

NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act

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## NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2023-2008081

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation

Dates: The application deadline is November 17, 2023, at 11:59 PM Eastern time. Applications must be received by [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov).

Funding Opportunity Description: The principal objective of this solicitation is to support transformational habitat restoration projects that restore marine, estuarine, coastal, or Great Lakes ecosystems, using approaches that enhance community and ecosystem resilience to climate hazards. Funding will prioritize habitat restoration actions that: demonstrate significant impacts; rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries; contribute to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species; promote climate-resilient ecosystems, especially in tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; and improve economic vitality, including local employment. This solicitation is authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) (BIL, Public Law 117-58), 135 STAT.1356 (Nov. 15, 2021) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA, Public Law 117-169).

This funding opportunity seeks habitat restoration projects that enhance coastal resilience. Coastal areas support the nation's largest and often fastest-growing population centers, as well as key natural assets. Strengthening coastal resilience means preparing and adapting coastal communities to mitigate the impacts of, and more quickly recover after, extreme weather events such as hurricanes, coastal storms, and flooding, as well as longer-term climate hazards, such as sea level rise. Habitat restoration and natural and nature-based infrastructure are critical to doing so, by protecting lives and property; sustaining commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing; recovering threatened and endangered species; and maintaining and fostering vibrant coastal economies. This funding opportunity – along with other opportunities through programs such as the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities – aims to fund projects that support

the overarching goal of enhancing coastal resilience. This funding opportunity is also aligned with actions outlined in the Biden-Harris Administration's Ocean Climate Action Plan, including nature-based solutions that support natural coastal and ocean systems while reducing the impacts of climate threats. This funding opportunity will prioritize high-value, transformative projects that advance resilience and support habitat restoration.

Applicants should address the following set of program priorities: 1) sustaining productive fisheries and strengthening ecosystem resilience; 2) enhancing community resilience to climate hazards and providing other co-benefits; 3) fostering regionally important habitat restoration; and 4) providing benefits to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, including through partnerships. This solicitation will fund projects that demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the geographic region where restoration actions are proposed.

Projects that are most responsive to the program priorities and are more transformative (i.e., have greater positive impact) will be more competitive. Proposals may include the following types of project phases: planning and assessments; feasibility studies; engineering design and permitting; on-the-ground implementation; pre- and/or post-implementation monitoring; or any combination of phases thereof. Proposals may also include capacity-building and stakeholder engagement to support the proposed restoration. Applicants proposing pre-implementation activities should demonstrate how these efforts will support or catalyze subsequent on-the-ground restoration.

Proposals that include on-the-ground implementation will be given priority compared to those that include only pre-implementation activities. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or watershed, and applicants should demonstrate the capacity to manage concurrent habitat restoration projects over multiple years.

NOAA is committed to the goals of advancing equity and support for underserved communities. NOAA encourages applicants to include and demonstrate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through proactive, meaningful, and equitable community engagement in the identification, design, and/or implementation of proposed projects. NOAA also encourages applicants to propose projects with benefits to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, and projects that appropriately consider and elevate local or indigenous knowledge in project design, implementation, and evaluation. Applicants should identify if the project is located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, and/or whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities. This program will advance the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative. Established by Executive Order 14008 on "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," the Justice40 Initiative has established a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain

federal investments in climate, clean energy, and other areas will flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. NOAA encourages a period of performance of up to three years, with the potential for up to five years, if necessary. NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from \$3 million to \$6 million over three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$1 million or more than \$25 million total for the entire award. Funds will be administered by the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation, as directed in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

## A. Program Objective

The principal objective of this solicitation is to support transformational habitat restoration projects that restore marine, estuarine, coastal, or Great Lakes ecosystems, using approaches that enhance community and ecosystem resilience to climate hazards. Funding will prioritize habitat restoration actions that: demonstrate significant impacts; rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries; contribute to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species; promote resilient ecosystems, especially in tribal or underserved communities; and improve economic vitality, including local employment. This solicitation is authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) (BIL, Public Law 117-58), 135 STAT.1356 (Nov. 15, 2021) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA, Public Law 117-169).

Extreme weather events and climate hazards can have significant impacts on coastal ecosystems and human communities. Strengthening ecosystem resilience in a changing climate is critical to promoting the recovery of threatened and endangered species, as well as enhancing the sustainability of commercial and recreational fisheries. Additionally, strengthening the resilience of coastal communities can reduce vulnerability and alleviate negative effects from extreme weather and climate hazards, such as flooding and coastal storms.

This funding opportunity will invest in transformational projects that have the greatest potential to provide holistic benefits, through habitat-based approaches that strengthen both ecosystem and community resilience. Examples of habitat restoration projects that are transformational at a regional or national scale include, but are not limited to: projects that provide significant benefits for ecosystems and community resilience; projects that catalyze broad initiatives or partnerships; large-scale projects; innovative projects, which may include new techniques for restoration; and projects that connect to or build upon other restoration or resilience work in a watershed. Projects that are most responsive to the program priorities and are more transformative will be more competitive, by providing important and lasting changes that make a difference for coastal communities and ecosystems.

NOAA also desires cost sharing to encourage partnerships among government, community, industry, and academia. Though not required, applicants are strongly encouraged to combine NOAA federal funding with formal matching contributions or informal leverage from a broad range of sources in the public and private sectors. Such cost sharing and leveraged

funds are an element considered in the evaluation criteria.

Entire segments of our society have been marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented in efforts to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and adapt to weather and climate impacts, despite being at greater risk due to lack of resources, accessibility constraints, and systemic institutional barriers. This includes tribes and indigenous people, who are disproportionately affected by climate change and face additional institutional barriers in order to adapt to the most severe impacts (Fourth National Climate Assessment). Executive Order 14096 on “Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All” (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/04/26/2023-08955/revitalizing-ournations-commitment-to-environmental-justice-for-all>) and Executive Order 13985 on “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government” (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-raciaequity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>), emphasize the need for federal agencies to take actions to redress unfair disparities and remove barriers to government programs and services. E.O. 14096 places even greater urgency on the federal government to “. . . build upon and strengthen its commitment to deliver environmental justice to all communities across America.” This program will advance the Biden-Harris Administration’s Justice40 Initiative. Established by Executive Order 14008 on “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” the Justice40 Initiative has established a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in climate, clean energy, and other areas will flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.

The following definitions of key terms apply to this funding opportunity.

**Ecosystem resilience.** This term refers to the capacity of an ecosystem to absorb, withstand, respond to, and/or recover rapidly from disturbances linked to extreme weather events and climate hazards. Resilient ecosystems can resist damage from extreme weather events or climate hazards, while retaining or having the ability to recover their inherent structure and ecological function.

**Community resilience.** This term refers to the capacity of a human community to absorb, withstand, respond to, and/or recover rapidly from disturbances linked to extreme weather events and climate hazards. Community resilience can also include the ability to plan and prepare for adverse effects of extreme weather events or climate hazards, and the capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

**Underserved communities.** This term refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic,

as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. Underserved communities are defined in Executive Order 13985:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>

**Meaningful engagement.** This term refers to communities having an opportunity to be an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, and/or leadership for activities that may affect their environment and/or health and well-being. Meaningful engagement relies on the involvement of those potentially affected in a manner that builds trust and addresses barriers to community participation. This ensures that the scope of the activities is inclusive of the priorities and needs of communities, and that the benefits of the activities flow back to the communities.

