

FY24 NOAA Marine Debris Removal under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY24 NOAA Marine Debris Removal under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ORR-2024-2007993

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.999, Marine Debris Program

Dates: ATTENTION: This competition will have a pre-proposal requirement (hereafter described as a Letter of Intent; LOI). Please note the competition's early submission deadline for this requirement.

This funding opportunity requires a Letter of Intent to be submitted for competitive review before a full proposal can be submitted. LOIs must be received via email as an attachment (to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov) no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, October 27, 2023. If invited per the instructions in this announcement, full proposals must then be submitted through and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, February 23, 2024. Due to limited time, hardcopy LOIs or full applications will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program, authorized in the Marine Debris Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq., supports the development and implementation of marine debris removal and prevention projects that benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and marine and Great Lake resources. Through this solicitation, NOAA seeks to openly compete funding made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (PL 117-58) to support large-scale marine debris removal efforts throughout the coastal United States, Great Lakes, territories, and freely associated states, including in Tribal or underserved communities.

The overall objective of this funding opportunity is to support impactful, large marine debris removal projects that will improve the resilience of the coastal and marine environment. This competition considers impactful projects to be those that will have long-lasting, transformational benefits to marine and coastal NOAA Trust Resources, coastal communities, and/or local economies. To accomplish this, the Marine Debris Program seeks proposals for impactful projects that remove and dispose of large marine debris (such as abandoned and derelict vessels, derelict fishing gear, and other large debris) and prevent the reaccumulation of marine debris in

the environment.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) describes the types of projects that are eligible for funding, as well as the proposal requirements and criteria under which applications will be evaluated for funding consideration. Funding of up to \$24,000,000 is expected to be available for this grant solicitation. NOAA MDP expects the majority of the funded projects to be between \$1M and \$4M. The minimum federal request for this solicitation is \$800,000 and in some cases, up to \$6M may be awarded. NOAA expects to support between four to eight projects from this competition, but may support more or fewer based on the merit of submitted applications and their proposed geographies and scale. Cost sharing, leveraged funds, and in-kind support are important to ensuring these projects are impactful and well supported. Applicants are strongly encouraged to explore the opportunity to combine NOAA federal funding with formal matching contributions and informal leverage from a broad range of sources in the public and private sectors.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The overall objective of this funding opportunity is to support impactful, large marine debris removal projects that will improve the resilience of the coastal and marine environment and implement strategies to prevent the reaccumulation of marine debris. “Impactful” projects are considered to be those that will have long-lasting, transformational benefits to marine and coastal NOAA trust resources, coastal communities, and/or local economies. This funding opportunity will openly compete funding made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (PL 117-58), and will focus support for impactful marine debris removal efforts throughout the coastal United States (including coastal riverine systems), Great Lakes, territories, and freely associated states, including Tribal and underserved communities.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), a division of the Office of Response and Restoration, leads national efforts to address marine debris. The mission of the NOAA MDP is to investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris. This mission is achieved through research, prevention, and removal activities that aim to conserve and protect our nation’s marine environment and coastal economy, as well as ensure navigation safety.

Marine debris is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes" (15 C.F.R. § 909.1). For the purposes of this funding opportunity, “large debris” is defined as abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV), derelict fishing gear (DFG), and other debris that is unable to be easily collected by hand.

In alignment with the Executive Order 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, the NOAA MDP encourages applicants and awardees to support the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility when writing their proposals and performing their work. Ensuring these principles means paying particular attention to the most vulnerable or underserved communities, which are often low-income, those already overburdened by pollution, those who lack economic or social opportunity, and people facing disenfranchisement.

B. Program Priorities

The highest priority for this funding opportunity is to support impactful, large marine debris removal projects. For the purposes of this funding opportunity, “large debris” is defined as abandoned and derelict vessels (ADVs), derelict fishing gear (DFG), and other debris that is unable to be easily collected by hand. Priority will be placed on proposals that clearly demonstrate the beneficial impacts the removal project will have on NOAA trust resources, and the surrounding coastal environment or community. Applicants may conduct removal activities on their own, collaborate with other organizations, pass-through funding to subawardees, or administer a competitive funding opportunity to allow for funding of smaller projects and lower the administrative burden on applicant organizations. Subawardees must be capable of planning and executing removal operations. Applicants should reference Section V.A. of this NOFO to review this competition’s evaluation criteria, and develop proposals with those criteria in mind.

NOAA seeks to fund a suite of projects that together address large marine debris across the country. When selecting proposals for this competition, NOAA will consider the proposals in the context of already-funded projects, including projects that received funding through previous Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Marine Debris Removal Grants, to avoid duplication of removal efforts in similar locations (see the NOAA MDP website for examples of past and current removal projects: <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/our-work/removal>).

NOAA trust resources generally refer to marine habitats and resources in which NOAA has a stewardship interest. This includes resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, Marine Monuments, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and areas under state coastal management programs, including Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes. NOAA trust resources also include commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine and Great Lakes fish and shellfish); coastal habitats; diadromous fish species; endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, other coastal habitats; Essential Fish Habitat (EFH); and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). For the purposes of this competition, NOAA trust resources may also include transient or transboundary marine species.

NOAA will prioritize applications that demonstrate clear removal and disposal outcomes. Removals should be conducted with a focus on alternative disposal methods when possible, which means applicants should use disposal methods that are the most environmentally friendly given the location, availability, and resources of the specific removal effort. Examples of alternative disposal may include: recycling, reuse, waste-to-energy, or other innovative disposal methods.

Removal projects that include strategies to prevent the reaccumulation of marine debris in the future may be prioritized. This might include: the development or expansion of state-, regionally-, or nationally-focused marine debris prevention programs, vessel or fishing gear turn-in opportunities, vessel or fishing gear recycling programs, targeted programs working with boaters or fishermen, etc. Prevention activities should aim to reduce the recurrence of the type of debris removed.

Prevention and removal activities should prioritize collaboration with diverse entities and groups. These include (but are not limited to) collaborations with public and nonprofit organizations, community and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, industry (e.g., commercial and recreational fishing industries, other marine industries, and plastic and waste management industries), corporations and businesses, youth groups, students, academia, Tribal governments, and local and state government agencies.

Removal projects that include monitoring activities to demonstrate long-term outcomes are encouraged. Monitoring refers to project-specific, re- or post-removal data collection where important ecological metrics (large debris accumulation over time, habitat/species impacts, changes in ecosystem services, vegetation, etc.) are analyzed to show the effect of the removal project. Long-term outcomes can be described as the anticipated benefits to habitats, communities, and the economy. Examples include the ecological services to be restored, benefits to local economies from an increase in tourism, the economic benefit to fishers from the removal of ghost gear, jobs created, or how planned prevention activities will sustain the benefits of the marine debris removal activity. All monitoring activities must be complementary to proposed large-debris removal efforts.

