NOAA RESTORE Science Program 2023

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA RESTORE Science Program 2023

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2022-2007377

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.451, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring, and Technology

Dates: A letter of intent (LOI) is required for this Announcement. The deadline for receipt of LOIs is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on August 16, 2022. LOIs should be submitted to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) RESTORE Science Program by email (noaarestorescience@noaa.gov).

The deadline for receipt of full proposals is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on November 15, 2022. Full proposals should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov). LOIs and full proposals received after their respective deadlines will not be reviewed or considered.

If use of Grants.gov is not feasible, contact the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) Grants Administrator (see section VII for contact information) as soon as possible and no later than a week before the due date to assess whether alternative arrangements can be made.

Applicants are advised to submit full proposals via Grants.gov well in advance of the deadline for full proposals as a precaution against unanticipated delays. Applicants must register with Grants.gov before submitting full proposals. When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind the following information regarding proposal submission on Grants.gov:

(1) Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the electronic System for Award Management (SAM), which takes an average of 7-10 business days after entering all information into SAM and requires the applicant's Employer Identification Number (see section IV.C.). SAM registration must be revalidated and renewed every 12 months.

(2) Following proposal submission to Grants.gov, an applicant will receive a series of email notifications for up to two business days before learning via validation or rejection whether NOAA has received their proposal.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA/NOS/NCCOS is soliciting proposals for the NOAA RESTORE Science Program for projects up to five years in duration. This announcement invites proposals that request funding from researcher, resource manager, and stakeholder partnerships to execute a previously planned, collaborative research project, develop its findings and products, transfer them to an identified resource manager or management body, and apply them to a specific Gulf of Mexico natural resource management decision. Funding is contingent upon the availability of funds in the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this Announcement will be made in June 2023, and that projects funded under this Announcement will have an October 1, 2023 start date. Total funding for this competition will be approximately $15 million over five years and approximately 10 projects may be funded. The maximum individual award amount is approximately $2,000,000 for up to five years in duration. Information regarding this Announcement, including webinars and additional background information, is available on the Science Program website (https://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/funding-opportunities/ffo-2023).

The NOAA RESTORE Science Program encourages applicants and awardees to support the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion when writing their proposals and performing their work. Promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity improves the creativity, productivity, and vitality of the research and management communities and leads to more robust natural resource management decisions.

Electronic Access: The NOAA RESTORE Science Program website (http://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/) furnishes supplementary information. Full proposals should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov).

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The mission of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) RESTORE Science Program is to carry out research, observation, and monitoring to support the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem, fish stocks, fish habitat, and the recreational, commercial, and charter-fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico. NOAA was authorized to establish and administer the Science Program, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act) (Public Law 112-141, Section 1604). The RESTORE Act also directs NOAA to prioritize integrated, long-term projects that address current or anticipated estuarine and marine ecosystem, fishery, or wildlife management information needs.

In developing proposals for this Announcement, applicants should consider the Science Program's long-term outcomes. First, the Science Program supports research that fosters an integrated understanding of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. This means focusing on the connections among species, habitats, and ecosystem processes as well as the cause-and-effect relationships that govern the strength of those connections. Second, the Science Program supports the use of this integrated understanding of the ecosystem to guide natural resource management, including restoration. Natural resource managers and natural resource management bodies are individuals or groups with authority to make decisions regarding the human use of or interaction with natural resources. Natural resource management takes many forms, for example, wildlife and fishery management, state and federal rulemaking and permitting, conservation practices by public or private landowners, place-based management, and restoration planning.

B. Program Priorities

1. Background

Effective management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and its natural resources is supported when natural resource managers and natural resource management bodies have access to the best available science and local knowledge, and then use it to inform their decisions (i.e., take action). To be actionable, research needs to be designed to produce findings and products that meet the information needs of resource managers, including matching the spatial and temporal scale of their decisions and being shared in a timely

manner and a comprehensible format. Fisheries managers have more confidence when setting catch targets if they have timely information on fish abundance and recruitment as well as information on catch and other causes of mortality, such as harmful algal blooms. When selecting a site and a technique for restoration, wetland restoration managers benefit from site-specific local knowledge, information on soil conditions and hydrology, and models for how human use, subsidence, and sea level rise could alter conditions over time. County and municipal land use planners deciding on zoning and regulations to preserve coastal habitats and species benefit from habitat maps, information on how species are using habitats, locally relevant climate and sea level rise projections, and estimates of other future stressors such as human population growth.

While there is no single recipe for success, using a co-production process is one way to make science actionable. Co-production is the collaboration of researchers, resource managers, and other stakeholders, including resource users, across the four phases of a research project to inform a specific natural resource management decision. Those four phases are:
(1) scoping;
(2) design;
(3) research and development; and
(4) transfer and application of findings and products.

Examples of co-production, as well as guidelines and best practices, can be found in Beier et al. (2017), Djenontin and Meadow (2018), Vincent et al. (2018), Laudien et al. (2019), and Miller et al. (2017), among others.

The scoping and design phases lay the foundation for the co-production of actionable science. The scoping phase starts with the identification of a specific natural resource management decision to be made in the future. As the scoping phase continues, the researchers, resource managers, and other stakeholders build relationships and form a team that allows for open communication and collaboration and develop a shared understanding of the decision and the information needed to inform it. In the design phase, the team develops an approach for acquiring that information, including developing research questions centered on reducing the uncertainties surrounding the decision and the methods for answering those questions. During the design phase, the team identifies approaches and strategies for developing research findings and products and plans how to best disseminate those outputs to those involved in making the decision as well as other stakeholders. The scoping and design phases take time and, because co-production is an iterative process, additional scoping and design may be necessary as the team proceeds to the third (research and development) and fourth (transfer and application) phases of a project. For example, research findings may emerge that raise new questions or the context for the decision may change.

This funding opportunity is intended to support phases three and four of co-production. It will provide funding to established teams of researchers, natural resource managers, and stakeholders to collaboratively execute a previously planned (i.e., scoped and designed) research project and apply its findings and products to a natural resource management decision. During the third and fourth phases of co-production, team members should continue to communicate, collaborate, and periodically evaluate the co-production process. The research and development phase may include collecting environmental observations, conducting surveys to assess the economic impact of a decision or stakeholder perceptions, gathering and integrating local knowledge, collaboratively analyzing and interpreting results, co-authoring research papers and reports, iteratively developing research products, and formulating policy recommendations that integrate knowledge from resource managers, researchers, and other stakeholders. The transfer and application phase may include communicating clear guidance on the appropriate use of the information generated by the project, the training of a resource manager or other user on the use of a research product, the use of research findings and products in the decision making process, feedback on how to improve a research product, and answering questions about how the research informed the decision.