**Indigenous knowledge (including Tribal Knowledge and Traditional Ecological Knowledge [TEK]):** This term refers to the cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. NOAA recognizes the importance of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge for understanding the environment, adapting to environmental change, and mitigating negative environmental impacts.

**Habitat restoration.** This term applies to techniques or strategies that aim to directly improve the quality and function of habitats, for the purpose of supporting the recovery or sustainability of the target species or fisheries and/or improving community and ecosystem resilience. A variety of habitat types are eligible within this funding opportunity, ranging from marine, estuarine, and coastal ecosystems at the land-sea interface (including coastal rivers), to the freshwater coastal ecosystems of the Great Lakes. Example habitats include, but are not limited to: coral reefs; oyster reefs; coastal wetlands and marshes; freshwater or tidal rivers and streams; shoreline and near-shore ecosystems; seagrass beds; kelp forests and rocky reefs; and mangroves. Applicants with proposals focusing exclusively on fish passage techniques that remove in-stream barriers, such as dams or culverts, are encouraged to reach out to agency contacts (see Section VII) to discuss additional funding opportunities that could be applicable to the proposed work.

**Co-benefits of restoration.** This term refers to the multiple benefits of restoration that extend beyond biologically relevant benefits to target species. This may include: contributions to ecosystem and community resilience; increases in business opportunities; revitalization of public communities; improvements in access to recreational, subsistence, and/or culturally

important fishing opportunities; reductions to safety hazards; and/or reductions in operation and maintenance costs. Co-benefits are often measured through socioeconomic methods.

Nature-based solutions. This term refers to actions that protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use, and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems. These solutions effectively and adaptively address social, economic, and environmental challenges, while simultaneously providing benefits for human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience, and biodiversity.

Coastal areas. This term refers to geographies within coastal shoreline counties (or parishes), or within coastal watershed counties (or parishes). Coastal shoreline counties are directly adjacent to the open ocean, estuaries, or the Great Lakes. Coastal watershed counties are located along inland rivers and streams with a significant impact on coastal and ocean resources.

#### B. Program Priorities

Successful proposals will be those that meet the evaluation criteria (Section V.A) most strongly, including those criteria related to the program priorities described here. Applicants should address the following set of program priorities: 1) sustaining productive fisheries and strengthening ecosystem resilience; 2) enhancing community resilience to climate hazards and providing other co-benefits; 3) fostering regionally important habitat restoration; and 4) providing benefit to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, including through partnerships.

For more information on the program priorities outlined below, applicants should visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

##### 1) Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience.

Applicants should describe how the proposed habitat restoration actions align with relevant plans to recover and/or manage the target species or fisheries. Proposals should also address how restoration will strengthen resilience within the target habitat and the surrounding ecosystem. Potential benefits for fisheries habitat will be evaluated based on how the proposed restoration actions will:

- (a) Contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that are under NOAA jurisdiction (hereafter, Listed Species);
- (b) Sustain or help rebuild fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery



Conservation and Management Act (hereafter, Managed Species), which includes benefits to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for recreationally and commercially important species and their prey;

(c) Enhance the sustainability of saltwater recreational fisheries by the restoration of habitat that supports the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy and Implementation Plans; or

(d) Improve habitat to support native fish species of the Great Lakes.

## 2) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Hazards and Providing Other Co-benefits.

Applicants should describe how the proposed restoration will benefit human populations within or near the project site(s), and how these actions will increase resilience to extreme weather and climate hazards (e.g., storms, flooding, erosion) that are most threatening to the local communities. Applicants may also describe how the proposed work will enhance the ability to plan and prepare for adverse effects of extreme weather events or climate hazards, or provide additional co-benefits to the community (e.g., economic vitality, increased access to natural resources). Co-benefits are defined in Section I.A.

## 3) Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration.

This solicitation will prioritize restoration actions that demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within a defined geographic region. Applicants should describe the context of the proposed work within the landscape, watershed, or other geographically defined boundary. Descriptions should explain how the work may complement other current or proposed restoration efforts, including projects that will help to build climate resilience through other funding opportunities supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (e.g., National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities) or the Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., Climate Resilience Regional Challenge).

Applicants should refer to watershed plans, resiliency plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning, conservation, or management documents, as appropriate, to support the proposed work. Comprehensive planning documents may range in scale and scope from the level of a local watershed plan, to a state- or basin-wide plan. Proposals should identify how the habitat restoration aligns with such comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and if the proposed actions demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the defined geographic area. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or

watershed.

#### 4) Providing Benefit to Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities, Including Through Partnerships.

NOAA is committed to the goals of advancing equity and support for tribal, indigenous, and underserved communities. Applicants should identify if the project is to be carried out in full or in part by a tribal government; if the project is located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; and/or whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities. This is a Justice40 covered program, and applicants should review Section IV.B. “Project Narrative” for information pertaining to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) to assist in identifying disadvantaged communities.

Additional resources for Program Priorities are available at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

### C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the following statutes to provide grants and cooperative agreements for habitat restoration and conservation: Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act 16 U.S.C. 661, as implemented by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a; and Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1535. The NOAA Administrator is authorized under the America COMPETES Act, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 893a, to support formal and informal educational activities at all levels. This solicitation is authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) (BIL, Public Law 117-58), 135 STAT.1356 (Nov. 15, 2021) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA, Public Law 117-169).

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates up to \$240 million will be available under this funding opportunity. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$1 million or more than \$25 million over the entire award period. NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from \$3 million to \$6 million. NOAA expects that only habitat restoration projects with significant ecological impacts, credible and detailed cost estimates,

and construction readiness will be awarded the maximum allowable request (\$25 million).

Funds will be administered by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Any funds provided to successful applicants for subsequent-year funding requests will be based on progress towards stated milestones and availability of funding. This determination is at the discretion of the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD).

Neither NOAA nor the Department of Commerce are responsible for direct costs of application preparation. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for habitat restoration, and the merit and ranking of the applications.

#### B. Project/Award Period

NOAA encourages and anticipates a period of performance of up to three years, with the potential for up to five years, if necessary. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be October 1, 2024. Both federal and non-federal match pre-award costs, incurred up to 90 days prior to the award start date, may be requested and will be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before NOAA GMD offers a grant is at the applicant's own risk. Award periods may be extended, at the discretion of NOAA and based on project needs, up to the extent legally allowable. This is typically a maximum award length of five years.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements, as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, meaning that NOAA expects to be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, collaborating on the scope of work, providing assistance with technical aspects of the habitat restoration, reviewing and commenting on design plans, and reviewing procurement materials to the extent authorized by 2 C.F.R. § 200.325.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, and state, local, and tribal governments. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this solicitation, but may serve as collaborative project partners. Foreign entities can participate as partners (contractors, sub-recipients, or informal collaborators) of a prime recipient based in the U.S.