NOAA is committed to advancing equity and support for underserved communities. The NOAA MDP strongly encourages applicants (and when relevant, subawardees) to incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility through proactive, meaningful, and equitable community engagement in the identification, design, and/or implementation of proposed projects. Applicants may demonstrate this in a variety of ways, and examples include, but are not limited to, working in or with underserved communities, working with stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues, encouraging diverse perspectives from project leaders and partners (including, but not limited to, sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geography), incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project, or translation of resources/signage into other languages (see signage requirements in sections IV.B.4 Budget Justification and VI.B.2 Special Award Conditions). Greater consideration will be given to projects that propose to work in areas with underserved communities that have been historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution.

Applicants should describe any project activities that will take place within, have a portion of the benefits flow to, and/or meaningfully engage Tribal or underserved communities. Meaningful engagement relies on the involvement of those potentially affected in a manner that builds trust and addresses barriers to community participation to ensure 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 community. In this competition, meaningful engagement refers to an intentional exchange between the applicant and the underserved community where both have multiple opportunities to ensure the other is correctly understanding each other's perspectives and ideas. This will ensure the Tribal and/or underserved community is an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, and/or leadership for project activities that may affect their environment and/or health and wellbeing. Outreach or communications directed to a Tribal or underserved community without any description for how feedback and ideas from the community receiving the messaging will be incorporated into the project design and/or execution will not be considered meaningful engagement.

This priority aligns with the Executive Order 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government. Competitive proposals will describe how their proposed project will advance equity, inclusion, and accessibility. For this funding competition, the following definitions from Executive Order 13985 are included:

- Equity: means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.
- Underserved communities: 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.
- Accessibility: means the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.
- Diversity: is defined by NOAA as a collection of individual attributes that together help organizations achieve objectives.
- Inclusion: is defined as a culture that connects each person to the larger organizing

structure.

Funding is primarily aimed at supporting new or impactful removal efforts, or programs that require funding to scale-up or expand their existing removal efforts to achieve broader and more impactful outcomes. Proposals that scale-up projects that were funded through the previous Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Marine Debris Removal competition are allowed, but the proposals must clearly indicate how additional funding will lead to outcomes above and beyond what was considered through the previous grant application.

Proposals to develop new marine debris databases will not be competitive under this competition. Applications addressing microplastics or microfibers are not priorities for this solicitation and will be withdrawn from the review, as will research and development proposals. Other NOAA funding opportunities may be available for such activities (e.g., the National Sea Grant BIL Marine Debris Challenge Competition NOFO and the National Sea Grant BIL Marine Debris Community Action Coalitions NOFO). Funding for marine debris interception technologies is available from the NOAA MDP through competition NOAA-NOS-ORR-2024-2007991 “FY24 NOAA Marine Debris Interception Technologies under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.” This funding opportunity is not intended for removal efforts in non-coastal states or inland areas outside the Great Lakes watershed.

Applicants should also note that the following activities, in general, will not be considered for use of federal dollars under project awards: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation; (4) activities that are eligible for removal and reimbursement under a Federal Disaster Declaration.

C. Program Authority

Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq.); Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (PL 117-58)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding of up to \$24,000,000 is expected to be available for this grant solicitation. NOAA MDP expects the majority of the funded projects to be between \$1M and \$4M. The minimum federal request for this solicitation is \$800,000 and in some cases, up to \$6M may

be awarded. NOAA expects to support between four to eight projects but may support more or less based on the merit of submitted applications and their proposed geographies and scale. The number of marine debris projects will be based on the merit of submitted applications. The exact amount of funds to be awarded and the number of awards made will be at the discretion of NOAA following pre-award negotiations with highly meritorious applicants. NOAA may request that a highly ranked applicant submitting more than one meritorious proposal combine all or parts of its proposals into one award. Publication of this opportunity does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of available program funds. Awards may include funding from other programs or agencies. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any or all proposals. The number of awards to be made under this solicitation will depend on the number and quality of eligible applications, the amount of funding requested by recommended applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and other program funding needs.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a project period of performance from two to four years in duration. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be August 1, 2024 – applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed project activities. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date to accommodate any delays in federal funding or environmental compliance consultations. Applications for renewal or supplementation of previously awarded NOAA projects are allowed; however, such proposals will be subject to the competitive process and will not receive preferential treatment. In some cases, NOAA may fund a project with incremental funding, usually in the form of a multi-year award. If incremental or multi-year funding is awarded, in which NOAA only obligates funds initially for the first phase of a project, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent time periods; additional funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to program mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the large marine debris removal projects. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, tracking the progress of removal, disposal, and prevention efforts through site visits; developing performance measures to assess project outcomes; participating in regular conference calls, and progress report evaluation and milestone approval; engaging with the recipient on environmental compliance requirements, technical collaboration, or permitting assistance; supporting the development

of public-facing communication materials or events to highlight marine debris prevention activities; supporting the development of and/or reviewing study approach, methodologies, and conceptual models; and reviewing manuscript drafts (if any).

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

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

As outlined in the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants for projects taking place in the coastal United States, Great Lakes, territories, and freely associated states (or their adjacent waterways), are state, local, Tribal, and territory governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris. Equally eligible are any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Interested federal agencies may collaborate with eligible applicants but may not receive funds through this competition. Foreign public entities (see 2 CFR 200.1) from outside of the freely associated states are not eligible to apply.

NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of veterans, minority-serving institutions, and entities that work in underserved and underrepresented areas. The NOAA MDP encourages applicants of all backgrounds, circumstances, perspectives, and ways of thinking to apply.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grant programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation. Applicants should indicate if the proposal has been submitted elsewhere for funding as described in the Budget Justification referenced in Section IV. Application and Submission Information (Subsection B “Content and Form of Application”) of this announcement.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no non-federal matching requirement for this funding. However, cost sharing,

leveraged funds, and in-kind support are important to ensuring these projects are impactful and meaningfully supported by other project partners. Applicants are strongly encouraged to explore the opportunity to combine NOAA federal funding with formal matching contributions and informal leverage from a broad range of sources in the public and private sectors. In cases where non-federal match or informal leverage cannot be obtained, the challenges preventing this type of support should be described (see Section V.A “Evaluation Criteria” for more detail on how this will be evaluated).

Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. 200.306 for cost sharing or matching policies. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates planning to provide cost sharing may propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been federally approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to Section IV.F “Funding Restrictions” for information on indirect costs.