2. Priority

This announcement invites proposals that request funding for researcher, resource manager, and stakeholder teams to execute a previously planned, collaborative research project, develop its findings and products, transfer them to an identified resource manager or management body, and apply them to a specific Gulf of Mexico natural resource management decision.

Applicants must clearly describe the specific natural resource management decision to which research findings and products generated by their project will be applied. Applicants should describe the context of the decision, including relevant ecological, social, political, economic, or other factors. Applicants should describe information that is needed to inform the decision and identify uncertainties related to the decision and how those uncertainties would be reduced by their proposed research. Applicants should also outline the timeline for the decision and should clearly describe how the proposed research and the development, transfer, and application of findings and products will align with key steps in the decision-making process.

The natural resource management decision being addressed must impact resources that occur in the Gulf of Mexico, its watersheds, or connecting waters. The Gulf of Mexico is defined

as the ocean basin bounded by the United States along its northeastern, northern, and northwestern edges; Mexico on its southwestern and southern edges; and Cuba on its southeastern edge. This definition of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem includes the estuarine and marine environments of the basin's continental shelf and its deepwater environments. If occurring in a watershed, which includes freshwater wetlands and uplands, or waters connected to the Gulf of Mexico through the Yucatan Channel or the Straits of Florida, the natural resource management decision must affect a resource in a way that has a direct, significant, and quantifiable impact on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

Applicants should describe the research questions developed during their design phase and how those questions are related to the uncertainties associated with their specific natural resource management decision. Applicants should describe the methods the project team plans to use to conduct the research. Applicants should describe the types of findings and products that could result from the research and how they would reduce the uncertainties associated with their specific natural resource management decision. Applicants should describe their strategy and processes for developing, transferring, and applying the findings and products to their management decision including how and when the findings and products would be used in the decision-making process. Given the iterative nature of co-production, applicants should also describe their approach for incorporating new information needs into their project's design should they emerge.

Applicants should demonstrate that a strong foundation for co-production has been built and will be maintained throughout the remainder of the project. The project team must have made substantial progress on the scoping and design phases for their project, and the results of that work should be reflected in their proposal. Applicants should describe the specific activities and steps they have taken to build relationships among team members to complete the scoping and design phases of their project.

The project team must include one or more natural resource managers, one or more researchers, and one or more representatives from the stakeholder community, such as resource users. The natural resource managers must be from the management bodies responsible for the identified resource management decision.

Applicants must list the members of their team with a clear delineation of each person's roles and responsibilities. If there are important collaborators who are not on the project team, they should be identified. Applicants should also describe how the team will operate and ensure accountability, including how decisions will be made within the team (e.g., consensus), how disputes will be resolved, and how the team will periodically self-assess its co-production process. One person on the team should be identified as the co-production

lead; they should coordinate the project’s collaborative activities and lead the team’s periodic evaluation of its co-production process. Project teams should include one or more individuals (e.g., representatives from boundary organizations) who have demonstrated expertise in the development and transfer of research findings and products to end users.

A letter of participation is required from each natural resource management body represented on the project team. This letter of participation should describe their roles in the project, how they were previously involved in the scoping and design phases of the project and two key insights they gained from those phases, and their plan for how and when they intend to use the findings and products from the project to inform their specific natural resource management decision. In cases where multiple resource managers or management bodies have responsibilities or decision authority, applicants may opt to include a subset of the managers or management bodies on the project team. However, applicants must explain how input from the other managers or management bodies not on the team will be considered and how the applicants will coordinate with them on the development, transfer, and application of research findings and products. Each management body with responsibilities or decision authority that is not represented on the project team should include a letter of support that clearly states their support for the project.

Applicants should incorporate the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion when writing their proposals and performing their work. Diversity here is defined as a collection of individual attributes that together help support effective natural resource management decisions and the research that underpins them. Equity here is defined as the quality of being fair and impartial. Ensuring equity means paying attention to end users and stakeholders' barriers to informing and influencing decisions and taking steps to maximize fairness, transparency, and accountability with them. Inclusion here is defined as a culture that intentionally creates opportunities to connect each person to the larger organizing structure, for example, a researcher being a part of a research team or a stakeholder having an opportunity to participate in a natural resource management decision process. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion improves the creativity, productivity, and vitality of the research and management communities and leads to more robust natural resource management decisions. Applicants may demonstrate this in a variety of ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, broadening the participation of underrepresented groups; having a diverse project team across several factors (e.g., sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geography, etc.); working with under-resourced, underserved, underrepresented, or under-engaged communities and stakeholders that may be impacted by the natural resource management decision; partnering with minority serving institutions or programs actively seeking diversity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; encouraging diverse perspectives from project team members and partners; fostering an

inclusive and safe environment; or incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project.

References

Beier, P., L.J. Hansen, L. Helbrecht, and D. Behar. 2017. A how-to guide for coproduction of actionable science. Conservation Letters. 10:288-296. https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12300.

Djenontin, I.N. and A.M. Meadow. 2018. The art of co-production of knowledge in environmental sciences and management: Lessons from international practice. Environmental Management. 61:885–903. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-018-1028-3.

Laudien, R., E. Boon, H. Goosen, and K. van Nieuwaal. 2019. The Dutch adaptation web portal: seven lessons learnt from a co-production point of view. Climatic Change. 153:509–521. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-018-2179-1.

Miller, B.W., A.J. Symstad, L. Frid, N.A. Fisichelli, and G.W. Schuurman. 2017. Co-producing simulation models to inform resource management: a case study from southwest South Dakota. Ecosphere 8(12):e02020. https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.2020.

Vincent, K., M. Daly, C. Scannell, and B. Leathes. 2018. What can climate services learn from theory and practice of co-production? Climate Services. 12:48-58. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cliser.2018.11.001.

C. Program Authority

Public Law 112-141, Section 1604, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring and Technology Program; 33 U.S.C. § 1321 note.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding is contingent upon availability of funds in the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. It is anticipated that total funding for this funding opportunity will be approximately $15 million and will fund approximately 10 projects. The maximum individual award amount is approximately $2,000,000 for up to five years in duration.