Applicants must propose work in coastal, marine, or estuarine areas that benefit species or fisheries outlined within the program priorities (Section I.B). See Section I.A. for a definition of coastal areas. Eligible applicants for Great Lakes projects must propose work within one of the eight U.S. Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). Applications that propose projects in the Commonwealth and Territories of the United States, for this solicitation defined as American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, are eligible, but those in the Freely Associated States are not eligible to submit an application.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no non-federal matching requirement for this funding. NOAA desires cost sharing to encourage partnerships among government, community, industry, and academia. To this end, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered within the evaluation criterion entitled "Project Costs" (see Section V.A). NOAA encourages applicants whose proposed initiatives exceed the budgetary limits for this competition to apply to this competition and also for other, complementary federal funding for separate components of their larger initiatives. In these situations, NOAA will coordinate as necessary with other agencies to assure that funding is not duplicated and that the complementary components will support completion of the larger initiative.

Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306 for cost sharing or matching policies. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates, and who are planning to provide cost sharing, may find it convenient to propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been federally approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to Section IV.F "Funding Restrictions" for information on indirect costs. Refer to Section II.B "Project/Award Period" and Section VI.A. "Pre-Award Costs" for information on pre-award costs.

For applications including non-federal match funds within the proposed budget, the ratio of approved NOAA funds to non-federal match funds will be legally binding within the award document signed by NOAA's GMD, if the application is selected for funding. NOAA is under no obligation to amend the match contributions once the award document is signed by

the recipient, but the amount may be amended based on extenuating circumstances. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions.

### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Applications through Grants.gov must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Late applications may not be considered for funding. Paper applications received later than seven business days following the post-mark due date and time will not be accepted. Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to Grants.gov, a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt. Applicants should consider the possibility of unforeseen impacts from natural hazards that could affect Internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before the application due date. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations that impact the ability to submit application packages may not result in changes to the application deadline. Information regarding electronic submission through Grants.gov is contained in Section IV.G. Applications must contain all required forms. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. Information regarding electronic submission through Grants.gov is contained in Section IV.G. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$1 million or more than \$25 million over the entire award.

The following information describes ineligible project proposal types and activities:

- 1) Proposals that focus solely on marine debris prevention and removal are not eligible. To find out about funding opportunities related to marine debris, please check with the NOAA Marine Debris Program and the National Sea Grant College Program at <https://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov> and <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding>
- 2) Proposals that focus solely on acquisition of real property are not eligible.
- 3) Proposals that focus solely on beach renourishment for recreational purposes are not eligible.
- 4) Proposals addressing hard infrastructure only for water quality improvement are not eligible. Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, elimination of combined sewer outfalls, replacement of failing septic systems, and implementation of agricultural animal waste management plans. However, projects that improve water quality through the creation or enhancement of fisheries habitat are eligible, as are projects that increase the amount of streamflow (i.e., water storage projects).
- 5) Activities that are required by a separate local, state, or federal consent decree, court

order, statute, or regulation are not eligible. Applicants planning to combine grant or matching funds with mitigation should review the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources; Final Rule at 73 Fed. Reg. 19594 (April 10, 2008). NOAA plans to follow the approach adopted by some other federal agencies on Page 19636 that describes scenarios where mitigation credits may or may not be obtained in association with federal financial incentives.

6) Effectiveness monitoring and research are not eligible project types. The NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation values effectiveness monitoring and research, but funds are not included within this solicitation to support monitoring and research-focused projects. Effectiveness monitoring examines how well the project performs, is longer-term than implementation monitoring, and often requires detailed field investigations of multiple physical, biological, and geochemical processes. Implementation monitoring, as discussed in Section IV.B and V.A.2(c), is an eligible activity, as is the tracking of performance measures and metrics. To find out more about effectiveness monitoring and regional contacts with which to discuss ideas, visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects>

#### IV. Application and Submission Information

##### A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), contact [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@Grants.gov](mailto:support@Grants.gov). Information about the recommended format for applications is contained in Section IV.B. The instructions for these forms are available at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>

##### B. Content and Form of Application

A complete, standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted, as described below. Each proposal must include the following federal application forms. The Standard Form (SF)-424 family and form instructions are available in the [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) application package, but may be downloaded from: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html>

- 1) SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance
- 2) SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-construction Programs
- 3) SF-424B: Assurances for Non-construction Programs

- 4) CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying
- 5) SF-LLL (if applicable): Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

In addition to the federal application forms, NOAA recommends the following components as part of a complete application package. Page limits assume an 11- or 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Components should be organized into a maximum of three PDF files outlined below, with a maximum length of 75 combined pages. Per the Grants.gov FAQs, please limit all attachments to a total of 200MB to reduce potential for submission errors (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>).

- PDF 1. Project Summary and Project Narrative (20 page limit)
- PDF 2. Budget Narrative (10 page limit)
- PDF 3. Supplemental Materials and Project Designs (45 page limit)

Reviewers will only evaluate the first 75 pages of the submitted materials. The application should follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A) to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The information provided below may help to address the evaluation criteria.

PDF 1. Project Summary and Project Narrative (20 page limit).

Project Summary (2 page limit).

- 1) Applicant Organization
- 2) Project Title
- 3) Site Location. Include the geographic coordinates and the nearest town or watershed. If multiple sites are proposed, please include geographic coordinates for each site.
- 4) Brief Project Description. Describe the extent to which the proposed work aligns with the stated program objective (Section I.A) and program priorities (Section I.B). The description should outline the expected benefits for the target species or fisheries, and how ecosystem resilience will be strengthened. Explain how your proposed work will enhance community resilience to climate hazards. Describe the proposed work within the context of the landscape, watershed, or other geographically defined boundary. The description should identify how the restoration aligns with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and if the proposed actions demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the geographic area. Identify if the project is located within tribal, indigenous, and/or

underserved communities and/or whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities.

5) Timeline. Provide a timeline of all project activities. This includes all work to be supported with requested NOAA funds, and any non-federal formal matching contributions or informal leverage.

6) Funding Request. Outline the total request for NOAA funds for each year of the project period. If non-federal matching contributions are proposed, include the status of the funds (e.g., not applied for; pending; secured). If other financial support beyond NOAA federal funds and non-federal match funds will be used to complete the proposed work, outline the sources and amount of these leveraged funds. If you have submitted (or plan to submit) your proposal to other relevant funding opportunities, please identify the funding source and/or title(s) of the competition(s), amount of funds requested, and approximate decision date(s) for anticipated award selection. If space is limited, provide a summary here and include a full description in the Supplemental Materials.

Project Narrative (18 page limit).

Proposals are evaluated based on the criteria described in Section V.A. Please review the evaluation criteria for a full description of topics to include in the project narrative. The following information provides guidance for how to respond to the evaluation criteria in context, which may or may not apply to the project type you are proposing. For more information on program priorities and other goals outlined below, applicants should visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

#### 1. Importance / Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals.

(a) Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience. Applicants should identify one or more species targeted by the proposed habitat restoration, and describe the general historic and current status of the population(s). Applicants should describe how the proposed actions support the recovery or sustainability of Listed Species, Managed Species, saltwater recreational fisheries, or native fish species of the Great Lakes. For proposals addressing Listed Species, proposed actions should align with ESA Recovery Plans. For proposals targeting Managed Species, proposed actions should be consistent with Fishery Management Plans and should address benefits to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for recreationally and commercially important species and their prey. For proposals addressing saltwater recreational fisheries, applicants should identify how proposed actions align with



one of the six guiding principles of the National Saltwater Recreational Angler Policy. The policy's goal of supporting sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries resources, including healthy marine and estuarine habitats, is guided by the principle of supporting ecosystem conservation and enhancement through restoration and science-based enhancements and conservation of forage fish. For proposals targeting the Great Lakes, applicants should describe how the habitat restoration actions will benefit native fish species.

