

***Responses to Applicant Questions
asked during Webinars for***

**NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and
Coastal Resilience Grants Under the BIL and IRA**

2023 Webinar Dates: August 29th, September 6th, and September 13th

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

NOFO: Notice of Funding Opportunity

ESA: Endangered Species Act

CFR: Code of Federal Regulations

BIL: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

IRA: Inflation Reduction Act

DEFINITIONS

Q: What is meant by "transformational"?

A: We do not provide a strict definition of the term "transformational" within the Program Objective section, although some examples are provided. The NOFO states: 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.

Q: What is the definition of an underserved community?

A: 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 as defined in Executive Order 13985. Applicants should visit this site for more information: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>

ELIGIBILITY

Location

Q: Although a federal agency is not eligible as an applicant, can a proposed project take place on federal property (e.g., a federal refuge) provided the applicant is an eligible entity?

A: Yes. Funds can be expended for work on land that is publicly owned, as well as privately owned.

Q: Can you expand on the eligible project location areas? For example, would a site along major tributaries that is upstream from coastal areas be eligible?

A: “Coastal areas” is a term that is defined within the Program Objective section of the NOFO. Within this definition, we state that coastal watershed counties are “located along inland rivers and streams with a significant impact on coastal and ocean resources.” This funding will support projects in upstream tributaries that demonstrate this linkage.

Q: How are “coastal” areas defined for the Great Lakes region?

A: “Coastal areas” of the Great Lakes meet the same definitions as coastal areas for marine and estuarine waters. As noted in the NOFO, 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).

Applicant Type

Q: Are tribes without federal recognition eligible to apply?

A: Yes. Eligible applicant types are outlined in Section III. If you are applying to NOAA’s Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grants, please consult the eligibility section for that NOFO regarding applicant types.

Q: Are National Estuary Programs (NEPs) eligible to apply?

A: Yes. The National Estuary Program (NEP) is an EPA place-based program to protect and restore the water quality and ecological integrity of estuaries of national significance. According to the EPA overview

of the program, NEPs are located in a variety of institutional settings, including state and local agencies, universities, and individual nonprofits. Non-federal applicants supporting any of the 28 recognized NEPs are eligible to apply.

Q: Are Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) eligible to apply?

A: Yes. Commercial / for-profit organizations are eligible to apply.

Project Activities

Q: Is land acquisition an eligible activity if it is part of restoration implementation?

A: Yes. Please see Section III regarding eligibility information. As long as land acquisition is not the sole focus of the proposal, it is an eligible activity within a broader scope of habitat restoration work.

Q: Is renting or a lease for a waterfront project site an allowable expense? If not, what kind of agreement with a private landowner would be necessary to be eligible?

A: Expenses necessary to accomplish the voluntary habitat restoration project are eligible, provided they are not expressly stated as ineligible in Section III. Landowner agreements for use or access of either private or public land should be sufficient to maintain the project for its expected lifetime, which will vary based on the type of project. Costs for leases or easements may be required to comply with federal policies for land purchase. More info can be found at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-200.316>

Q: Are fish passage projects that provide access to inaccessible habitat, but do not include barrier removal, an eligible project type under this NOFO?

A: Yes, this project type is eligible under this NOFO. If you are also applying to either the NOAA's Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grants or the NOAA's Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grants, please consult the eligibility sections for those NOFOs regarding allowable techniques and activities.

Q: Are capital projects eligible for funding? For example, building a new stream crossing (larger culvert) for habitat restoration?

A: Yes, this funding opportunity supports large-scale projects with long-term benefits. Projects that include fish passage techniques and improved access to habitat are eligible in this NOFO.

Q: Is monitoring of post-habitat and population restoration efforts eligible for funding?

A: In Section III of the NOFO, we state that effectiveness monitoring and research are not eligible project types. Applicants should consult the [NOAA RC Tier I Monitoring Guidance](#) to differentiate between implementation monitoring vs. effectiveness monitoring, for proposals that include the four primary restoration techniques (coral restoration, oyster restoration, fish passage, and hydrologic restoration).

Q: Would basic research be supported by this funding if there is potential for long-term application to habitat restoration, resilience, etc.?

A: In Section III of the NOFO, we state that effectiveness monitoring and research are not eligible project types under this funding opportunity. However, planning, design, and feasibility studies are eligible

activities. Applicants should demonstrate how pre-implementation activities will facilitate future restoration efforts. Please see Section III regarding eligibility information.

Q: Can funding be directed towards coastal dune restoration?