B. Project/Award Period

Full proposals may cover an award period of 1 to 5 years. It is anticipated that final

recommendations for funding under this Announcement will be made in June 2023, and that projects funded under this Announcement will have an October 1, 2023 start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

In an effort to maximize the use of limited resources, proposals from non-federal, non-NOAA federal, and NOAA federal applicants will be evaluated in the same competition, with different funding instruments applicable to the type of applicant.

The funding instrument for a full proposal selected for funding from a non-federal applicant is expected to be a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement is similar to a grant, but used when substantial federal government involvement is anticipated. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the recipient; or, the assisting agency has the right to intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities. Substantial involvement will be coordinated and communicated by the Science Program, and may include, but is not limited to, collaboration and participation by NOAA, involvement in investigator meetings, setting up management advisory groups, support for the co-production of science process, development of plans to transfer project findings and products to potential users and stakeholders, review of financial expenditures, and communication and dissemination of project results.

If the non-federal applicant is at an institution that has a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI), and their proposed project fits within the scope of that CI, then they may include a cover letter with their proposal stating their desire to have the proposal associated with the CI. This letter should specify the name of the CI, the CI cooperative agreement number, and the NOAA-approved research theme and task that applies to the proposal. The proposal will use the Facilities & Administrative (F&A, or indirect costs) rate associated with the main CI agreement. If the proposal is selected for funding, NOAA will notify the institution that a separate award will be issued with its own award number. The new award will include two Specific Award Conditions: (1) the existing institution/NOAA memorandum of agreement (MOA) would be incorporated by reference into the terms of the competitive award, and (2) any progress report(s) for the competitive award must follow the timetable of the funding program and be submitted directly to the funding program. Report(s) will be copied to the CI's administrator when due, to be attached to the main cooperative agreement progress report as an appendix. This will allow the CI to coordinate all the projects funded through the CI, since the terms of these awards will specify that this is a CI project via the MOA.

If the non-federal applicant is at an institution that has a NOAA approved Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) and meets the criteria described below for using that status, they may include a cover letter with their proposal stating their desire to have the proposal associated with that CESU. This letter should specify the name of the CESU. Of the 17 CESUs across the nation, NOAA is a member of 10: North and West Alaska, California, Hawaii-Pacific Islands, South Florida-Caribbean, Gulf Coast, Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast, Chesapeake Watershed, North Atlantic Coast, Pacific Northwest, and Great Plains. The following criteria must be met for NOAA to use the established partnerships with CESUs:

(1) The proposed project must fit within the objectives of the National CESU Network Program, which are to provide research, technical assistance, and education to federal land management, environmental, and research agencies and their partners in biological, physical, social, cultural, or engineering disciplines needed to address natural and cultural resource management issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context.

(2) The proposed project must fit the intent of the CESU's existing Cooperative and Joint Agreement, which means (a) the research partnership will carry out or stimulate an activity (e.g., data, products, or services) for a public purpose, and (b) NOAA will be significantly involved in the work.

The funding instrument for a selected proposal from an eligible NOAA federal applicant will be an intra-agency transfer of funds.

The funding instrument for a selected proposal from a non-NOAA federal applicant will be through an inter-agency transfer of funds, provided legal authority exists for the federal applicant to receive funds from another agency. NOTE: Before non-NOAA federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have applicable legal authority for an inter-agency transfer of funds. Non-NOAA federal applicants that intend to be the lead institution should contact the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) Grants Administrator to discuss technical details (refer to section VII for contact information). Support may be solely through the Science Program or partnered with other federal offices and agencies.

The intra- and inter-agency transfers of funds are not federal assistance (grants or cooperative agreements), and the policies described in this Announcement applicable to federal assistance awards do not apply to federal entities receiving intra- and inter-agency transfers of funds. In the agreements implemented in these situations, NOAA will be substantially involved in the projects in a manner similar to the cooperative agreements with non-federal parties. Contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator for more information (refer to section VII for contact information).

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education; not-for-profit institutions; for-profit organizations; local, state, and tribal governments; and U.S. territories and federal agencies that possess the statutory authority to accept funding for this type of work. The lead applicant must be from a U.S.-based entity.

Science Program funding opportunities may not be used to hire and fund the salaries of any permanent federal employees. Federal award recipients may use their funding to cover travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual personnel costs associated with the proposed work.

Investigators are not required to be employed by an eligible entity that is based in one of the five Gulf of Mexico States (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas). However, investigators that are not employed by or associated with Gulf of Mexico-based eligible entities are strongly encouraged to collaborate with partners from Gulf of Mexico-based eligible entities.

Foreign researchers may participate by submitting a subaward or contract through an eligible U.S. entity. Science Program funding may not be spent in Cuba.

The Department of Commerce and NOAA support cultural and gender diversity and encourage proposals involving women and minority investigators, participants, and groups. In addition, the Department of Commerce and NOAA are strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. The Department of Commerce and NOAA encourage any of the above institutions to apply.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

A LOI is required to apply for this Announcement. Full proposals that do not have an associated LOI that was submitted by the deadline will not be considered and the full proposal will be returned to the applicant without review.

Each proposal must substantially comply with the 18 elements listed under Required Elements in section IV.B.3.(1)-(18), or it will be returned to the sender without further consideration. A checklist with the required and optional elements can be found in section VIII.B.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Proposal materials are available at http://www.grants.gov as part of the electronic proposal package, which includes the federal forms. Please contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator should you have an issue accessing the materials (see section VII for contact information).

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Letter of Intent

A LOI is required to apply for this Announcement. The purpose of the LOI process is to provide information to potential applicants on the relevance of their proposal to the program priority described in this Announcement (section I.B.) in advance of preparing a full proposal. Full proposals will be encouraged only for LOIs deemed relevant; however, the final decision to submit a full proposal is made by the investigator. The LOI should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to this competition. The LOI must be no more than three pages in length, single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins and must include, in order, the components listed below. If these listed components are not included, the LOI may not be considered and the applicant may not be eligible to submit a full proposal:

(1) Tentative project title.

(2) Names, institutions, and roles (briefly) of all investigators. Identify the lead investigator, natural resource manager(s), co-production lead, and other co-investigators. Also list unfunded collaborators that are not on the project team but are making a substantial contribution to the project.