Applicants should describe and quantify a measurable effect that the restoration actions will have on the ecosystem (e.g., acres of habitat restored, stream miles opened for fish passage). Descriptions should provide context for the current condition of the habitat, and outline the issues that are limiting recovery or sustainability of the target species or fisheries. Proposals should also address how restoration will strengthen resilience to climate change within the target habitat and the surrounding ecosystem. Proposals can describe the disturbance or stressors that will be minimized or prevented, or how restoration actions will strengthen capacity for adaptation to environmental changes.

(b) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Hazards and Providing Other Co-benefits. Applicants should describe how the proposed habitat restoration will benefit human populations within or near the project site(s), and how habitat restoration actions will promote resilience to the climate hazards that are most threatening to the local communities. Applicants may also describe how the proposed work will enhance the ability to plan and prepare for adverse effects of extreme weather events or climate hazards. Examples of co-benefits include, but are not limited to: protection from flooding and extreme weather events; reduction in erosion impacts; increases in job opportunities; improvements in access to recreational, subsistence, and cultural fishing opportunities; and creation of public spaces. Proposals should include descriptions of anticipated resilience benefits and other co-benefits that will result from habitat restoration within the spatial and temporal context of the proposed activities. Co-benefits are defined in Section I.A.

Proposals may include specific metrics within the Project Narrative to capture the impact or scale of the proposed work on community resilience and other expected co-benefits such as public safety or community enhancement. Public safety benefits may include infrastructure improvements, removal of physical hazards, or flood risk reduction, with potential metrics such as: number of structures improved; number of structures protected from flooding or storm surge; or changes in flood heights. Community enhancement benefits may include recreational or economic improvements, with potential metrics such as number of new recreational access points or avoided or reduced maintenance costs. For more information on developing socioeconomic performance metrics for restoration projects, applicants should visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/priorities->

## habitat-restoration-grants

(c) **Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration.** Applicants should explain why the proposed work is meaningful within the selected geographic region. Descriptions should explain how the work may complement other current or proposed restoration efforts, including projects that will help to build climate resilience through other funding opportunities supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (e.g., National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities) and Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., Climate Resilience Regional Challenge). Applicants should refer to watershed plans or other fishery-related strategic planning, conservation, or management documents, as appropriate to the proposed work. Proposals should identify how the restoration aligns with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and if the proposed actions demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the defined geographic area. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or watershed.

(d) **Providing Benefit to Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities, Including Through Partnerships.** Applicants should identify if the proposed work is to be carried out in full or in part by a tribal government or if the project is located within a tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved community. Applicants should indicate whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities and how those benefits will be measured.

As needed, to assist with identifying and assessing the marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities that are connected to their proposed restoration actions, NOAA encourages the use of the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) (at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>) as the primary mapping tool. Applicants are encouraged to use the information available through CEJST, other relevant tools, and direct engagement of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities to assist in assessing how the benefits of a project will reverse or mitigate the burdens of disadvantage.

## 2. Technical / Scientific Merit.

(a) **Project Methodology.** Applicants should provide evidence to support the feasibility of the techniques, and address whether the methods are technically sound and safe for the public. Proposals that include multiple sites should describe the restoration methods for each

location. For each restoration site, applicants should clearly identify the project phase(s) (e.g., feasibility study, engineering and design, on-the-ground implementation) and the proposed restoration techniques.

(b) Project Detail. The project narrative should include a timeline with key milestones and deliverables identified and detail how the actions will be completed within the specified time period. If multiple restoration sites are included within one proposal, the proposed actions should be fully described for each site. Applicants should identify interim milestones that correspond to funding year increments. This includes identifying all consultation and permitting requirements and the current document status (e.g. not applied for, pending, secured), and incorporating the likely award start date and species-specific work windows. For projects with permits or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents completed or under development, please indicate the status and level of NEPA review (Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement), lead federal agency, contact information for the lead agency person, and where public copies of the document are available. See also Section VI.B.4 of this announcement.

(c) Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation. Applicants should describe the habitat-based metrics or other quantitative performance measures that will be used to evaluate the success of the proposed restoration actions. Specifically, on-the-ground restoration projects should include ecological targets that can be evaluated within approximately one-year post-implementation. Proposals that focus solely on pre-implementation activities, such as planning, feasibility, and/or engineering and design, should include baseline monitoring. Proposals requesting funding for on-the-ground implementation activities should include a Monitoring Plan (2 page limit) as part of the Supplemental Materials. Applicants should be willing to work with NOAA to adjust planned monitoring activities, if necessary, to ensure that the proposed parameters are appropriate and meet the requirements below.

Proposals that include one of the NOAA Restoration Center's four primary restoration methods (coral reef restoration; oyster reef restoration; hydrologic restoration; fish passage) should incorporate the applicable implementation monitoring parameters found in the NOAA Restoration Center Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance. The guidance document provides an overview of the preferred structure for Monitoring Plans. The monitoring guidance and regional contact persons can be found at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects#more-information>

Proposals that do NOT include one of the NOAA Restoration Center's four primary restoration methods named above should propose sufficient, cost-effective monitoring

metrics that will assess whether the restoration actions were carried out as designed. Proposals should: 1) include parameters that evaluate short-term structural changes at the project site(s) (e.g., as-built surveys), and may also include a basic measure of success (e.g., presence/absence of target species); 2) propose pre-implementation data collection, when applicable; 3) include parameters with quantitative or clearly defined targets; and 4) include parameters with targets that can be evaluated within approximately one year after project implementation.

While the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation values effectiveness monitoring and research, funds are not included within this solicitation to support these efforts. Effectiveness monitoring examines how well the project performs, is longer-term than implementation monitoring, and often requires detailed field investigations of multiple physical, biological, and geochemical processes. Proposals for effectiveness monitoring that do not qualify for other NOAA competitive funding may be eligible for NOAA's Broad Agency Announcement, posted on Grants.gov.

(d) Sustainability. The narrative should describe future management, beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s) so the effects of the funded project(s) can benefit the target species and habitat into the future. If applicable, a description of a landowner agreement may contribute to this element. For new or replacement structures, the estimated design life of a project should be noted, including any factors (such as changing weather patterns) that may shorten the expected functional life of the project. Applicants should also describe how the proposed restoration design, methodology, and techniques provide for ecosystem resilience to extreme weather events, self-sustaining habitats, or adaptation to potential climate change impacts at the project site. An operations and maintenance plan should be considered when applicants are proposing to install structures that require ongoing operation and maintenance in order to be effective, such as fish passage devices, fishways, or tide gates. The proposal should include discussion of an operations and management plan that specifies the entity responsible for the structure(s) and how they will be operated and maintained throughout the life of the structure(s) to ensure lasting habitat benefits.