A: Yes. Applicants will want to demonstrate how these activities will benefit target species, and how restoration of coastal dunes can provide increased resilience. Please note that proposals that focus solely on beach renourishment for recreational purposes are not eligible, as outlined under the eligibility information in Section III. Projects that result in beach renourishment as a secondary benefit of habitat restoration are eligible.

Q: Are mitigation projects eligible? Would I be able to claim conservation credits?

A: Applicants should refer to Section III regarding eligibility of compensatory mitigation projects. The NOFO states: "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.

Q: Can you elaborate on restrictions regarding improvements to water quality?

A: Projects may improve water quality through creation or restoration of fisheries habitat. As outlined under the eligibility information in Section III, 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.

Q: Is "green infrastructure" considered hard infrastructure?

A: Ineligible hard infrastructure is described in Section III. We do not provide a strict definition of the term "green infrastructure" within the Program Objective section, but we do provide a definition for "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.

ALIGNMENT WITH PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Q: Can you provide some additional details regarding "capacity-building" proposals?

A: Capacity-building and stakeholder engagement are allowable components of a habitat restoration proposal. These elements may include funding for new (or existing) positions to enhance organizational capacity and coordination. Applicants should demonstrate how these efforts will catalyze or support subsequent on-the-ground restoration and/or enhancement of coastal resilience. In addition, applicants may also want to consider whether other funding sources may be applicable, if the proposed work primarily focuses on capacity-building. For example, the Office of Habitat Conservation is managing a concurrent funding opportunity that focuses on Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for

Tribes and Underserved Communities, with proposals due on December 19, 2023. Applicants may apply to more than one funding opportunity for the same project. More information can be found here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/coastal-habitat-restoration-and-resilience-grants-tribes-and-underserved-communities>

Q: Can funding be directed towards repair of existing, damaged structures (e.g., rock arch ramps) to allow upstream migration of fish in the Great Lakes?

A: Yes. Applicants will want to demonstrate how native fish species in the Great Lakes will benefit from improved migration and increased access to habitat.

Q: Can funding be directed towards the creation and/or expansion of nursery facilities that can supply biodiversity enhancement (e.g., corals, mangroves, oysters)?

A: Yes. Applicants should demonstrate how the creation or enhancement of nursery facilities directly relates to a broader effort to support or recover the target species.

Q: Can non-restoration activities be included with a restoration-based proposal?

A: Inclusion of “non-restoration” activities within a habitat restoration-based proposal may be allowable. Applicants should check Section III of the NOFO to verify that their proposed non-restoration activities are eligible. For any concerns about allowability of certain techniques or actions, applicants are encouraged to reach out to NOAA staff to discuss their project(s).

Q: Is restorative aquaculture (e.g., cultivation of seaweed or shellfish) an allowable activity? Would a proposal focused on increasing aquaculture capacity be allowable if there was a demonstrated connection to planned habitat restoration projects?

A: Aquaculture is an eligible component of a broader habitat restoration effort. Applicants should refer to the evaluation criteria that focus on co-benefits of restoration, including economic vitality, when assessing whether to include aquaculture efforts within a given proposal. Applicants should note that the primary objective of the funding opportunity is to support habitat restoration.

Q: Is the creation of artificial reefs an allowable activity?

A: Creation or enhancement of artificial reefs is an allowable activity. Applicants proposing to construct artificial reefs should outline how the techniques align with the program priorities, and how the reefs will benefit target species or fisheries.

Q: If a fish species is considered in decline and under study by State agencies, is that an allowable target species?

A: In this situation, we would recommend contacting the program office to discuss your specific project. For the first sub-criterion under the evaluation criteria, applicants should address how the proposed work will benefit Listed Species, Managed Species, saltwater recreational fisheries, or native fish species of the Great Lakes. Applicants should refer to Section I for more information about program priorities.

Q: After eradication of an invasive species, will restoration of native species be allowable?

A: Yes, restoration of native species is an allowable project activity. Applicants should describe how the proposed work aligns with the program priorities. Applicants should note that the primary objective of the funding opportunity is to support habitat restoration.

Q: Do proposals need to address all four program priorities?

A: Applicants may submit proposals that do not address all four program priorities. Reviewers will be scoring eligible proposals based on alignment with the evaluation criteria, which include the program priorities under Importance and Applicability. Therefore, proposals that do not align with all four program priorities may receive a lower overall score compared with proposals that strongly address each program priority.