(3) The specific natural resource management decision to be addressed by the proposal, and a brief description of its context, related uncertainties that would be informed or reduced by the proposed research, timeline, and geographic extent.

(4) A brief summary of research questions related to the uncertainties developed during the design phase, proposed methods to conduct the research to address those questions, the types of findings and products expected to come from the research, and how they are expected to reduce uncertainties associated with the specific natural resource management decision.

(5) A brief summary of the project team's strategy and timeline for developing, transferring, and applying the findings and products to their specific natural resource management decision, including a timeline that illustrates how and when the findings and products would be used in the decision-making process.

(6) A brief summary of the specific activities and steps the project team has taken to build and maintain relationships among team members to complete the scoping and design phases of their project.

(7) A brief description of how the team will operate and periodically evaluate its co-production process.

(8) A brief summary of how the management bodies responsible for the natural resource management decision on the team will participate in the project's execution.

(9) A brief summary of how the proposed project incorporates the principles of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

(10) The approximate cost of the project, including a brief overview of its budget.

Section IV.D.1 provides a deadline by which the LOI must be submitted and instructions for how to submit it. The Science Program will conduct a review of each LOI to determine whether it is responsive to the program priority as detailed in section I.B. Emails to encourage or discourage a full proposal will be sent to the lead investigator for each LOI within approximately four weeks after the LOI due date. The final decision to submit a full proposal will be made by the applicant(s) and institution(s), regardless of the recommendations of the Science Program regarding the LOI.

2. Application

The provisions for preparing full applications (hereafter, "proposals") provided here are mandatory. Proposals received after the published deadline (see section IV.D.2) or proposals that deviate from the prescribed format will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Information regarding this Announcement, including webinars and additional background information, is available on the Science Program website (https://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/funding-opportunities/ffo-2023). An example proposal may be found at https://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/resources. Please note the example is available for general guidance purposes only; applicants must comply with the complete instructions included within this Announcement. Answers to frequently asked questions are available at https://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/funding-opportunities/ffo-2023/faqs.

For clarity in the submission of proposals, the following definitions are provided for applicant use:

Funding or Budget Period - The period of time when federal funding is available for obligation by the recipient. A funding or budget period is typically 12 months and must be specified in multi-year awards, if applicable.

Period of Performance - The period of time established in the award document during which federal sponsorship begins and ends. The term “award period” or “project period” may be used interchangeably with “period of performance.”

Proposals with subcontractors or subawards - The lead institution on a collaborative proposal may request direct funding by NOAA. If funded, the lead institution will disburse funds to the contractors or sub-recipient institutions. A sub-recipient receives funds from the lead institution to carry out part of the federal award. A subcontractor provides property or services needed to carry out the project in the federal award.

3. Required Elements

Each proposal must substantially comply with the following 18 elements or it will be returned to the sender without further consideration. The summary title page, abstract, project narrative, data management plan, references, biographical sketch, and budget narrative must be single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. The 18 elements are as follows (see section VIII.B. for a checklist of elements):

(1) Standard Form (SF)-424: All applicants requesting direct funding must submit the Standard Form, SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance,” to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for their institution for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal and is the first required form in the Grants.gov proposal package.

(2) Summary title page (one (1) page maximum): The summary title page includes, in order, the project's title; the letter of intent number (provided by the Science Program after the LOI review), the lead investigator’s name, affiliation, complete address, phone number, and email address; the name of each natural resource manager on the project team including their affiliation, complete address, phone number, and email address; the specific natural resource management decision to be addressed by the proposal; and the requested funding amounts for each fiscal year with and without ship funding. Separate budget information is not requested on the title page for institutions that are proposed to receive funds through a subaward to the lead institution; however, an accompanying budget narrative must be submitted for each subaward. For further details on budget information, please see elements

14 and 15 below. Applicants may suggest merit reviewers on a page after the summary title page.

(3) Abstract (one (1) page maximum): The abstract should appear on a separate single page, headed with:

(a) The proposal title.

(b) The name, institution, and email address for the lead investigator, natural resource manager(s), co-production lead, and other co-investigators on the project team. Unfunded collaborators that are not on the project team but are making a substantial contribution to the project should also be identified.

(c) The total proposed cost (including shiptime, if any), and

(d) the funding period.

The abstract should include a brief introduction to the natural resource management decision that will be addressed, including its context and related uncertainties that could be reduced by additional research; the research questions and proposed methods; and a brief summary of the plan to have project findings and products applied to the specific natural resource management decision. It should be written in the third person. Project abstracts of proposals that receive funding may be posted on program related websites.

(4) Project narrative (ten (10) page maximum): The project narrative must describe the project and indicate its relevance to the stated program priority (refer to section I.B.), as follows:

(a) Describe the specific natural resource management decision that the project will address, including its context, related uncertainties that would be informed or reduced by additional research, and its geographic extent. Applicants should also outline the timeline and specific steps for the decision and highlight steps where additional research findings and products could inform the decision.

(b) Describe the research questions related to the uncertainties developed during the design phase, proposed methods to conduct the research to address those questions, and an approach for incorporating new information needs into the project’s design should they emerge.

(c) Describe the types of findings and products expected to come from the research and how they are expected to reduce uncertainties associated with the specific natural resource management decision.

(d) Describe the strategy and timeline for developing, transferring, and applying the findings and products to their specific natural resource management decision.

(e) Describe the specific activities and steps the project team has taken to build and maintain relationships among team members and complete the scoping and design phases of their project.

(f) Describe the composition of the project team and the responsibilities of each team member. The project team must include one or more natural resource managers, one or more researchers, and one or more representatives from the stakeholder community (e.g., resource users). A co-production lead from among the team should be identified, and important collaborators that are not on the project team should be listed.

(g) Describe how the project team will operate and ensure accountability going forward, including how decisions and disputes will be addressed and how the team will periodically self-assess its co-production process.

(5) Statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion (one (1) page maximum): In this statement, describe how the proposed project incorporates the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Applicants may also highlight past diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and the value those experiences will add to the proposal.

(6) Data management plan (two (2) page maximum): Provide a detailed data management plan that aligns with the specific Data Management Guidance provided in section VIII.A. The plan should describe how metadata and data used as part of the proposed work will be disseminated to the broader community. A plan for long-term archiving of these data should also be included. 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 Science Program will not offer specific technical guidance; however, the use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. Applicants that propose to collaborate with data centers or networks, except the NCEI, are advised to obtain letters of commitment that affirm the collaboration. Where possible, all applicants are strongly encouraged to use existing data centers and data portals to archive and disseminate their data. Costs associated with data archiving may be included in the proposal budget (see Element 15). Refer to Section VIII.A. for specific Data Management Guidance.