Applicants proposing to enhance existing tidal wetlands, including beneficial reuse of dredged material to increase substrate elevation to keep pace with sea level rise and subsidence effects, should provide information on the source of the dredged materials, the site-specific rate of sea level rise and subsidence, target substrate elevation(s), and how the restored site is expected to keep pace with the rate of sea level rise and subsidence. Proposals for oyster reef restoration should identify whether the site(s) will be located in areas protected from harvest, and whether the site(s) will serve as a larval source within the

targeted ecosystem. Proposals including living shoreline techniques should provide site specific context to demonstrate that the specified design components are appropriate for the location. If plants or animals will be introduced to the restoration site(s), include the origin/source and regional genetic stock of the plant or animal, and describe the proximity to any existing or remnant sources of similar type in the area.

(e) Data Management Plan. Applicants should include a Data Management Plan under PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs). See Section VI.B. of this announcement, regarding NOAA's Data Sharing Policy.

### 3. Overall Qualification of Applicant.

(a) Restoration and Conservation Qualifications. Within the project narrative, applicants should describe the restoration and conservation qualifications of the project team (staff and/or partners), including experience with planning, design, engineering, implementation, and/or monitoring for habitat restoration projects. Resumes or curriculum vitae (CVs) for up to five (5) key personnel should be included within PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs), and the documents should highlight relevant education, experiences, and training.

(b) Management Capacity. Within the project narrative, applicants should describe the project team's ability to successfully manage a federal award. Applicants should demonstrate a strong capacity to maintain financial and administrative records and fulfill reporting requirements. Within the attached resumes or CVs, applicants should highlight relevant experience with management of federal funds or other significant grant awards. Applicants should address whether the project team has the capacity to complete the proposed work on time, even in the face of adverse conditions.

4. Project Costs. Applicants should follow the guidance provided under PDF 2. Budget Narrative.

### 5. Outreach and Education.

(a) Stakeholder Support. NOAA encourages robust public support for restoration projects, as evidenced by letters from a diverse range of participants and partners. A diverse range of groups may include community associations, local environmental justice organizations, business / agricultural groups, adjacent landowners, and state, local, and tribal governments. If landowner support is essential to implementing the restoration actions, a letter of support or permission should be included. Applicants should indicate which letters, if any, are from

identified underserved communities or tribes. Letters of stakeholder support (and landowner support, if applicable) should be included in PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs).

(b) Inclusive Planning and Engagement. Proposals should include opportunities for meaningful engagement of local communities and outline how any barriers to engaging in project planning or accessing the project benefits will be addressed, with a focus on tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, when relevant. Applicants should describe how the project(s) will meet the holistic needs of the community, and may wish to consider developing partner relationships (including contracts or subawards) with other organizations to facilitate the inclusion of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities.

A clearly outlined strategy to engage a diverse range of community groups in restoration actions should be included. Applicants who are interested in partnering with conservation corps, veterans groups, Minority Serving Institutions, or other organizations should describe how they plan to implement those partnerships and outline the objectives of their participation. Meaningful engagement concepts and examples of activities are described in the NOAA Restoration Center Meaningful Engagement of Tribes and Underserved Communities overview document available at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants#how-do-i-demonstrate-the-meaningful-engagement-of-local-tribal-and-or-underserved-communities-in-my-project?>

(c) Community Outreach and Education. Applicants should describe the strategy to share information and educate the public about the restoration actions. Strategies may include, but are not limited to: various formats of outreach content (e.g., signage, newsletters, online content); materials in multiple languages, if applicable; events and volunteer opportunities for community members; informal education and mentoring for interns or early career professionals, including those from underrepresented groups in ocean and atmospheric science and policy careers; opportunities for press visits; or other outreach that encourages support for restoration and environmental stewardship. Applicants should consider collaborating with local community members to incorporate volunteer, education, and/or hands-on opportunities for their communities.

#### PDF 2. Budget Narrative (10 page limit)

Reviewers will evaluate project costs by reviewing the budget narrative. Project costs should be divided into the following categories, also referred to as SF-424A Object Classes: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, and Other. The sum of

funds requested under these Object Classes should be recorded as Total Direct Costs. The costs required for organizational operation that cannot be easily associated with an individual project or program should be recorded as Indirect Costs. Organizations with a federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) should include a copy of the approved NICRA in PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs). Organizations without a NICRA may claim the 10% de minimis rate for calculating indirect charges on the Modified Total Direct Costs or may negotiate a rate, as outlined below (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 for definitions). Refer to Sections IV.F. and VI.B. of this announcement for more information about indirect costs. All Object Class costs in the budget narrative should equal those entered on the SF-424A. These totals should also be recorded on the SF-424A. NOAA staff will review budget information in recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, necessary, and realistic.

For projects with contractual components, applicants must follow procurement standards set forth in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317-200.327. If the proposal is considered for funding, NOAA Grants Management Division reviewers will be looking for information on the procurement methods used for each contract, as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.320. Applicants are encouraged to provide separate budgets for each contract and they must provide budgets for each contract in excess of \$250,000, to determine whether proposed costs are reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable. For contracts that are not yet in place at the time of submitting the proposal, the budget narrative must include an explanation of how contractual costs were estimated and what procurement methods they will use to select contractors.

In addition to dividing the budget narrative into Object Classes, separating costs by milestone or purpose may be valuable to reviewers. Award costs should be divided into annual funding requests to show anticipated expenditure rates. If NOAA funding will be used to complete part of a broad-scale project, a budget overview for the entire project should be provided to demonstrate how the NOAA request relates to the overall project budget and how NOAA funds are needed for successful implementation.

If a project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, applicants should include the amount requested or secured from other funding sources, and whether the funds are federal or non-federal in origin. Applicants should clearly indicate if funds are proposed as official, non-federal match, or if the funds are informal leverage. Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306 for explanations of match funds, which must generally be used during the award period. Match is entered on federal forms, recorded on award documents, and becomes a legally binding component of the award. Leverage refers to all other funding support that contributes to completion of the project(s). Leverage can be either federal or non-federal in origin, and can include funds expended toward the project(s) either before or

during the award period. The NOAA Restoration Center has provided guidance regarding the level of detail required to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, necessary, and realistic in the “Supplemental Instructions” at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-budget-guidance>

### PDF 3. Supplemental Materials and Project Designs (45 page limit)

All supplemental materials should be combined into a single PDF, including a cover page that lists all of the documents and associated page numbers. The cover page does not count toward the 45 page limit. The compiled PDF should be uploaded under the “Other Attachments Form” in Grants.gov.

- 1) Include maps and/or aerial photos with nearby towns and/or roads labeled and with the site location(s) highlighted.
- 2) Include resumes or CVs for up to five key personnel (maximum of 1 page per person), as described in the guidance (Section IV.B) under Overall Qualification of Applicant.
- 3) Include letters of support from a diverse range of partners, as described in the guidance (Section IV.B) under Outreach and Education. If applicable, include a letter documenting support or permission from any private owners or public land managers to conduct work at the proposed site(s).
- 4) Include a Data Management Plan (2 page limit). See Section VI.B.5 of this announcement for a complete description of NOAA’s Data and Publication Sharing Directive for NOAA Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts.
- 5) If applicable, include a Monitoring Plan (2 page limit) for proposals that involve on-the-ground implementation, as described in the guidance (Section IV.B) for the “Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation” sub-criterion under Technical / Scientific Merit.
- 6) If a proposal includes fish passage activities within Great Lakes habitat, include appropriate documentation demonstrating consultation with, and support from, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sea Lamprey Control Program.
- 7) Include any other relevant supporting materials, such as: a federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA); documentation of confirmed sources of formal, non-federal matching contributions or informal leveraged funds; additional site photos; etc.