Q: Should projects be shovel-ready? Is there a preference for on-the-ground implementation compared with pre-implementation activities?

A: This funding will support a range of project phases (e.g., planning, feasibility, engineering, design, implementation, or any combination thereof). Applicants should note that proposals including implementation components will be prioritized, compared with proposals that focus solely on pre-implementation activities. This prioritization is linked with the degree of likelihood that the proposed work will provide benefits to target species and/or communities, as outlined in the scoring guidance within the evaluation criteria in Section V.

Q: My project is currently at the planning and design stage. Would my proposal be more competitive if I delay submission by a year or more, when I would be ready to apply for implementation funds?

A: NOAA cannot officially advise any applicants regarding decisions about whether / when to submit proposals. However, applicants should note that proposals including some amount of on-the-ground implementation will be prioritized. Applicants may still elect to submit proposals that focus solely on pre-implementation activities.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Importance and Applicability

Q: I noticed that the evaluation section calls out Sustaining Productive Fisheries - is this a required outcome? Or as long as we are strengthening ecosystem resilience, is that enough?

A: Applicants should reference the scoring guidance outlined within the evaluation criteria under Section V. In order to earn full points under this 11-point sub-criterion, proposed actions must include on-the-ground implementation that 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. Applicants should note that the scoring guidance outlines how partial credit will be awarded for each sub-criterion.

Q: For the “Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience” program priority, is this only relevant to actual ‘fish’ or can this apply to other aquatic organisms?

A: Other aquatic organisms may serve as target species, such as endangered sea turtles or marine mammals, for example. For proposed work that will benefit target species listed under the ESA (“Listed Species”), applicants should note that this program priority only covers species under NOAA jurisdiction. Endangered and threatened species that are under the sole jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, such as manatees or sea birds, are **not** covered under this program priority. Listed Species that are under joint jurisdiction, such as Atlantic salmon or Gulf sturgeon, are covered under this program priority. Please see this website for more information about target species mentioned in the evaluation criteria:

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

Q: Our project meets all the goals and priorities of this grant program except for endangered / threatened fish species, which will indirectly benefit from the marsh restoration. Will our proposal still be considered?

A: Applicants may demonstrate how planned restoration will result in both direct and indirect benefits to target species or fisheries. In addition, for the “Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience” program priority, applicants do **not** need to address all four of the categories: a) Listed Species; b) Managed Species; c) saltwater recreational fisheries; d) Great Lakes native fish species. Proposed projects may include benefits for multiple categories (e.g., Listed Species and Managed Species), but this is not required. Furthermore, none of these four categories will be prioritized over another category. For example, proposals targeting Listed Species will not necessarily receive a higher score than proposals targeting Managed Species. Reviewers will be evaluating proposals based on the likelihood that the work will provide benefits to the target species or fisheries.

Q: Can you provide more information about saltwater recreational fisheries, under the “Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience” program priority?

A: Under this sub-criterion, applicants may demonstrate how the proposed restoration will enhance the sustainability of saltwater recreational fisheries. Applicants may refer to the national and/or regional implementation plans at the following address:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/recreational-fishing/national-saltwater-recreational-fisheries-policy>

Q: Is there any specific guidance around defining your geographic region (e.g., set size, number of communities, watershed boundary, etc.)?

A: Under the “Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration” sub-criterion, applicants are encouraged to describe their proposed work within the context of the landscape, watershed, or other geographically defined boundary. NOAA does not have specific guidance about how to define the project area or size, but 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. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or watershed.

Q: Where can one find examples of coastal resiliency projects providing direct / indirect benefits and engagement to underserved communities?

A: Short descriptions of projects that were funded in the first round (Fiscal Year 2022) of the Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants are provided on our webpages. More information can be found here:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/transformational-habitat-restoration-and-coastal-resilience-projects>

Q: Which tool does NOAA use to determine underserved communities?

A: NOAA encourages the use of the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). 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. The CEJST tool can be found at:

<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>

Technical and Scientific Merit

Q: Could you elaborate on the environmental compliance requirements?

A: NOAA will analyze the potential environmental impacts of federally funded project activities, as required through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As outlined in the NOFO, 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. For proposals that are selected for funding, NOAA staff will work in collaboration with applicants to obtain any necessary information to support our environmental compliance requirements. NOAA is required to complete NEPA requirements regardless of whether another federal agency is serving as the NEPA lead.

Q: Do all permits need to be in place before the award is disbursed, or can scoping and securing permits be included in the supported work?