For funded applications that include 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 Grant Management Division (GMD). NOAA is under no obligation to amend the match contributions once the award document is signed by the recipient.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Activities involving the collection, assessment, oversight, or interpretation of scientific information are required to adhere, to the best of their ability, to the principles, policies, and codes of conduct identified in NOAA’s Policy on Scientific Integrity (NOAA Administrative Order 202-735D-2), which is available at:

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-202-735d-2-scientific-integrity>

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

<https://sciencecouncil.noaa.gov/Scientific-Integrity-Commons>

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants must follow the LOI and full application requirements stated in this announcement, or they may not be considered. Complete application packages, including required federal forms, general instructions, and supplementary instructions specific to this

competition can be found on Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If the application forms and instructions cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Amanda Dwyer (amanda.dwyer@noaa.gov, 240-533-0402).

B. Content and Form of Application

LETTER OF INTENT:

The Letter of Intent (LOI) submission is a critical step to determine if proposed projects are well-suited for this specific competition. Applicants must submit a LOI and receive an invitation from the NOAA MDP before submitting a full proposal. LOIs must be submitted as an email attachment to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern time on October 27, 2023 (see Section IV.D. below). Please put “FY24 NOAA Marine Debris Removal Letter of Intent (LOI)” in the email subject heading. An email confirmation will be sent indicating successful submission of the LOI. If no confirmation email is received, that is an indication that the LOI submission was not successful and will not be reviewed. In such cases please contact the NOAA MDP to resolve the issue prior to the deadline. For this reason, it is highly recommended that LOIs are submitted early.

The goal of the competitive LOI process is to streamline the proposal review and to be able to provide feedback and guidance on invited application ideas. In the LOI, applicants must indicate clearly how their project proposes to address the competition priorities, the need for the proposed debris removals, the geographic location of all project activities, and a short description of the methods, outcomes, and efforts to address diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility. Those applicants whose LOIs do not strongly align with program objectives and priorities, as determined by the NOAA MDP (through the review process described below in Section V.A.), will not be invited to submit full applications.

The LOI must be no more than three (3) pages in length. It should be single spaced, use 11- or 12-point font on an 8.5” x 11” page size and have page margins no smaller than 1” on each edge. A fourth page may be submitted showing only project site maps and photographs of the area or the debris targeted for removal. If the LOI is incomplete, does not meet the guidelines above, or is submitted late, it may not be considered. Those applicants invited to submit a full proposal will receive an email notification containing feedback and full-proposal submission instructions from NOAA MDP. NOAA MDP may limit the number of full applications invited in order to meet the Program’s expected budget or to manage the review workload.

The LOI should include each of the components listed below:

- a) Applicant Organization

b) Project Title

c) Principal Investigator(s) Name, Address, Telephone Number and Email Address: Briefly describe the PI or organization's experience or expertise that would lead to a successful removal project. A list of primary project partners and their roles/contributions should also be part of this section.

d) Project Location: List the geographic area(s) in which the project will be implemented. Include geographic coordinates of removal sites if known.

e) Project Description: Clearly state the purpose of the project and briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds. Applicants should identify the debris type and include a clear explanation for why this type or category of debris was chosen. Applicants should identify the mechanism(s) for distributing funds (e.g., applicant removal activities, collaboration with other organizations, pass-through funding to subawardees, or administration of a competitive funding opportunity). Applicants should describe proposed techniques that will be used and indicate the duration of the project. This section should describe associated prevention, and/or monitoring activities that are planned. Applicants administering a competition for subawardees that will propose marine debris removal projects should clearly articulate the proposed approach for planning and executing the competition.

f) Anticipated removal activity start date (not the proposed award start date)

g) Funding: Indicate the approximate amount of federal funds requested and approximate amount of non-federal match or informal leverage anticipated.

h) Project Outcomes and Metrics: Describe how project activities will be impactful on NOAA trust resources, coastal communities, and/or local economies and how the project benefits will be sustained beyond the life of the project; identify NOAA trust resources that are likely to benefit (habitats and species expected to benefit) and how the project will make a measurable impact. Describe project metrics expected to be tracked, including, at a minimum when applicable: an estimate of how many pounds of debris will be removed from the marine/coastal environment, the number and type of ADVs/DFG/other debris items removed, geographic area (in square miles or shoreline miles) surveyed. When applicable, the following metrics are encouraged to be tracked: weight of debris recycled/reused/converted to energy, footprint of debris

removed (square feet), number of volunteers, and number of volunteer hours.

i) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility Description: Indicate how the project demonstrates principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through proactive, meaningful, and equitable community engagement in the identification, design, and/or implementation of proposed projects. This may be demonstrated in a variety of ways and examples include but are not limited to working in or with underserved communities, working with stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues, working with a project team with diverse perspectives (including, but not limited to, sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic), or incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project.

Applicants should identify if project activities will take place within, have a portion of the benefits flow to, and/or meaningfully engage Tribal or underserved communities and how those benefits will be measured. Please reference the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/>) to identify if any known project locations are considered disadvantaged communities. If a community is not considered disadvantaged by CEJST, the applicant may provide an alternate reference or description.

An LOI template can be found at:

<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources/funding-opportunities>

FULL PROPOSAL (only if invited):

Applicants may only submit a full proposal if invited to do so by the NOAA MDP. Applicants are required to apply through the Grants.gov website. No hardcopy applications will be accepted due to limited staff time.

Please visit <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources/funding-opportunities> for helpful information on developing and submitting proposal documents/information.

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

Applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section may not be reviewed. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed. Proposals will not be accepted if sent via fax or email. Application documents must use 11- or 12-pt font on an 8.5" x 11" page size and have page margins no smaller than 1" on each edge.

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

- SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-construction Programs
- SF-424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs
- CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
- Summary (described below, 3 pages or less)
- Narrative (described below, 15 pages or less)
- Data Management Plan (described below, 2 pages or less)
- Budget Justification Narrative (described below, 8 pages or less)
- Curriculum vitae or résumé of applicant personnel (2 pages or less per person)
- Maps depicting the geographic extent of where removal efforts will be targeted including any site location(s) and/or potential removal locations highlighted (no page limit)
- Photographs of example debris targets, if any (no page limit)

- Letter(s) documenting partner support (no page limit)
- Indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable (no page limit)
- Other relevant attachments important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as documentation of permits necessary to perform the work proposed under the project (20 pages or less).

The following sections describe the information that should be provided in the proposal.