8) If available, project designs and basis of design reports should be included in the application in order for reviewers to comprehensively assess the technical merit of the proposed restoration. Relevant sections of construction specifications, scopes of work for services, and cost estimates may also be provided. Please do not attach feasibility studies or watershed plans. The critical components of those documents should be summarized in the Project Narrative. Please remember that reviewers will only evaluate a maximum of 75 pages for each application package.

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

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

Each applicant, unless the applicant has an exception approved by the federal awarding agency under 2 C.F.R. § 25.110(d), is required to: (1) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (2) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and (3) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. 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.

Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be periodically renewed. On April 4, 2022, the federal government began using a new UEI number provided by SAM. The organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed to receive a UEI, which is provided by SAM. If an entity is already registered in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), the new UEI has already been assigned and is viewable in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov). This includes inactive registrations.

#### D. Submission Dates and Times

The application deadline is November 17, 2023, at 11:59 PM Eastern time. See Section III.C and IV.G. for more information.

#### E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, contact the official listed in Section VII of this announcement for referral information. The information can also be reviewed at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SPOC-list-as-of-2023.pdf>

#### F. Funding Restrictions

The budget may include indirect (facilities & administrative [F&A]) costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. As defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, indirect (F&A) costs are incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance). A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect (F&A) cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), an applicant that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to: charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC); describe all costs as direct costs in the budget narrative; or establish a new rate through their cognizant agency for indirect costs as defined under 2 C.F.R. § 200.1. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Raishan Adams, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or [raishan.adams@noaa.gov](mailto:raishan.adams@noaa.gov).

#### G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit applications electronically through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). Users of Grants.gov will be able to create an online application workspace to submit the application. If an applicant has problems accessing the online workspace at Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@Grants.gov](mailto:support@Grants.gov). Applications must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Late applications may not be considered for funding. We highly recommend that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov, as registration with SAM is required (Section IV.C), and several steps are required to verify the staff allowed to submit applications in Grants.gov.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt; the second validates that the submission is acceptable and timely; and the third confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If all notifications are not received, applicants should contact the Grants.gov help desk to confirm the application was successfully submitted. After submitting the application package, applicants should download a copy of the submitted application for offline record-keeping and to verify the contents of the submission zip file. Grants.gov recommends downloading the submitted application via the Details tab of the workspace and verifying the contents of each file in the zip (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>).

Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to Grants.gov, a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt for paper applications. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received later than seven business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

Electronic applications are strongly encouraged; however, paper applications will also be considered. Paper applications should be sent to: NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Fisheries (F/HC3), 1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14853, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: 2023 Transformational Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants. All applications MUST contain ALL required forms. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. Applicants are responsible for tracking their own applications. Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration or support, shall be submitted together in one package. Please notify the contact official in Section VII of this announcement by email regarding any paper submissions by mail, and/or for any technical difficulties using Grants.gov.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA Evaluation Criteria and the respective weights specified below. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive. See Section IV. B for suggested details to address the evaluation criteria.

1. Importance / Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (35 points): This criterion ascertains the extent to which there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, tribal, state, or local activities. For this

competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

(a) Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience. To what extent will the proposed actions restore habitat for the benefit of: 1) Listed Species, through actions that are prioritized in ESA Recovery Plans; 2) Managed Species, as described in Fishery Management Plans; 3) saltwater recreational fisheries, as described in the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy and Implementation Plans; or 4) native fish species in the Great Lakes? To what extent will the habitat restoration help to strengthen ecosystem resilience? Proposals including on-the-ground implementation will be prioritized. For proposals that solely include pre-implementation activities, such as planning, feasibility, and/or engineering and design, what is the likelihood that the proposed work will provide direct habitat benefits and strengthen ecosystem resilience, once implemented? (11 points)

0 – proposed actions will not result in habitat restoration, and no specific ecosystem or fisheries benefits are identified; 6 – proposed actions will result in a moderate level of habitat restoration, with some potential for strengthened ecosystem resilience and direct benefits to the target species or fisheries; 11 - proposed actions include on-the-ground implementation and will result in a substantial level of habitat restoration, with high likelihood of strengthened ecosystem resilience and direct benefits to the target species or fisheries.

(b) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Hazards and Providing Other Co-benefits. To what extent will the proposed actions enhance community resilience to climate hazards? To what extent will the proposed actions result in additional co-benefits to the community, which could include socioeconomic metrics that are targeted to the proposed work? For pre-implementation activities (such as future project development planning and feasibility studies, engineering and design, permitting, and stakeholder engagement) and/or organizational capacity building, what is the likelihood that the proposed work will result in enhanced community resilience or other co-benefits, once restoration actions are implemented? (9 points)

0 – proposed actions will not enhance community resilience to climate hazards or provide other co-benefits; 5 – proposed actions will result in moderate enhancement of community resilience to climate hazards, with potential to provide other co-benefits; 9 – proposed actions include on-the-ground implementation and will result in substantial enhancement of community resilience to climate hazards, with a high likelihood of providing other co-benefits.

(c) Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration. To what extent does the proposal

demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the geographic region where restoration work is proposed? Does the proposal describe the relative importance and context within the geographically defined boundary, and identify if the proposed restoration actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources? (10 points)

0 – no evidence that proposed actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and no evidence is provided to demonstrate importance within the region; 5 – proposed actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, but the proposal lacks evidence regarding level of importance and transformative potential within the region; 10 – proposed actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and proposal provides evidence to demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the region.

(d) Providing Benefit to Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities, Including Through Partnerships. Has the applicant demonstrated that the proposed work is located within a tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved community, as defined within Section I.A? Has the applicant demonstrated alignment with stated priorities and needs of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities? Will the benefits of restoration flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities? (5 points)

0 – proposed actions will not benefit tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; 3 – proposed actions have strong potential of providing benefit to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; 5 – proposed actions are located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities and/or have a high likelihood of providing benefit to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities.

2. Technical / Scientific Merit (25 points): This criterion assesses whether the restoration activity or approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant has described a realistic and thorough restoration plan that includes:

(a) Project Methodology. To what extent are the proposed actions feasible from a biological, engineering, and community perspective, including whether the approach is technically sound and safe for the public? (7 points)

0 – proposal does not provide support for the methodology; 4 – proposal provides moderate support for the feasibility of the methodology; 7 – proposal provides substantial support for the feasibility of the methodology.

(b) Project Detail. To what extent does the proposal completely describe the proposed restoration actions, including a realistic timeline, key milestones and outcomes to be achieved, and the status of permitting and environmental compliance? For projects with multiple sites, does the proposal include sufficient detail about the proposed work at each site to assess the merit of the planned activities? (7 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding restoration actions, realistic timeline, key milestones, and project status; 4 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding restoration actions, realistic timeline, key milestones, and project status; 7 – proposal provides substantial detail regarding restoration actions, realistic timeline, key milestones, and project status.