A: Applicants may submit proposals before permits are secured, and may request funding for permitting and environmental compliance tasks. In the proposal, applicants should identify which permits and/or consultations will be required for the restoration, and should outline the anticipated timelines for obtaining any necessary permits.

Q: Is any monitoring allowed or required under the funding?

A: Monitoring requirements are outlined under Section IV. The NOFO states: 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. Examples can be found here:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects>

Q: What if monitoring and/or data collection is required by state agencies in order to perform the project?

A: Applicants are permitted to collect additional data and perform monitoring activities that are not outlined within our NOAA RC Tier I Monitoring Guidance, in order to meet obligations for other funding

sources or regulatory requirements. For additional monitoring that is self-funded by the applicant, or supported through other non-NOAA sources, applicants may describe these activities in the proposal.

Overall Qualifications of Applicants

Q: Should we include qualifications or CVs for key partners or sub-awardees, or just from the applicant organization?

A: Project partners may be identified in the narrative itself and through resumes or curriculum vitae (CVs) in the Supplemental Materials section. A maximum of 5 resumes or CVs may be included in the proposal, which should highlight the qualifications of key personnel and partners. Proposals will be evaluated for restoration and conservation qualifications, as well as management capacity.

Project Costs

Q: Where can I find the categories to be included in the budget justification?

A: The “Object Classes” can be found within the SF-424A: a) Personnel; b) Fringe Benefits; c) Travel; d) Equipment; e) Supplies; f) Contractual; g) Construction; and h) Other. Supplemental guidance for budget narratives can be found here:

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

Q: Are support letters required for match or leverage sources?

A: Support letters are encouraged, but not required. For cost-share that is confirmed and secured at the time of application submission, documentation should be included in the Supplemental Materials. For any non-federal match and/or leverage funds that are pending or otherwise not secured at the time of submission, applicants should outline these prospective sources of cost-share within the proposal.

Q: Can a state or local grant be used as cost-sharing funds?

A: Yes. Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. 200 to determine whether such funds are eligible to be proposed as formal, non-federal match. If the cost-share sources do not meet the requirements for non-federal match, the funding could still be included as project leverage. Applicants should note that the NOFO has a sub-criterion that weighs all forms of cost-share sources equally; that is, non-federal match is not preferred or favored over non-federal or federal leverage. However, the scoring guidance does emphasize secured / confirmed contributions over pending contributions. In order to receive the full 5 points, applicants must demonstrate a 1:1 ratio of NOAA-requested funds to cost-share contributions, as stated on page 29-30. More information about cost share and match can be found here:

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D/section-200.306>

Q: For formal match contributions, may I include volunteer hours? How do I value those hours?

A: Yes. As outlined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(e), rates for volunteers must be consistent with those paid for similar work in the labor market for the kind of services involved. Paid fringe benefits that are reasonable, necessary, allocable, and otherwise allowable may be included in the valuation. More information can be found at: [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200#p-200.306\(e\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200#p-200.306(e))

Q: Is there a limit on indirect cost? Can we use our NICRA?

A: There is no limit on indirect costs that are approved within a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). Applicants with a NICRA should include a copy of the current agreement in the Supplemental Materials. For applicants without a NICRA, the approved indirect cost rate is the 10% de minimis applied to Modified Total Direct Costs, as described in 2 C.F.R. 200.

Q: Is there a negotiated profit rate for business applicants?

A: For-profit organizations should refer to 2 C.F.R. 200.400(g) for information about profits and fee structures. This section states that recipients "may not earn or keep any profit resulting from Federal financial assistance, unless explicitly authorized by the terms and conditions of the Federal award." More information can be found here: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E>

Q: Is a contingency line item allowed in the budget?

A: Grants regulations allow applicants to budget for contingency costs. Applicants should provide details about how contingency funds would be spent, if those funds are not ultimately needed for the proposed project costs. Budget estimates should be based on project experience and research on expected cost increases.

Q: Is a separate budget description required for each contract?

A: Yes. As outlined in the NOFO, for projects with contractual components, applicants must follow procurement standards set forth in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317-200.327. Applicants should provide separate budget descriptions for each contract, to determine whether proposed costs are reasonable, realistic, 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 will be used to select contractors.

Q: How would you categorize incorporation of hard infrastructure into proposed work?