(7) References cited: Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publication, the article title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the ten (10) page project narrative.

(8) Natural resource management letter of participation: Each proposal must include a letter of participation from each natural resource management body represented on the project team. The letter should describe their roles in the project, how they were previously involved in the scoping and design phases of the project and two key insights they gained from those phases, and their plan for how and when they intend to use the findings and products from the project to inform their specific natural resource management decision.

(9) Milestone chart: Provide the anticipated timelines of major tasks and milestones associated with the proposed work. Applicants are required to use the milestone chart template (which includes an example) included with the electronic proposal package (and also available at https://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/resources; OMB Control No. 0648-0384).

(10) Biographical sketches: The lead investigator and each co-investigator (including natural resource managers) must provide a summary of up to two pages that includes:

(a) Their email and mailing address;

(b) A list of professional and academic credentials and accomplishments;

(c) A list of up to five examples or publications that describe their past experience working with researcher and natural resource manager partnerships and transferring and applying research findings and products in a natural resource management context; and

(d) A list of up to five archived datasets most closely related to the proposed project.

(11) Current and pending support: The lead investigator, each co-investigator (including natural resource managers), and each unfunded collaborator making a substantial contribution to the project must provide a description of all current and pending financial/funding support (e.g., federal, state, not-for-profit institutions, for-profit organizations). The capability of the investigators and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present and future commitments to other projects should be addressed. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time investigators and collaborators have devoted to other federal or non-federal projects, as compared to the time that will be devoted to the proposed work solicited under this notice. A current and pending support form is available on the NCCOS website for your use: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/application-forms/. You must respond to the requirement whether or not you have any current and/or pending support.

(12) Accomplishments from prior support: If the lead investigator or co-investigators have received federal or state funding awards in the past five years for research relevant to this funding opportunity, information on the awards is required. The following information must

be provided:

(a) The award number, amount, and period of support;

(b) The title of the project;

(c) A summary of the results of the completed work;

(d) Publications resulting from the award;

(e) Archived datasets resulting from the award;

(f) A brief description of outputs and outcomes, especially the application of research findings and products in a natural resource management context; and

(g) As appropriate, a description of the relationship of the completed work to the proposed work.

(13) Permits: Provide a list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. You must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required.

(14) SF-424A: Applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form, which identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the proposal. Place each fiscal year in separate columns in section B of page 1 on the SF-424A. NOTES: This revised SF-424A section B format is a NOAA requirement that is not reflected in the Instructions for the SF-424A. The budget figures must correspond with the description contained in the budget justification.

Multi-investigator proposals using a subaward approach must submit a SF-424A for each subaward that has the same budget figures as its corresponding budget narrative. The lead institution should list the total for subcontracts under 6.f. “Contractual” and the total for subawards under 6.h. “Other” in their SF-424A.

(15) Budget narratives: All proposals must include a detailed budget narrative covering the proposed period of performance with a justification to support all proposed budget categories. For additional information concerning each of the required budget categories and appropriate level of disclosure please see https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2019/Jun/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf.

Personnel costs should be broken out for each named investigator, number of months, and percentage of time requested per investigator. Support for each investigator should be commensurate with their stated involvement. Any unnamed personnel (e.g., graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title and their personnel costs explained similar to investigator personnel costs above. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals should be explained.

Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Equipment costs should describe the equipment to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. Applicants may include publication costs.

Proposals are permitted to include the costs of project-level data management, including coordinating, organizing, documenting, formatting, or otherwise preparing datasets for submission to NOAA or non-NOAA data facilities; establishing and maintaining data access tools and services and related metadata; and managing non-digital data that are not required to be made publicly accessible, including laboratory notebooks, preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer review reports, communications with colleagues, or physical objects such as laboratory specimens.

A separate budget narrative is required for each institution that is proposed to receive funds through a subaward or subcontract to the lead institution. The budget narratives should describe the work to be supported and indicate the applicability or necessity to the project. When a collaborator or contractor is known before applying, signed approval from the institution of each subaward and subcontract must accompany its budget justification. The lead institution is responsible for sending funds to its subaward and subcontract institutions. For acquisition contracts, the purpose and cost or price must be fully justified and the contract must comply with 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.326.

(16) CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov CD511 document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institution.

(17) SF-424B: Assurances - Non-Construction Programs: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov SF-424B document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institutions.

(18) Alphabetized list of collaborators, advisors, and advisees: Provide ONE list per proposal that includes all collaborators, advisors, and advisees and their respective institutions for each investigator (lead investigator, co-investigators, postdocs, sub-awardees, etc.). The combined and alphabetized list should be on a spreadsheet with column headers for (A) First Name, (B) Last Name, and (C) Institution. Collaborators are individuals who have participated in a project or publication within the last 48 months with any investigator,

including co-authors on publications. Collaborators also include those persons with whom the investigators may have ongoing collaboration negotiations. Advisees and advisors do not have a time limit. Advisees are persons with whom the individual investigator has had an association as thesis or dissertation advisor or postdoctoral sponsor. Advisors include an individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors. Unfunded participants in the proposed study should also be included on the list, but not their collaborators. This information is critical for identifying potential conflicts of interests and avoiding bias in the selection of reviewers.

In summary, multi-investigator proposals proposing a subrecipient known in advance MUST provide the following for each proposed subaward: SF-424A, budget narrative, signed approval, and current and pending support forms for each investigator.

Likewise, multi-investigator proposals that include a contractor known in advance MUST provide signed approval, cost or price justification, and current and pending support forms for each contractor.

4. Optional Elements

Applicants may include other materials as listed below in addition to the 18 required elements; these elements are encouraged, but not required (see section VIII.B. for a checklist of elements):

(1) Additional letters of support or commitment: Letters of support or commitment in addition to the required natural resource management letter of participation (see section IV.B.3. required element 8) are strongly encouraged, but not required. Consider providing letters from partners that confirm contributions to and support for the proposed work, such as team members included in the project but not funded in the budget, natural resource management bodies and other end users not represented on the project team who play a role in the natural resource management decision, and individuals or groups that provide access to data or other needs for the proposed project. If applicable, the letter should summarize how input from those not on the team will be considered and how the applicants will coordinate with them on the development, transfer, and application of research findings and products.