(c) Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation. To what extent will the project measure near-term implementation success, following the provided guidance (see Section IV.B: Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation)? If no baseline monitoring will be performed for pre-implementation activities, does the applicant clearly explain the rationale for the lack of monitoring or evaluation measures? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not include habitat-based monitoring metrics to evaluate project success, or does not provide a rationale for the lack of assessment measures; 3 – proposal includes satisfactory habitat-based monitoring metrics to evaluate project success, or provides a satisfactory rationale for the lack of assessment measures; 5 – proposal includes meaningful habitat-based monitoring metrics or other performance measures to evaluate project success, or provides a clear rationale for the lack of monitoring or assessment measures.

(d) Sustainability. To what extent does the proposal describe the sustainability of the methodology and the susceptibility of the project site(s) to climate change impacts? Has the applicant described future management, beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s)? Does the proposed methodology enhance ecosystem resilience to extreme weather events and adaptation to potential climate change impacts anticipated at the project site, and throughout the watershed? Is there evidence that the applicant has chosen, or has a plan to select, the most self-sustaining restoration techniques to accomplish the proposed goals? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding sustainability of the methodology; 3 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding sustainability of the methodology; 5 – proposal provides substantial detail regarding sustainability of the methodology.

(e) Data Management Plan. Has the proposal included a Data Management Plan, as outlined in Section VI.B.5? If no data will be collected through the project, the applicant must clearly explain the rationale for the lack of data collection in order to receive points. (1 point)

0 – proposal does not include a Data Management Plan, or a rationale for the lack of data collection; 1 – proposal includes a sufficient Data Management Plan, or a sufficient rationale for the lack of data collection.

3. Overall Qualification of Applicant (10 points): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to support the proposed award. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following (as demonstrated by attached resumes or CVs that highlight relevant project management and financial management, and accomplishments of the key technical and financial staff):

(a) Restoration and Conservation Qualifications. Does the applicant demonstrate the capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work? Does the project team (staff and/or partners) demonstrate the necessary education and experience in planning, design, engineering, implementation, and/or monitoring efforts, in order to successfully carry out the scale and scope of the project? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides no documentation of capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work; 3 – proposal provides documentation of adequate capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work; 5 – proposal provides documentation of substantial capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work.

(b) Management Capacity. Does the applicant describe the necessary experience, facilities, equipment, and administrative resources available to successfully fulfill the responsibilities associated with managing a federal award? Does the applicant demonstrate an ability to maintain financial and administrative records, and fulfill reporting requirements? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides no description of experience or available resources to manage the award; 3 – proposal describes adequate experience and available resources to manage the award; 5 – proposal describes extensive experience with federal grants (or grants of similar complexity) and available resources to manage the award.

4. Project Costs (15 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the proposed needs and time-frame. For this competition, applications will be evaluated on the following:

(a) Budget Detail. Has the applicant provided a budget that includes sufficient detail, divided into SF-424A Object Classes? Does the budget clearly outline the NOAA funding request and, if applicable, any other potential funding sources, such as non-federal match? If funds are requested for partial support of a broader restoration effort, or for projects with multiple sites and/or phases, does the proposal include the full project budget and/or a budget for each site or project phase? (3 points)

0 – proposal does not provide a detailed budget; 2 – proposal provides a moderately detailed budget; 3 – proposal provides a very detailed budget.

(b) Funding Allocation and Cost-effectiveness. Does the budget allocate the majority of direct costs within the federal funding request to support the proposed habitat restoration actions (e.g., project planning, feasibility, engineering and design, implementation monitoring, and/or on-the-ground implementation), compared to the percentage used for activities that are not supporting the proposed projects? Has the applicant demonstrated that a significant overall benefit will be generated at a reasonable cost, based on the applicant's stated objectives? If funds are requested for capacity-building, does the applicant demonstrate how these efforts will support the proposed restoration? (7 points)

0 – budget is not cost-effective, and allocates only a small amount of direct federal funds to support the proposed habitat restoration activities; 4 – budget is moderately cost-effective, and allocates a moderate amount of direct federal funds to support the proposed habitat restoration activities; 7 – budget is very cost-effective, and allocates all direct federal funds to support the proposed habitat restoration activities.

(c) Cost-sharing and Leveraging Funds. To what extent will the applicant complement NOAA's investment with other funding sources, including formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal leverage? Confirmed matching and/or leveraged funding sources should be documented in the Supplemental Materials. Note whether the other funding sources are non-federal or federal, and whether the funds are secured or pending. (5 points)

0 – budget does not include any formal, non-federal matching contributions or informal, leveraged funds; 3 – budget includes formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal, leveraged funds, with a combined total that is less than a 1:1 ratio of matching or leveraged funds to NOAA funds; 5- budget includes formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal, leveraged funds, with a combined total that meets or exceeds a 1:1 ratio of matching or leveraged funds to NOAA funds.



5. Outreach and Education (15 points): NOAA assesses whether the project is based on broad community support and the award can deliver a focused and effective outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the nation's natural resources through habitat restoration. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

(a) Stakeholder Support. Does the proposal demonstrate a broad base of stakeholder and community support from partners that are meaningfully contributing to the project? Has the applicant provided support letters from a diverse range of actively contributing partners (and from the landowner, if applicable)? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not demonstrate a wide base of stakeholder and community support; 3 – proposal demonstrates moderate community support; 5 – proposal demonstrates substantial community support through a diverse set of partners.

(b) Inclusive Planning and Engagement. Does the proposal demonstrate early and meaningful engagement of the local community, including tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, in decision-making processes? Does the proposal describe how any barriers to engaging in project planning and/or accessing the project benefits will be addressed? Is there a clearly outlined strategy to maintain engagement of a diverse range of community groups, including underserved communities, in the proposed restoration actions? Engagement can occur directly, or in collaboration with a local partner, including through contracts and subawards. (5 points)

0 – proposal does not describe an engagement strategy; 3 – proposal describes an adequate engagement strategy; 5 – proposal describes a meaningful engagement strategy, and includes tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities in the process.

(c) Community Outreach and Education. Does the proposal include an outreach and education strategy to share information about restoration goals and results to a broad and diverse audience? The strategy may include traditional forms of outreach but may also include informal education and mentoring or hands-on activities that encourage future habitat restoration and conservation actions? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not include an outreach strategy; 3 – proposal includes an adequate outreach strategy; 5 – proposal includes a meaningful outreach strategy, and has strong potential to encourage future habitat restoration and conservation actions.

#### B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative screening to determine if the

packages are eligible and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications are screened to ensure that they were received by the deadline date, that the applicant is eligible to apply, and that the application includes a project narrative, budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B. NOAA is not required to screen applications before the submission deadline, to identify deficiencies that would cause the application to be rejected or to receive a poor evaluation. However, if deficiencies are identified by NOAA or the applicant before the deadline, the applicant may correct any deficiencies by submitting a revised application. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it.

Eligible applications will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process to determine how well they meet the program priorities and evaluation criteria of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. Eligible applications will be evaluated by three or more merit reviewers as part of a technical review based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. After the technical review, a panel may convene to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official regarding which proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities (Sections I.A and I.B). The panel will be composed of qualified persons with appropriate subject-matter expertise who may be from federal, state, or tribal agencies, for profit or non-profit organizations, or academic institutions. To the extent that non-federal panelists are involved, the panel will not provide consensus advice. The panel may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications.