A: For proposals that incorporate hard infrastructure, such as building a greenhouse to grow marsh plants or a nursery for corals or shellfish, applicants will want to demonstrate how the infrastructure will benefit the target species or fisheries. In certain cases, a lease vs. purchase assessment may be required to justify expenditures. These costs may belong in the "Equipment" object class if the components will be purchased directly by the primary applicant, or may belong within the "Contractual" class if the purchase is embedded within a contract. Applicants should also consult the eligibility information in Section III of the NOFO, which states that: "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)."

Q: How do you prepare a budget for a site that has undergone an alternatives analysis, but does not yet have the restoration methodologies identified?

A: Budget justifications are inherently estimates. Applicants can formulate budgets based on previous experience, and refer to current cost ranges for techniques that are likely to be employed for on-the-ground implementation.

Q: Does the funding cover costs incurred prior to the start date, specifically the costs of land acquisition?

A: Per Section VI.A. of the NOFO regarding pre-award costs, 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, 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. Applicants should also note that in order to be eligible, land acquisition should not be the sole focus of the proposal. For more information about pre-award costs, applicants can refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.458 at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E/subject-group-ECFRed1f39f9b3d4e72/section-200.458>

Q: Does cost-sharing have to be within the project period only? Or can pre-award contributions toward the project be considered as leverage?

A: In general, contributions for formal, non-federal match must be expended during the award period, as outlined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306. The pre-award cost window of "up to 90 days" before the period of performance applies to non-federal match funds, as well as NOAA funds. However, these award-window requirements do not apply to contributions that are categorized as informal leverage. As outlined in the NOFO, 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.

Outreach and Education

Q: Is an educational component, such as a video or printed product to describe the project, part of the desired outcomes and economic benefits?

A: Outreach materials, including audiovisual and printed products, can be included and described within the strategy or plan for outreach and education. Applicants should refer to the suggested Content and Form (Section IV) for the sub-criterion for Community Outreach and Education, which states: "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."

APPLICATION and AWARD REQUIREMENTS

Q: Is a “Letter of Intent” required for this funding opportunity?

A: No, we are not accepting a Letter of Intent or a pre-proposal for this opportunity. Full proposals are due by November 17, 2023, at 11:59pm Eastern time.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of support letters that can be included?

A: No. There is no limit to the number of support letters, aside from the overall page limit (45 pages) for the Supplemental Materials.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of proposals that I can submit?

A: No. There is no limit to the number of proposals that can be submitted by an applicant.

Q: Will NOAA be sharing more guidance on BABA and specifics around what is classified as a “public infrastructure project”? We have some projects that take place on private land, but we are unsure if they are still classified as “public infrastructure” since they are benefiting a public river at-large.

A: NOAA has some available resources regarding the Build America Buy America (BABA) Act, and we are working on obtaining additional guidance to share. Please reach out to the Competition Manager through the resilience.grants@noaa.gov service account with additional questions.

Q: Are the awards subject to prevailing wage rules through the Davis Bacon Act?

A: At this time, the Davis Bacon Act does not apply to awards supported through this funding opportunity. We have consulted with our Federal Assistance Law Division (FALD) to obtain clarification on this matter, in response to recent guidance issued by the White House.

Q: Will invoicing be on the same schedule as biannual progress reporting?

A: NOAA uses the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system that is operated through the Department of Treasury. Through this system, awardees can draw down funds as-needed to pay invoices. In terms of reporting, a brief form (SF-425; Federal Financial Report) that includes overall expenditures and cash on-hand will be due on the same schedule as the biannual progress reports.

Q: In relation to the 3-year award period, does that mean all funds need to be spent by October 2027? Is there any opportunity for expenditure beyond that?

A: NOAA encourages 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 under this funding opportunity will be October 1, 2024, which would place a 3 year performance period ending on September 30, 2027. Should an award be unable to expend funds during the performance period, a no-cost extension may be considered based on the circumstances that led to a delay in spending.

Q: If allocated funds are not fully spent in Year 1 of the project period, can we carry the funds into Year 2?

A: Yes. Applicants should include realistic timelines with annual budget breakdowns within their proposals. However, we understand that project changes and delays may occur during the award period. Funds obligated in Year 1 of the project period will still be available for spending in Year 2, and beyond.

Q: What are the reporting requirements, if a grant is awarded?

A: 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. Additional information can be found in Section VI.C. of the NOFO.

Q: Is this funding likely to require annual organizational audits for the lead applicant?

A: Audits are required for entities receiving \$750K + in federal funding. Additional information can be found on page 37 of the NOFO. 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. More information can be found at: <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBq4>

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Q: Is it beneficial for a nonprofit to collaborate with other nonprofits, to work toward mutual shared goals for projects? Are joint applications allowed?