1. Summary (3 pages or less)

- a) Applicant Organization
- b) Proposal Title
- c) Applicant Point of Contact Name, Address, Telephone Number, and Email Address
- d) Proposed project activities: List the types of activities proposed (i.e. number of targeted removals, surveying/scoping new removal targets, subaward competition, prevention/monitoring activities, etc.)
- e) Location: List the geographic area(s) in which the project activities will be implemented. Include geographic coordinates of removal sites if known.
- f) Funding: Indicate the amount of federal funds requested and the amount of non-federal match or informal leverage anticipated.
- g) Description: Clearly state the purpose of the proposed activities and the specific marine debris issues being addressed, including a clear explanation for why this type or category of debris was chosen, how it is detrimental to the area, including impacts to both the environment and wildlife, as well as the surrounding communities. Applicants should clearly articulate the proposed project components; summarize all proposed planning and on-the-ground activities expected; identify stakeholders and non-federal partners that are likely to be involved; identify NOAA trust resources that are likely to benefit; and indicate the duration of the project and provide a general timeline of activities.
- h) Outcomes and Metrics: Briefly describe the anticipated ecological and socio-economic

outcomes (i.e. ecological services to be restored, benefits to NOAA trust resources, benefits to local economies from an increase in tourism, etc.) the project is expected to produce, including how the project benefits will be sustained beyond the life of the project. Provide an estimate of how many pounds of debris will be removed from the marine/coastal environment, the number and type of ADVs/DFG/other debris items removed, geographic area (in square miles or shoreline miles) surveyed. Provide approximate numbers for outcomes of project activities and describe how data will be recorded and maintained. Long-term outcomes can be measured with an increased focus on prevention activities and monitoring activities in association with the removal efforts. Examples of long-term outcomes include the ecological services to be restored, benefits to local economies from an increase in tourism, the economic benefit to fishers from the removal of ghost gear, jobs created, or how planned prevention activities will sustain the benefits of the marine debris removal activity.

2. Narrative (15 pages or less)

When writing the Narrative, applicants should understand the components of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A. "Evaluation Criteria" in this announcement), as they explain how proposals will be scored for the application to be competitive. The Narrative is limited to 15 pages and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. Generally, the Narrative should include the following information.

- a) Introduction & Outcomes: A summary of the problem the proposed removal project is addressing. Describe the geographic reach of the project and whether the project will directly conduct targeted marine debris removal or will create and administer a competition for subawardees that will propose marine debris removal projects. Identify the habitats, species, and/or resources (including specific NOAA trust resources (as described in Section I.A) expected to directly and indirectly benefit from removal activities, including anticipated ecological services to be restored by debris removal (these benefits should be tracked during the award period). Also include any benefits to the economy, local communities, or navigation safety that might result.

Applicants should align efforts with existing regional or national publicly vetted programs, priorities, or strategic plans (e.g., regional Marine Debris Action Plans, National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, 2021-2025 NOAA MDP Strategic Plan, National Marine Sanctuary management plans, etc.) and describe how they do so. Proposal narratives should explicitly list or otherwise cite such documents for verification purposes, including the page number or specific action number within the plan. NOAA Marine Debris Action Plans can be found on the

NOAA MDP website at:

<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/emergency-response-guides-and-regional-action-plans>.

Describe how project activities will be impactful on NOAA trust resources, coastal communities, and/or local economies, and how the project benefits will be sustained beyond the life of the project. Applications should include the metrics expected to be tracked, including specific, measurable metrics on removal, disposal, prevention, tracking, and post-removal monitoring efforts, species/habitat impacts, volunteer participation, economic benefits, and other performance measures. Provide an estimate of how many pounds of debris will be removed from the marine/coastal environment, the number and type of ADVs/DFG/other debris items removed, geographic area (in square miles or shoreline miles) surveyed. When applicable, the following metrics are encouraged to be tracked: weight of debris recycled/reused/converted to energy, footprint of debris removed (square feet), number of volunteers, number of volunteer hours. Provide approximate numbers for outcomes of project activities and describe how data will be recorded and maintained. Long-term outcomes can be measured with an increased focus on prevention activities in association with the removal efforts. Examples of long-term outcomes include the ecological services to be restored, benefits to local economies from an increase in tourism, the economic benefit to fishers from the removal of ghost gear, jobs created, or how planned prevention activities will sustain the benefits of the marine debris removal activity.

- b) Project Location(s): The geographic area (e.g., national or a specific region) in which the project will take place should also be clearly described. Provide maps (if needed) of expected locations of on-the-ground work. Indicate the time of year that those activities will take place in each location, if possible. If exact locations are unknown at the time of application, describe project locations in as much detail as possible and when/how locations will be determined.
- c) Detailed Description: This section should clearly describe the following components in detail:
 - i) Project Overview: How the project would be carried out and how it will meet the goals of this NOFO. This should include a description of short- and long-term goals and objectives that align with goals of this NOFO; an overview of each proposed activity (removal, disposal, prevention, and monitoring); and a description of how project results will be shared more broadly.
 - ii) Removal Methods: For applications that propose to execute a plan for a particular

marine debris removal project, the application should include the specific marine debris they plan to remove, how those marine debris targets were identified, and how they will be removed. If the list of the specific marine debris targets has not been finalized or the applicant is proposing to subaward funding based on a competition, the applicant should describe their goals in detail and the process they will use to finalize the list of marine debris targets.

For applications that propose administering a competition for subawardees, the application should include what applicants, geographies, and types of marine debris will be eligible for the competition. Applications should identify the targeted applicant pool for sub-awards (if applicable), as well as the expected number and funding range of sub-awards to be made for the overall life of the project. Applications should also include the methods proposed for identifying potential sub-awards or projects, how NOAA will be involved in the process and funding decisions, and the criteria that will be used for selecting strong projects and determining the success of project activities. Please note, it is NOAA's intention to maintain maximum competition and flexibility in the administration of federal funds through these awards. If the applicant anticipates limiting competition or otherwise restricting the allocation of funding to specific purposes, these limitations or restrictions should be clearly detailed in the narrative.

- iii) Disposal Approach: For applications that propose executing a plan for a particular marine debris removal project, the application should describe the planned disposal methods, including plans for alternative disposal as defined in Section I.B. Program Priorities. For applications that propose administering a competition for subawardees that will propose marine debris removal projects, the application should describe how disposal methods will be considered and tracked as part of the competition and on-going monitoring.
- iv) Prevention Activities (see Section I.B): For prevention activities proposed, the application should clearly describe the activities and how they complement the removal and disposal activities proposed. By incorporating prevention activities along with removal, the application should describe how the likelihood of reaccumulation of specific debris types will decrease. Prevention activities may include those activities aimed at building capacity to address chronic large marine debris problems (See I.B). Any prevention activities aimed at changing behaviors and raising awareness should also be described. Applicants should clearly identify the target audience for any prevention activities and describe the

approaches that will be used to engage that audience.