If convened, the panel will be presented with the top-ranked applications, per the results of the technical review. Panelists will also receive the technical review scores and comments for each application. The panelists will individually rate top-ranked proposals on the following scale:

- 1 – Fair: application marginally addresses the program objective and priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was moderately responsive to the evaluation criteria;
- 2 – Good: application adequately addresses the program objective and priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was strongly responsive to the evaluation criteria;
- 3 – Excellent: application exceptionally addresses the program objective and priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was highly responsive to the evaluation criteria.

If a panel is held, the panel's ranked list will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding. If a panel is not held, the technical review ranking will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending

applications for funding.

If an application is recommended for funding, staff from the NOAA will contact the applicant to negotiate a final application package. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. In the event further funding becomes available after the initial selection, NOAA may select additional proposals without repeating the competitive process. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award.

NOAA may choose to award partial funding as part of a multi-year award. Once funds are awarded, recipients of multi-year awards will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years for the same award. NOAA expects, but is not obligated, to provide additional funding to multi-year awards in subsequent years. In this case, a budget narrative and SF-424A that identifies each separate year of requested funding will be required prior to an award offer. Adding funds to multi-year awards is contingent on the availability of funds and satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of NOAA.

The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. The NOAA Grants Officer makes the final approval decision and issues an award, as described in Section VI.A. and B.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted will be kept on file in accordance with NOAA records requirements and then destroyed.

#### C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will recommend applications for funding in rank order, unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications.

- 1) Availability of funding;
- 2) Program priorities and policy factors set out in Sections I.A and I.B;

- 3) Balance/distribution of funds by: a) geographic area, b) type of institutions, c) type of applicants, d) research areas, or e) project types;
- 4) Whether the proposal duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
- 5) Applicant's prior award performance;
- 6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups (including the extent to which projects benefit tribes, indigenous, and/or underserved, marginalized, underrepresented, environmental justice, and/or disadvantaged communities); and
- 7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation (Section VI.B) before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA GMD.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants should anticipate the earliest start date for awards will be October 1, 2024.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

**PRE-AWARD COSTS.** Per 2 C.F.R. § 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA, and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.460). NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 90 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

**GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE.** Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant or cooperative 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.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

#### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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 <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>

RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS. For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, 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.

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's electronic grants management system at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at: <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>

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 electronic grants management 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>

**HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH.** For research projects involving Human Subjects an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or an exemption determination will be required in accordance with DOC 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>

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA).** NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500\\_1508.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.** Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA.

Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

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

**DATA SHARING PLAN.** 1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards. 2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. 3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new

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

More information can be found on NOAA's Data Management Procedures at: [https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data\\_Sharing\\_Directive\\_v3.0\\_remediated.pdf](https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf) and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information: <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information>

**NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY.** 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>

**SCIENCE INTEGRITY.** 1. **Maintaining Integrity.** The non-federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. **Peer Review.** The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality



Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

**REVIEW OF RISK.** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Responsibility/Qualification section in the System for Award Management (<https://sam.gov/content/fapiis>) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

**REVIEWS AND EVALUATION.** The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications 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, and also by federal agents and contractors, and/or 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 §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.

**REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS.** If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), Pub.L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American, Buy American (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52 and OMB M-22-11, recipients of an award of federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (DOC) are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project for infrastructure unless: 1) all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States; 2) all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and 3) all construction materials(1) are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

-- (1) Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

To help federal agencies and recipients meet BABA requirements, the U.S. Department of

Commerce, National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network™ provides a service to connect stakeholders, including recipients, to U.S. manufacturers that have relevant production capabilities and capacities to help fulfill current market and supply chain needs. Recipients considering a BABA nonavailability waiver are strongly encouraged to contact the NIST/MEP for assistance with supplier scouting services prior to seeking a BABA nonavailability waiver. Further information on the NIST/MEP supplier scouting services is available at: <https://www.nist.gov/mep/supplier-scouting>.

**WAIVERS.** When necessary, recipients may apply for, and DOC may grant, a waiver from these requirements. DOC will notify the recipient for information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. 1) When DOC has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which DOC determines that: a. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest; b. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or c. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent. A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. DOC will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office. There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at [whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america](http://whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america).

**DEFINITIONS.** “Construction materials” include an article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives—that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall. “Domestic content procurement preference” means all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. “Infrastructure” includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission

facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy. “Project” means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States.

### C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semiannually. Performance (technical) reports shall use the NOAA Restoration Center's progress report narrative format and form approved by OMB under control number 0648 0718, or a successor form. This form will be provided to awardees by the NOAA Federal Program Officer. In addition, award recipients proposing multiple site locations may be required to complete individual reports for each site, or provide a project/site list including status and expenditures.

Performance (technical) reports shall be due on the same fiscal year schedule as financial reports (Oct. 30 and April 30) covering April 1 - September 30 and October 1 - March 31, respectively. A comprehensive final report covering all activities during the award period is required and must be received by NOAA within 120 days after the end date of this award. Reports are submitted electronically through NOAA’s electronic grants management system.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards of \$30,000 and over.

If selected for funding, award recipients will be expected to use North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes to characterize project expenses. Applicants will also report the number of jobs created or retained, and for what duration, in labor hours. NOAA will use this information to analyze the effects of habitat restoration spending on employment and economic output. Applicants selected for funding will receive further guidance on using NAICS codes to record project expenses and labor hours.

Recipients will be obligated to assist NOAA in complying with all relevant requirements and implementing guidance issued to federal agencies by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), particularly with respect to any requirements related to the BIL and IRA that may be determined at a later time. NOAA anticipates additional guidance may be forthcoming related to responsibilities of recipients of grants and cooperative agreements, including

guidance on agency-wide or government-wide requirements.

## VII. Agency Contacts

Supplemental Guidance regarding application writing and FAQs about this Announcement can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/coastal-habitat-restoration-and-resilience-grants>. For further information contact Natalie McLenaghan at (240) 614-3192, or by e-mail at [resilience.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:resilience.grants@noaa.gov). Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA project ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's objectives. NOAA will make every effort to respond to prospective applicants on a first come, first served basis. These discussions will not include review of draft proposals or site visits during the application period.

## VIII. Other Information

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out an award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, codified by the Department of Commerce at 1327.101. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g. subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

The DOC encourages the use of public signage on projects funded in whole or in part by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, IIJA), the CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the American Rescue Plan (ARP), and other federally funded projects as appropriate. Clear and prominent construction signage on projects is one of several ways to inform taxpayers about how federal funds from these laws are being spent and advance the goals of accountability and transparency. Construction signs should be displayed throughout the construction phase of the project in an easily visible location that can be directly linked to the work taking place, and be maintained in good condition throughout the construction period. Award-specific conditions for construction signage may require the use of the official Investing in America emblem, and refer to the general guidelines and design specifications for applying the emblem and corresponding logomark available in the Official Investing in America Emblem Style Guide: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Investing-in-America-Brand-Guide.pdf>

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If the project is installing a plaque citing the origins or history of the project, the plaque should identify the project as a “project funded by [Insert name of the law].” Costs associated with signage must be reasonable and limited, and recipients are encouraged to use recycled or recovered materials when procuring signs. Signs should not be produced or displayed if doing so results in unreasonable cost, expense, or recipient burden.