A: Partnerships and collaborations are allowed and encouraged. Applicants should determine which organization will serve as the primary recipient, and whether other organizations will participate as sub-recipients or as informal collaborators. The project team may consist of members from different organizations, and applicants may include resumes or curriculum vitae (CVs) from partner organizations as well as descriptions for these partnership roles.

Q: We are working with landscape design firms on planning components. Should we have our consultants be co-applicants on the project?

A: For application submission, the proposal is limited to one primary recipient. However, applicants are allowed to include sub-recipients for sub-awards and contracts. Project partners may be identified within the proposal, including in the narrative section and through resumes or curriculum vitae (CVs) in the Supplemental Materials section.

Q: Does a partner organization included in a proposal also need to be registered at SAM.gov, or only the primary applicant?

A: Proposals are submitted via a single applicant / entity. 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. For additional information, please refer to Section IV.C of the NOFO. According to 2 C.F.R. § 200.332 ("Requirements for pass-through entities"), sub-recipients should be registered with

SAM.gov and have a UEI. See 2 C.F.R. 200 for more information:

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-200.332>

Q: How will collaboration with federal partners factor into the award decision?

A: Federal partners are not permitted to serve as primary recipients, but collaboration on project activities is allowed. Award decisions will not be based on either the inclusion, or exclusion, of federal partners within proposed projects.

Q: I work for an engineering firm. For some past grant opportunities that we have helped our clients with, we later were told that our work on the grant application disqualified us from working on the project after the grant was awarded. Does this grant have that restriction?

A: This funding opportunity does not restrict organizations from participating as collaborators on a selected award, as a result of past involvement with a project. Primary applicants and sub-recipients should consult 2 C.F.R. § 200.319, to verify compliance with the rules for procurement. This section states: In order to ensure objective contractor performance and eliminate unfair competitive advantage, contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, or invitations for bids or requests for proposals must be excluded from competing for such procurements. See 2 C.F.R. 200 for more information: [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200#p-200.319\(b\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200#p-200.319(b))

Q: Are for-profit companies able to apply as partners on applications for large-scale implementation projects? Do higher-ticket deliverables performed by for-profits need to be competitively bid?

A: For-profit organizations are eligible to apply as primary recipients, and are also allowed to serve as sub-recipients through sub-awards and/or contracts that are included within the proposal. Bidding and selection of contracts and sub-awards should comply with regulations outlined in 2 C.F.R. 200. Primary applicants and sub-recipients should consult 2 C.F.R. § 200.319, to verify compliance with the rules of competition.

AWARD SELECTION

Q: Is funding distributed somewhat evenly across regions or applicant types (for example, Atlantic vs. Pacific, freshwater vs. saltwater, states vs. territories), or is the selection just based on the proposals submitted?

A: Generally speaking, we fund proposals in rank order based on panel scores. If a panel review is not convened, the rank order will be based on the proposal scores from the technical review. In order to improve equitability in funding, NOAA is permitted to use legally approved Selection Factors to fund additional proposals out of rank-order. Geographic distribution is one of the Selection Factors outlined in Section V of the NOFO. To view the range of awards selected in the first round of the funding opportunity that was offered in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22), visit this page:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/transformational-habitat-restoration-and-coastal-resilience-projects>

Q: Is there a minimum score to qualify for funding?

A: The funding selections will be based on proposal rankings, as outlined under Section V of the NOFO. There is no minimum score, or a specific range of scores, that will qualify for funding.

Q: Will this funding opportunity be offered again in future years?

A: We are planning to release additional BIL-supported funding opportunities in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), although the timeline for release is not yet clear.

Q: Are proposal reviewers chosen from a national pool, or do you select them from the region where the project is located?

A: Proposals will be reviewed by staff with both specific and general knowledge of habitat restoration and coastal resilience. It is possible, but not guaranteed, that the selected reviewers may be physically located in the same region where the project is proposed. Applicants should provide sufficient background about proposed site locations, as the reviewers might not be familiar with the project area.

Q: What are the key differences between this NOFO and the Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities NOFO?

A: Applicants may submit applications to both this NOFO and the Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities. Some of the key differences include the minimum and maximum funding requests per proposal, the point structures for the evaluation criteria, and the deadlines for submission. More information can be found at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/coastal-habitat-restoration-and-resilience-grants-tribes-and-underserved-communities>