- v) **Monitoring Activities:** If monitoring activities are being proposed, clear methods and information on data collection should be outlined. The application should clearly describe how the activities complement the removal and disposal activities being proposed.
- d) **Permitting and Compliance:** A discussion of how the applicant organization will ensure that all necessary environmental permits will be secured prior to the use of federal funds on activities where such permits are required. Applicants should note, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires NOAA to analyze a project's potential environmental impacts. As such, this section should also describe how necessary project information would be provided to NOAA staff in order to ensure compliance with all federal regulatory requirements. All successful applicants will be expected to have a process in place to provide as much detailed information as is reasonable on project activities, including details about site locations, species and habitat(s) to be affected, on-the-ground project activities and processes proposed, the time of year that work will take place, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, potential introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to marine mammals, impacts to endangered and threatened species or their designated critical habitat, impacts to coral reef systems). See Section VI. Award Administration Information (Subsection B.(10) "NEPA Requirements") for further detail on the NEPA process and requirements for applicants.
- e) **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility:** Information on how proposed activities will promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Projects that demonstrate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through proactive, meaningful, and equitable actions and community engagement in the identification, design, and/or implementation of proposed project activities will be prioritized. This may be demonstrated in a variety of ways and examples include but are not limited to working in or with under resourced or underserved communities as part of project development or execution; working with stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues, working with a project team with diverse perspectives (including, but not limited to, sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic locations), or incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project. Additionally, the applicant should indicate any experience they or their project partners have in promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility in their past work.

Describe how benefits from the proposed work will flow to Tribal and/or underserved communities and how those benefits will be measured. When possible, please use the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov>) to identify if any known project locations take place in disadvantaged communities. We are requesting use of this tool designed to assist agencies in defining and identifying disadvantaged communities. This tool measures environmental and socioeconomic burdens as well as health, housing, and transportation burdens at the census tract level. In this tool, Federally Recognized Tribes, including Alaska Native Villages, are also considered disadvantaged communities. We recognize this tool does not cover all burdens or lack of resources for all Tribal and/or underserved communities, especially for territories and freely associated states. In cases where burdens are not identified by CEJST for a community where project activities will occur, applicants may include their own identification of Tribal or underserved communities based on similar burdens or lack of resources, if CEJST does not identify those communities as disadvantaged. This may include, but is not limited to, a description of the community's previous or current access to resources, community history, power, values, or how they have been historically marginalized and/or overburdened by pollution.

Priority will be given to removal projects that fully meet the other priorities of this competition and describe meaningful engagement with Tribal or underserved communities. Meaningful engagement can occur in the identification, design, and/or implementation of proposed projects (see Section I.B). Some examples of ways to demonstrate meaningful engagement with a Tribal or underserved community include, but are not limited to:

- Describing how Tribal or underserved communities were/will be engaged in the removal site selection process/removal methods to ensure the removals in their community will be seen as a benefit and there aren't unintentional consequences by targeting removals located in an underserved community without the input of that community
- Describing specific project roles that will be conducted by Tribal or underserved community members located in the project area and/or impacted by the targeted debris presence/proposed removal project activities. This description should include how those roles were/will be selected. Ideally, these roles would be included in both the design and execution of the removal activities.

- Describing engagement with the underserved community to learn about the specific challenges they are facing and how the proposed removal activities can be conducted to help mitigate those challenges (i.e., ADV removals will make a local waterfront safer/more accessible, removal of DFG will enhance local fisheries and improve food security, removal of large debris items are expected to restore tourism revenue to improve the local economy, etc.)
- f) **Community Involvement:** Information on how proposed activities will promote community involvement and stewardship. Where appropriate, projects funded under this opportunity may encourage community involvement, such as through direct involvement in project activities, involvement in marine debris prevention, education, and outreach activities that are related to funded work, hands-on training, cash contributions, or donation of in-kind goods and services such as boat time and/or monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews.
- g) **Project Implementation Timeline and Milestones:** Indicate when the project is expected to begin (month and year, not before August 1, 2024) and end, and include a timeline for other key project activities and benchmarks, including expected competition deadlines for projects proposing subawards.
- h) **Roles and Responsibilities, Project Staff, and Letters of Commitment:**
Applicants should demonstrate a strong understanding of the marine debris issue and the technical requirements of large debris removal and disposal. Information on the roles and responsibilities of applicant organization staff should be detailed. Describe the organizational structure of the applicant and the qualifications of project staff. Describe the level of staff experience and qualifications in managing grants and implementing projects, including specifically any that addressed marine debris. All proposals should clearly demonstrate how the geographic scope of the proposed project fits with the applicant's own expertise, capabilities, and mission.
- Include a description of the experience and qualifications of relevant subcontractors conducting project work. If applicable, describe any previous NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include name(s) of any relevant NOAA staff. Examples of successfully implemented past projects, or the organization's experience successfully managing federal grants, partnerships, or funding competitions (if applicable) should be provided. If project staff have no specific examples to provide, applicants will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, demonstrated by education, training, and/or experience of primary project participants. Additionally, letters of support should be provided from any other

organizations involved to document their commitment to the proposal's goals and objectives, and to show support for long-term goals extending beyond the project's period of performance. Letters of support do not count toward the page limit for the Narrative.

- i) **References Cited:** Include all references to source materials cited within the proposal, if applicable. Applicants may follow any accepted scholarly format for citations that includes authors' names, year of publication, article and journal (or chapter and book) title, volume number, and page numbers. The Reference Cited section is not included in the 15-page limit but should include bibliographic references only (i.e., no additional parenthetical information), and can be included as either a separate attachment or part of the Narrative.

3. Data Management Plan (2 pages or less)

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

The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in Section VI. Award Administration Information (Subsection B.9 "Data Management Guidance) below. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of the proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of project data and information expected to be created during the course of the project (e.g., removal metrics, outreach metrics, etc.); the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access and the medium by which the data will be shared; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The NOAA MDP manages and maintains a public-facing Clearinghouse (<https://clearinghouse.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>) and is able to ensure grantee compliance with Data Management requirements by hosting project data on that platform.

A sample Data Management Plan may be found at:
<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources/funding-opportunities>

4. Budget Justification Narrative (8 pages or less)

Applicants should follow NOAA's Budget Narrative Guidance document to ensure the appropriate content and format is provided with the proposal. This document can be found at: https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf

The Budget Justification should include both a narrative and a summary budget table that lay out and describe each line item's various costs in as much detail as is reasonable. For clarification and simplicity, the Budget Justification narrative should be organized using the object classes in the order that they appear on the SF424A. Include detailed descriptions of all cost justifications for both federal funds and any cost sharing or matching funds (cost share or matching funds should be described in the same level of detail as the federal funds). Cost sharing, leveraged funds, and in-kind support are important to ensuring these projects are impactful and well supported. In cases where non-federal match or informal leverage cannot be obtained, the challenges preventing this type of support should be described.