(2) Indirect costs rate agreements: Proposals that request funds for indirect costs for institutions that have a current federally approved rate should provide the indirect cost rate agreement for the lead institution and each institution that is proposed to receive funds through a subaward or subcontract to the lead institution. An applicant without a federally

approved rate should refer to section IV.F. of this Announcement regarding options.

(3) SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: If lobbying activity is or has been secured to influence the outcome of a covered federal action, complete the SF-LLL standard lobbying disclosure form found at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html and include it with your proposal package.

5. Application Format and Assembly

"Workspace" is the standard way for organizations or individuals to apply for federal grants in Grants.gov. "Workspace" allows a grant team to simultaneously access and edit different forms within a proposal. Plus, the forms can be filled out online or offline.

"Workspace" also allows applicants and organizations to tailor their proposal workflow. Please refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html to determine which of the three approaches your institution should take when completing a "Workspace" proposal. This webpage also contains resources to aid in setting up the workspace and the proposal submission process.

If you experience submission problems that may result in your proposal being late, send an email to support@grants.gov and call the Grants.gov help desk (800-518-4726). The federal program officer for this Announcement will use programmatic discretion in accepting proposals due to documented electronic submission problems. If more than one submission of a proposal is performed, the last proposal submitted before the due date and time will be the official version.

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

Any applicant awarded in response to this Announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at https://sam.gov/SAM/. SAM enables the use of a universal entity identifier and to build the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note, to the extent applicable.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its proposal, which takes an average of 7-10 business days after entering all information into SAM and requires the applicant's Employer Identification Number; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its proposal; and (iii)

continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or a proposal or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. SAM registration must be revalidated and renewed every 12 months. Applicants are advised to complete SAM registration or renewal well in advance of the full proposal deadline.

NOAA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA 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.

D. Submission Dates and Times

1. Letter of Intent

A LOI is required for applying to this Announcement. Lead investigators should submit their LOI as an attachment to an email addressed to noaarestorescience@noaa.gov. Please name your LOI file as follows: “2023 - Lead Investigator First Name Last Name - X.”, where “X” is a number (e.g., 1, 2, etc.) that differentiates LOIs should you submit more than one. The deadline for receipt of a LOI for this Announcement is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on August 16, 2022. Late LOIs will not be considered and associated full proposals will not be reviewed or considered.

2. Full Application

The deadline for receipt of full proposals is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on November 15, 2022. Full proposals should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov). Full proposals received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered. As a precaution against unanticipated delays, applicants are advised to complete Grants.gov registration and to submit their proposals to Grants.gov well in advance of the full proposal deadline.

If use of Grants.gov is not feasible, contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator (see section VII for contact information) as soon as possible and no later than a week before the due date to assess whether alternative arrangements can be made.

After electronic submission of the proposal through Grants.gov, the person submitting the proposal will receive a series of email notifications for up to two business days from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their proposal. The first email will confirm

receipt of the proposal by the Grants.gov system and the second email will indicate that the proposal has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency (NOAA) or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated proposals are sent to NOAA for review. After the proposal has been validated, this same person will receive a third email, generally within two business days, when the proposal has been downloaded by NOAA. If an applicant has not received an email verifying that the proposal has been downloaded by NOAA, the applicant is responsible for contacting the federal program officer for this Announcement (refer to section VII for contact information) and providing documentation that demonstrates the proposal was submitted to Grants.gov ahead of the deadline.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Proposals under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2), an opportunity for public notice and comment is not required for this notice relating to grants, benefits, and contracts. Because this notice is exempt from the notice and comment provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is not required, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Costs

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 Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06 (effective November 2020) found at https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. For questions, please contact the Grants Officer for indirect or facilities and administrative costs (refer to section VII for contact information).

2. Funding Restrictions specific to the RESTORE Act

The RESTORE Act stipulates the eligible activities for the Science Program and what the funds may NOT be used for. Per the Act, “The funds ...may not be used for any existing or planned research led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, unless agreed to in writing by the grant recipient.” NOAA has interpreted this language to mean that if the proposed work is captured within any of the following three categories, then it will be considered as “existing or planned research led by NOAA”:

(1) Substantially part of work that is currently tracked in NOAA Line Office Annual Operating Plans, part of any NOAA grant or other NOAA funding mechanism documentation, or part of other NOAA budgetary or program management documents; or

(2) Substantially part of work that has been proposed in a NOAA Budget Formulation Program Change Summary or other budget formulation documents at the NOAA Line Office level since July 2012, regardless of success; or

(3) Substantially duplicative of efforts implemented by NOAA (i.e., conducted by NOAA federal scientists or contract scientists on behalf of NOAA).

Final determination of the eligibility of the proposed work will be made by the Science Program. The Science Program will also not fund start-up or operational costs for private business ventures and neither fees nor profits will be considered as allowable costs. For questions, please contact the federal program officer (refer to section VII for contact information).

G. Other Submission Requirements

None.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

(a) Importance and Applicability (25 percent): This assesses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, the Science Program will evaluate proposals based on how well the applicant demonstrates (1) an integrated understanding of the specific natural resource management decision, its context, and related uncertainties that could be reduced by additional research; (2) an understanding of the timeline for the decision and the steps in the decision-making process where additional research findings and products could inform it; (3) the relevance of the proposed research questions to the uncertainties associated with the decision; and (4) plans to incorporate the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the project’s execution.

(b) Technical and Scientific Merit (25 percent): This assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, the Science Program will evaluate the efficacy of (1) the proposed methods to conduct the research; (2) the types of findings and products expected from the research and whether they would reduce the stated uncertainties; (3) the proposed strategy and timeline for developing, transferring, and applying the findings and products to the specific natural resource management decision; and (4) the data management plan.

(c) Overall Qualifications of Applicants (20 percent): This assesses whether the applicants possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, the Science Program will evaluate the capability and composition of the project team to complete the proposed work based on (1) their subject matter expertise and accomplishments from past research and its application; (2) their experience with collaborative activities such as planning, stakeholder engagement, and facilitation; (3) their demonstrated capability to develop, transfer, and apply research findings and products in a natural resource management context; and (4) demonstrated experience regarding data management and the timely communication of findings, data, and other products.