The amounts described in the Budget Justification narrative and summary table must match the dollar amounts on all required forms. The summary budget table does not count toward the 8-page limit.

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

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

Projects funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law may be required to display signage throughout any active removal or construction phases that acknowledges funding from NOAA Marine Debris Program and other contributing partners (see VI.B.2 Special Award Conditions). Any project activities where signage would be relevant should include this in their budget request. Additionally, project leads from proposals selected for funding

may be required to participate in a Marine Debris Removal Grantee meeting to share the results of the work conducted, discuss challenges, and foster connections across projects. Costs for any travel support should be included in the budget request.

For any subawards expected to be made, describe the process that will be used to identify recipients and the justification for that process. NOAA expects successful applicants to prioritize cost effectiveness and the use of local contractors where possible and if appropriate.

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

Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving the project's stated goals, and a comparison with rental costs should be provided to justify the need to purchase. If rental of equipment is not possible, an explanation will be required in the budget narrative.

Refer to Section IV. Application and Submission Information (Subsection F(2) "Indirect Costs") regarding indirect costs in the budget.

5. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume NOAA has any prior knowledge relative to the merits of the project described in the proposal. As such, proposals should be written with an appropriate level of detail. Detailed maps of project activities, photographs of the targeted debris/project site characteristics, summaries of project designs, and letters of support from project partners (especially those partners critical to the success of the project) are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the Narrative page limit, although supplementary materials should not exceed 20 pages. Letters of support from partners, local, state, and federal government agencies, natural resource and/or waste management agencies, industry, and Congressional representatives are also helpful in demonstrating support for the project and if applicable, how project results will be applied to their management objectives. Such supplementary information should be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) application.

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

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

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

Advanced divers are divers with advanced diving training for the proposed tasks and in compliance with OSHA guidelines. Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that snorkelers should complete only simple activities such as surveys and removal of light, non-entangling objects. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of diving being undertaken.

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

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

or fishing line.

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in its application; and (iii) 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 UEI 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 several weeks to complete the SAM registration process. Existing registrations may need to be renewed, as such applicants should plan accordingly.

D. Submission Dates and Times

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND APPLICANTS BEGIN THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS EARLY. NOAA WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE SUBMISSIONS. APPLICANTS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO SUBMIT IN ADVANCE OF THE DEADLINE. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY. DUE TO LIMITED STAFF TIME, HARDCOPY APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

This funding opportunity requires a Letter of Intent to be submitted for competitive review before a full proposal can be submitted. LOIs must be received via email as an attachment (to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov) no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, October 27, 2023. If invited per the instructions in this announcement, full proposals must then be submitted through and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, February 23, 2024. Due to limited staff time, hardcopy LOIs or full applications will not be accepted.

Please keep in mind that the registration processes for SAM.gov and Grants.gov may take as long as several weeks and may affect your submission timeline (see Sections IV. Application and Submission Information, Subsections C “Unique Entity Identifier and system for Award Management (SAM), and G “Other Submission Requirements” of this

announcement).

As stated above, no hardcopy, fax, or email applications will be accepted. Applicants without the ability to apply electronically should contact the program to discuss alternate arrangements for submission. It is recommended applications are submitted ahead of the deadline to avoid technical difficulties with Grants.gov.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grants programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation but will not be given preferential treatment.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications for federal financial assistance are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." All applications for funding under this competition are required to complete item 19 on the SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, contractual costs, supplies, and indirect costs, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Currently, allowable costs are determined by reference to 2 C.F.R. 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." All subawards are also subject to these federal cost principles. Award recipients are subject to 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.327 when implementing contracts under an award.

Pre-award costs are allowable only with the written approval by NOAA under 2 C.F.R. 200.458 except to the extent allowed for research awards under 2 C.F.R. 200.308(e)(4). Any pre-award costs incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award are at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be August 1, 2024. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed project activities.

The Build America Buy America Act, enacted as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, established a domestic content procurement preference for all Federal financial assistance obligated for infrastructure projects. The domestic content procurement preference requires that all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in covered infrastructure projects are produced in the United States. If applicable, all projects should ensure adherence to this requirement.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government, or if the applicant elects the 10% de minimis rate, as described below. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates may propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been federally-approved and documentation is readily available.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal Government should be included with the application. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Raishan Adams, Branch Chief, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or raishan.adams@noaa.gov.

G. Other Submission Requirements

If invited, full applications must be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). To use Grants.gov, applicants must have an active Grants.gov registration, and be registered with SAM.gov (as described in Section IV. Application and Submission Information (Subsection C "Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)"). Applicants should note that it may take up to several weeks for first time users to register with each of these systems. Even if an applicant has registered with each of these systems previously, renewing, updating or reactivating accounts are required prior to proposal submission, and may take some time to complete. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect.

Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days. For further information please visit <http://www.sam.gov>. See also 2 C.F.R. 25.

Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

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

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

LETTER OF INTENT EVALUATION CRITERIA:

LOIs will be reviewed to ascertain whether the proposal has the potential to address marine debris removal activities that meet the competition's priorities. Priorities are listed in Section I.B above.

By assigning a score of 0 to 5 to each criterion, the NOAA MDP will assess whether the proposed approach is appropriate, focused on priority marine debris issues, and whether the LOI clearly explains how project activities will be carried out. Specifically, LOIs will be evaluated using the following criteria and weighting:

- How likely is it that the project will have impactful benefits to NOAA trust resources, and the surrounding coastal environment or community (as described in Section I.B)? Does the LOI clearly describe the anticipated ecological and socio-economic outcomes that the project is expected to produce, including how the project benefits will be sustained beyond the life of the project? Are project metrics described and estimates provided? (30%)
- Does the LOI clearly identify the project's overall goals and objectives and lay out a realistic and cost-effective approach? How well developed are the proposal ideas at this stage? Does it clearly state the purpose of the project and specific tasks to be

accomplished with requested funds and clearly describe proposed techniques that will be used? (20%)

- Does the organization demonstrate the capabilities, experience, or expertise that would lead to a successful effort? Organizations demonstrating high levels of technical and administrative expertise or capability are likely to score higher on this criterion. (15%)

- Does the LOI include prevention activities? Is there an appropriate and effective level of prevention activities to be conducted about the identified marine debris issue to prevent reaccumulation? Is a target audience identified? (20%)

- Does the project demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility will be promoted in the proposed work? Does the proposal describe proposed activities taking place in Tribal and/or underserved communities and whether a portion of the benefits will flow to those communities and how those benefits will be measured? Does the project include meaningful engagement with Tribal or underserved communities? Projects that indicate a high likelihood of a realized benefit and meaningful engagement (see Section I.B) with the community in developing the proposal and executing the project activities will score higher on this criterion. Applicants that reference CEJST (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov>) will score higher in this criterion. If CEJST does not have adequate data to identify a community as disadvantaged, applicants should outline other identifying burdens that define that community as underserved. (15%)

The NOAA MDP may use the Selection Factors described in Section V.C. below during the LOI process to determine final invitations. Furthermore, the NOAA MDP may establish cut offs based on reviewer score or the number of reviewer invite recommendations.

FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Technical reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five evaluation criteria and respective percentages specified below. Each of the five evaluation criteria have sub-criteria components. Applications that fully address the issues described in all five sub-criteria are likely to be more competitive.

The criteria are also available in table format on the NOAA MDP website (<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources/funding-opportunities>). This is the recommended viewing format for both applicants and reviewers, for clarity of the expectations of a strong

proposal.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following metrics for each priority.

Summary of Evaluation Criteria

- Importance and Applicability of Proposal to Program Priorities (40 points)
- Technical Merit (25 points)
- Overall Qualification of Applicant (10 points)
- Project Costs (15 points)
- Community Support (10 points)

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal to Program Priorities (40 points)

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

Project Outcomes (30 points)

- Will the project have impactful benefits to NOAA trust resources, and the surrounding coastal environment or community (as described in Section I.B)? Will the project cover an appropriate geographic scale and remove large marine debris? (10 points)
- Does the proposal clearly describe the anticipated ecological and socio-economic outcomes that the project is expected to produce? (10 points)
- Does the proposal include strategies to prevent the reaccumulation of marine debris? This may include project activities aimed at building capacity to address chronic large marine debris problems, or activities aimed at sustaining the benefits of the marine debris removal proposed in the application. (6 points)
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the prevention strategies will ensure the project benefits will be sustained beyond the life of the project? (4 points)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (10 points)

- Does the applicant identify project activities taking place in and/or benefits flowing to a Tribal or underserved community, and does that community have a connection to the project activities? Applicants that reference CEJST

(<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/>) will score higher in this criterion. If CEJST does not have adequate data to identify a community as disadvantaged, applicants should outline other identifying burdens that define that community as underserved. (4 points)

- Does the application indicate the removal of this debris will help address other challenges the underserved community is facing (eg. removal of debris will help improve local fisheries/food security)? (2 points)
- Does the applicant describe how their team will bring a diversity of viewpoints to this project? (2 points)
- Does the applicant describe any experience they or their project partners have in promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility in their past work? (2 points)

Projects that demonstrate a thoughtful approach to coordinate among diverse groups and ensure federal funding is allocated in the most efficient and equitable way, and does not duplicate any existing efforts, as well as those that aim to prioritize the use of local partners/contractors, where possible and appropriate, will score higher on this criterion.

2. Technical Merit (25 points)

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

Project Goals and Objectives (5 points)

- Does the proposal clearly identify the project's overall goals and objectives and are they realistic and achievable? Reference Section IV.B.2 which describes the requirements for the Project Narrative.

Project Description (10 points)

- Does the application provide a realistic project timeline (in line with the award period guidelines described in Section II.B)? (2 points)
- Does the application provide a clear description of proposed removal, disposal, prevention, and monitoring techniques and activities likely to be implemented and

are these techniques appropriate for the project? (8 points)

Environmental Impacts (5 points)

- Does the application include detailed maps of removal sites and information on the expected species that may be encountered in the area and affected by project activities? (3 points)

- Does the applicant provide assurances that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws? (2 points)

Applications submitted with all of the above information, along with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations, or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed debris removal activities are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher on this criterion. Additionally, proposals that demonstrate that the project site selection process included consideration of benefit to/impact on a Tribal and/or underserved community or how those communities were meaningfully engaged in the selection process are also likely to score higher.

Project Metrics (5 points)

- Does the applicant describe how they and any project partners or subawardees will collect specific, measurable metrics on removal, disposal, prevention, monitoring, species/habitat impacts, volunteer participation, economic benefits, benefits to Tribal and/or underserved communities and other performance measures as described above in Section IV. B? Do they provide realistic estimates of these metrics? (3 points)

- Does the proposal include a Data Management Plan? If so, does it adequately describe what data will be collected during the project and how it will be made accessible and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner, in compliance with Data Management requirements described in Section VI.B.9? (2 points)

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to meet proposal objectives.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Applicant Technical & Administrative Qualifications (10 points)

- Do the applicant and any identified project partners or subawardees have the ability and expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work? Does the applicant propose to prioritize the engagement of local partners or removal contractors? This should be indicated by the qualifications, planning, and/or past experience of project partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing large debris removal, disposal, prevention, and post-removal monitoring projects, or regional coordination efforts. (5 points)

- Does the applicant have the administrative capacity (i.e., the administrative resources and capabilities that the applicant has, or that are available to the applicant) to successfully manage both the federal award as well as any potential subawards? (5 points)

Proposals that demonstrate access to extensive technical expertise and federal grant experience, or that have systems and personnel in place to effectively manage federal grant requirements are likely to score higher on this criterion. Applicants with the ability to ensure project success through on-the-ground monitoring and oversight, and effectively track and report on project/subaward accomplishments are likely to score higher on this criterion.

4. Project Costs (15 points)

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

Project Budget Composition (5 points)

- Is the overall budget realistic, enabling the applicant to effectively and successfully meet all proposed objectives with the funding requested? (3 points)

- Is the overall budget reasonable, including only those costs necessary to effectively and successfully meet all proposed objectives? (2 points)

Applications that propose to use NOAA funds to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative activities are unlikely to score high under this criterion. Funding directed at supporting new or impactful efforts, or programs that require funding to scale-up or expand their existing efforts to achieve broader and more impactful outcomes are likely to score higher under this criterion.

Project Budget Organization (5 points)

- Does the budget justification narrative contain a sufficient level of detail, as required in Section IV.B.? This includes whether the applicant includes a detailed summary budget table, the budget is organized by SF-424A object classes, and describes both the federal and non-federal funding needs for all required project costs (i.e., for both implementation and administration activities).

Proposals with detailed Budget Narratives that follow the format of NOAA's Budget Narrative Guidance document (link is provided in Section IV.B.) are likely to score higher on this criterion.

Cost-sharing and Leveraging Federal Funds (5 points)

- Does the applicant complement NOAA's investment with other funding sources, including formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal, leveraged funds? Are matching and/or leveraged funding sources (both planned and confirmed) documented in the proposal? In cases where non-federal match or informal leverage are not provided, does the proposal describe challenges in a way that indicates it is unlikely the applicant could have done more to secure match or leveraged funds?