(d) Project Costs (10 percent): This assesses whether the budget is realistic and commensurate with the needs and timeframe of the proposed work. For this competition, the Science Program will evaluate (1) the completeness of the budget narrative and how realistic the budget is for completing the proposed work and (2) the potential impact of the project's findings and products relative to the cost of the project.

(e) Project Team Integration and Practices (20 percent): This assesses how well the project team is integrated and its use of co-production practices. For this competition, the Science Program will evaluate proposals based on (1) whether the project team has a diverse mix of institutions and partners commensurate with the proposed research and its transfer and application, (2) the assigned roles and responsibilities of team members, (3) the description of the activities and steps taken to build relationships among team members to complete the scoping and design phases of the project, (4) the description of how the project team will operate and ensure accountability going forward, and (5) the level of commitment demonstrated by the natural resource management letters to applying the project's findings and products to the decision.

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine if it is timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for proposals with non-substantive issues that can be easily rectified or cured. Ineligible, incomplete, duplicate, or non-responsive proposals may be eliminated from further review.

All proposals that pass this initial administrative review will be evaluated individually by independent peer mail review and/or independent peer panel review. Both federal and non-federal experts may be used in this process. The federal program officer identified in section VII is responsible for conducting the evaluation process described in this Announcement.

For peer mail review, proposals will be evaluated and scored individually by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers. Each peer mail reviewer will see only certain individual proposals within their area of expertise and score them individually on a scale of 0 to 100 in accordance with the assigned weights of the evaluation criteria (refer to section V.A.).

The peer mail reviewer applies a rating of 1 – 5 to each criterion (refer to section V.A.), where the rating represents the reviewer's view of how well the applicant met the standards described for a particular criterion using the following scale:

- Poor (1): the applicant has not addressed the criterion adequately or it has substantial deficiencies;
- Fair (2): the applicant has minimally addressed the criterion or it has moderate deficiencies;
- Good (3): the applicant has addressed the criterion adequately or it has low deficiencies;
- Very Good (4): the applicant has addressed the criterion satisfactorily or it has no deficiencies; or
- Excellent (5): the applicant has addressed the criterion exceptionally well or is outstanding.

The total score (0-100) is then calculated using the weights and ratings for each criterion), as follows: [(Rating (a) × 25) + (Rating (b) × 25) + (Rating (c) × 20) + (Rating (d) × 10) + (Rating (e) × 20)]/5 = Total score

Total scores from each review are averaged and rounded to the nearest integer. Based on the scores from mail peer review, a cutoff will be established for proposals to proceed to the next stage of review. Depending on the nature and quality of the proposal pool and the available funding, NOAA expects approximately 40 proposals may be sent forward to the independent peer panel, where they will be evaluated and scored individually by the

panelists. Proposals not sent forward to the peer panel will not be given further consideration and applicants will be notified of non-selection.

The peer panel will be diverse and inclusive and composed of several individuals with a range of professional and technical expertise such that the panel, as a whole, covers the range of topics addressed by the proposals being reviewed. The panel will have access to all mail reviews of proposals and will use the mail reviews in discussion and evaluation of the entire slate of proposals. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria (refer to section V.A.). Individual peer panel reviewers will consider the relative weighting of the evaluation criteria in providing their individual score. The individual peer panelists' scores shall be combined, using one or more methods, to obtain a numerical ranking of the proposals. Only the panel scores will be used to rank each proposal. When more than one non-federal reviewer is used, no consensus advice will be given by the independent peer mail review or the review panel. The federal program officer will not vote, score, or participate in discussion of the merits of any proposals other than to ask clarifying questions and respond to programmatic questions from the reviewers. Following the peer panel, the federal program officer may interview natural resource managers named on highly-ranked proposals to gain additional insights into their commitments and plans for applying the findings and products expected from their project.

The federal program officer will create a ranking of the proposals using the combined panel scores and make recommendations on which proposals to fund and at what amounts given the program priority, the approximate number of expected awards, the approximate amount of funding available for this competition, interviews with natural resource managers on highly-ranked proposals, and the selection factors (refer to section V.C.). Following the evaluation process, applicants recommended for funding may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NOAA may select some, all, or none of the proposals, or part(s) of any particular proposal, may request that applicants combine projects, and may delay a potential award to a subsequent period without re-competition.

Recommendations for funding are sent to the Science Program's Director for review. The Director will solicit input from the Science Program's Executive Oversight Board on the broad portfolio of recommendations; there will be no review by the Executive Oversight Board of individual proposals. The Director then sends their final recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official, the Director of NCCOS, for final funding decisions.

In making final funding decisions, the Selecting Official will award in rank order from the peer-review process unless selection out of rank order is justified based on the selection

factors (refer to section V.C.).

When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of peer reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant. Declined proposals will be held for the required three years, in accordance with current retention requirements, and then destroyed.

C. Selection Factors

Proposals may be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

(1) Availability of funding;

(2) Balance or distribution of funds:

(a) Geographically;

(b) By type of institutions;

(c) By type of partners; and

(d) By topical areas.

(3) Whether this project duplicates projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other state and federal agencies or science initiatives;

(4) Program objectives, program priority, and policy factors (refer to sections I.A. and I.B.);

(5) Applicant's prior award performance;

(6) Partnerships or participation of targeted groups; and

(7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the grants officer.

Awards may also be modified for selected projects depending on budget availability or according to the selection factors listed above.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will begin in November 2022. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this Announcement will be made in June 2023. Applicants should use a start date of October 1, 2023.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the

Grants Officer has signed the grant agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain specific award conditions unique to a proposed work that will be applied on a case-by-case basis. For example, the award may include conditions that limit the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce 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 and may be accessed online at: http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

2. 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 applies to awards in this program. Refer to https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200 and https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/part-1327.

3. Department of Commerce Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. A current version of this document (November 2020) is available at https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy.

4. Research Terms and Conditions

For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Department of Commerce Financial

Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions (Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

5. Bureau Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance.

6. Limitation of Liability

Funding for this Announcement is contingent upon availability of funds in the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for the direct costs of proposal preparation or associated costs. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA or any other agency to award any specific project or to obligate any part of the entire amount of available funds. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of not receiving an award. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

7. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq., as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf) for projects proposed to receive NOAA federal funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A for NEPA, https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-216-6a, and the NOAA

Companion Manual, https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAANAO-216-6A-Companion-Manual-03012018.pdf. Applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted; locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected; possible construction activities; and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems) in their project narrative. 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 of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts associated with their proposed project. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of a proposal. If additional information is required after a proposal is selected, funds may be withheld by the Grants Officer under a Specific Award Condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

8. Permits

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all permits and approvals from federal, state, tribal, and local governments and private landowners where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be received by the federal program office prior to release of funding. Failure to apply for and obtain federal, state, tribal, and local permits, approvals, or letters of agreement may delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding. In some cases, if additional permits and approvals are required after a proposal is selected, funds may be withheld by the Grants Officer under a Specific Award Condition requiring the recipient to submit required permits and approvals.

9. Human Subjects Research

For research projects involving Human Subjects an Institutional Review Board approval or an exemption determination will be required in accordance with Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section G.05.i., “Research Involving Human Subjects” found at https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy.

10. Release of Application Information

Privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, patentable ideas, or trade secrets, disclosure of which may harm the applicant, should be included in proposals only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed work. In the event that a proposal contains information or data that the applicant does not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the proposal, 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. A proposal that results in an award will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary, or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the proposal aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, and 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for the Department of Commerce to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA.

Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NOAA will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and contractors, and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the proposal or as otherwise authorized by law. Portions of proposals resulting in awards that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the federal government or the funding recipient owns a right, title, or interest (including a nonexclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NOAA will notify the recipient of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the recipient may advise NOAA of such inventions described, or other confidential, commercial, or proprietary information contained in the proposal.

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the data management plan from funded projects, 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.

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in proposals for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other federal employees, federal agents and contractors, and by non-federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of

interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information.
As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

11. Review of Risk

After proposals are recommended for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. 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, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, Specific Award Conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject a proposal in its entirety if information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected proposals and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer.

12. Scientific Integrity

The Science Program adheres to the principles of scientific integrity. This policy can be found at https://sciencecouncil.noaa.gov/Scientific-Integrity-Commons.

13. NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy

Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards

NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award.

NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment-free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.

For more information, please visit: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial.

C. Reporting

All performance (i.e., technical progress) reports shall be submitted electronically through NOAA's electronic Grants Online system unless the recipient does not have electronic access. In that case, performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the federal program officer. All financial reports shall be submitted in the same manner.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $25,000. See 2 C.F.R. Parts 25, 170.

VII. Agency Contacts

Technical Program Information: Frank Parker, Associate Director and federal program officer, 970-528-0407, frank.parker@noaa.gov.

Grants Administration Information: NCCOS Grants Administrator, nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov.

Data Management Information: Jessica Morgan, NCCOS Scientific Data Coordinator, 240-

397-5462, nccos.data@noaa.gov.

Indirect or Facilities and Administrative Costs Information: Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 301-628-1308, lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

A. Data Management Guidance

1. Data Management Plans

Data management plans (see section IV.B.3.(5)) submitted with proposals MUST reflect one or more of these option(s):

Option A: For the majority of oceanographic and ecological data, except those listed below, funding recipients are expected to submit data to NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) for long-term preservation, which will provide public access, archiving, discovery metadata meeting NOAA standards and formats, and a Digital Object Identifier (DOI). NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

Option B: For any other data not appropriate for submission to NOAA NCEI, funding recipients are expected to submit data to an appropriate data facility (i.e., National Institutes of Health GenBank for genomics data) that preserves data, properly manages archived data to assure their quality, mints DOIs, and makes archived data and related information available to users in a timely and efficient manner.

Option C: For limited-release data that are limited by law, regulation, policy, security requirements, commercial or international agreements, or valid technical considerations, funding recipients may request permission from the federal program officer not to make data publicly accessible.

2. Definitions of Data Management Terms

Environmental data are recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans, atmosphere, space environment, sun, and solid earth, as well as correlative data such as socio-economic data, related documentation, and metadata. Digital audio or video recordings of environmental phenomena (such as animal sounds or undersea video) are included in this definition. Numerical model outputs are included in this definition,

particularly if they are used to support the conclusion of a peer-reviewed publication. Data collected in a laboratory or other controlled environment, such as measurements of animals and chemical processes, are included in this definition.

Sharing data means making data publicly visible and accessible in a timely (see below) manner at no cost (or no more than the cost of reproduction), in a format which is machine-readable and based on open standards, along with metadata necessary to find and properly use the data. Data are to be made available in a form that would permit further analysis or reuse: data must be encoded in a machine-readable format, preferably using existing open-standard formats; data must be sufficiently documented, preferably using open metadata standards, to enable users to independently read and understand the data. Data should undergo quality control (QC) and a description of the QC process and results should be referenced in the metadata.

Machine-readable means the data are stored on a computer in a digital format whose structure is well described and which can be read without the aid of a human. An open-standard format is one which does not require proprietary software to be read. Metadata is documentation that is machine-readable and structutructured according to an open-standard format and which describes the data so that users can search for, access, read, understand, and use the data. International Organization for Standardization (ISO) EXtensible Markup Language (XML) is an acceptable metadata format.

Timely means no later than publication of a peer-reviewed article based on the data, or two years after the data are collected and verified, or two years after the original end date of the grant (not including any extensions or follow-on funding), whichever is soonest, unless a delay has been authorized by the NOAA funding program.

3. Data and Manuscript Requirements

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 Science Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards. Contact the federal program officer for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients (see section VII for contact information).

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

Contact the NCCOS Scientific Data Coordinator for questions regarding data management and implementing this guidance (see section VII for contact information).

B. Checklist for Required and Requested Elements

Required elements:

(1) SF-424
(2) Summary title page (one (1) page maximum)
(3) Abstract (one (1) page maximum)
(4) Project narrative (ten (10) page maximum)
(5) Statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion (one (1) page maximum)
(6) Data management plan (two (2) page maximum)
(7) References cited
(8) Natural resource management letter of participation
(9) Milestone chart
(10) Biographical sketches
(11) Current and pending support
(12) Accomplishments from prior support (if none, indicate such)
(13) Permits (if none, indicate such)
(14) SF-424A (one for the lead institution and one for each subaward and subcontract institution)
(15) Budget narratives (one for the lead institution; one for each subaward and subcontract including signed approval)
(16) CD-511
(17) SF-424B
(18) Alphabetized list of collaborators, advisors, and advisees (ONE spreadsheet that includes the list for all investigators)

Optional elements:

(1) Additional letters of support or commitment
(2) Indirect costs rate agreements (requested)
(3) SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)