5. Community Support (10 points)

This criterion evaluates whether the project has effective engagement from relevant stakeholders, including engagement of underserved and underrepresented communities, if applicable. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Community Support (10 points)

- Does the proposal effectively integrate well with existing regional or national publicly vetted programs, priorities, or strategic plans? (2 points)

Program or plan examples include, but are not limited to: NOAA Marine Debris Action Plans, National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, 2021-2025 NOAA MDP Strategic Plan, National Marine Sanctuary management plans etc. Check your region's page on the NOAA MDP website (<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/your-region>) for a regional Marine Debris Action Plan. Projects that work toward actions prioritized in the above, or similar, plans will score higher on this criterion.

- Has the applicant demonstrated meaningful engagement from project partners (as defined in Section I.B.), and strong community support for the project? This may be

reflected by the diversity, strength and involvement of project participants, partners and local entities, as well as include letters of support from project partners, state and local governments, members of Congress, private landowners, community groups, or relevant resource agency personnel familiar with the issue? Do these letters indicate that the partners are meaningfully involved in both the planning and execution of the project? (8 points)

Proposals that include letters of support from all proposed project partners will score higher on this criterion if those letters demonstrate the specific commitments to the project. This also includes letters from landowners and other stakeholders involved with or impacted by the project, granting permissions and other assurances that the project has their full support. As appropriate, projects that make connections to underserved and/or underrepresented individuals or communities, both in the development of the proposal and/or to broaden participation of stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues and/or for whom social and economic vulnerability due to marine debris impacts is high, may score higher on this criterion.

B. Review and Selection Process

Letters of intent and full proposal applications will be screened to determine if they are eligible, complete, and responsive to this funding announcement. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application with omitted documentation or a minor administrative discrepancy that can be easily rectified or cured.

LETTER OF INTENT MERIT REVIEW

Letters of Intent will undergo a merit review by at least three qualified reviewers, in accordance with the LETTER OF INTENT EVALUATION CRITERIA (see Section V.A). Each reviewer will evaluate their assigned proposals and provide individual scores. Reviewers may discuss applications with each other but scoring will be on an individual basis. The MDP will set a cut off score to determine which LOIs will receive invitations to submit full proposals. The NOAA MDP may also use the Selection Factors described in Section V.C. below during the LOI process to determine final invitations.

FULL PROPOSAL MERIT REVIEW

Full proposal applications will undergo a technical merit review where they will be evaluated by at least three qualified reviewers, and according to the evaluation criteria and weights described in this announcement (see Section V. Application Review Information

(Subsection A “Application Review Information”). Proposals may be organized into distinct review groups (e.g., based on geography, project type, or some combination thereof), with reviewers assigned to one or more review groups. Each reviewer will evaluate their assigned proposals and provide individual scores, comments, and/or recommendations. Reviewers may discuss applications with each other, but if one or more non-federal reviewers are involved, scoring will be on an individual basis and no consensus advice will be given. Once the technical merit reviews are complete (and provided that no panel review is conducted, as discussed below), reviewer comments, project scores, and a rank order for each review group will be presented to the NOAA MDP electing Official. Based on the results of the technical merit review, the Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division based on those review group rankings. The Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding out of rank order if justified by any of the selection factors listed below in Section V. Application Review Information (Subsection C “Selection Factors”). The Selecting Official may not recommend proposals for funding from all review groups, and conversely, may elect multiple awards from the same review group if it is determined they are higher quality proposals.

In some cases, as determined by the Competition Manager, after the technical merit review is complete for full proposals but prior to presenting final recommendations to the Selecting Official, NOAA may conduct a secondary panel review to determine which top-ranked proposals best meet the program’s objectives and priorities outlined in Section I. Funding Opportunity Description (Subsections A “Program Objective” and B” Program Priorities”) and were most responsive to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section V.A. The panel would be composed of federal employees and may convene in person, by telephone, or video conference. The panel would be presented with the top ranked applications (based on the results of the technical merit review), technical review scores, and comments for each application. The panel would then rate all top ranked proposals based on their relevance to the program priorities outlined in this NOFO.

The panel review rating would then be presented to the Selecting Official in order to determine which applications should be recommended to the NOAA Grants Management Division. The Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding out of the panel review’s rank order if justified by any of the selection factors listed below in Section V. Application Review Information (Subsection C “Selection Factors”). NOAA will aim for geographic diversity with the portfolio of projects awarded under this solicitation and will balance that objective with the objective for high-impact projects.

Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and may be

requested to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. All performance is checked through SAM.gov under Responsibilities and Qualifications. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

Applicants may submit comments to the System for Award Management, about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206.

C. Selection Factors

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

1. The availability of funding
2. The balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically

- b. By institution type
 - c. By partner type
 - d. By habitat type
 - e. By debris type
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies
 4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I. Funding Opportunity Description Subsections A “Program Objective” and B “Program Priorities” of this announcement
 5. The applicant's capacity to meet program objectives, or their prior award performance
 6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups, including tribes and underserved communities; and
 7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Management Division.
 8. Relevance to legislative priorities of the NOAA MDP.
Therefore, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NOAA anticipates that successful applications will be identified by April 1, 2024, and notifications to all applicants are anticipated to be made as soon as possible thereafter. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be August 1, 2024, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, environmental compliance analysis, and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed project activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets

prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be announced or initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. A "Notice of Award" will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA electronic grants management system.

PRE-AWARD COSTS. Per 2 CFR 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 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be 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

1. 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. These may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

2. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements: Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

3. 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 electronic grants management system at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

4. Research Terms and Conditions: For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the 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.

5. Bureau Terms and Conditions: Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA 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>.

6. Specific Award Conditions: In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the NOAA electronic grants management system award package may contain specific award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as the required use of the NOAA MDP Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 for submitting semiannual progress

reports, as well as any signage requirements associated with the funding source. 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 IJJA), 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> 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.

7. Access to Information:

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 nondisclosure 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 Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

In addition, 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.

8. Executive Order 12866: This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866 (Regulatory Planning and Review).

9. Data Management Guidance:

- (a) Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by NOAA. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format (Machine-readable means the data are stored on a computer in a digital format whose structure is well described and the data can be read without the aid of a human), preferably a widely-used or open-standard format (An open-standard format is one that does not require proprietary software to be read), and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), based on widely used or international standards.
- (b) Funding recipients are responsible for ensuring that environmental data produced by the project is discoverable and accessible to the general public in the required timeframes. The NOAA Marine Debris Program requires that public access to grant-produced data be enabled by one of the following methods (1) data hosting by the NOAA MDP (preferred method; NOAA MDP manages and maintains a public-facing Clearinghouse and is able to ensure grantee compliance with Data Management requirements by housing project data on the Clearinghouse); (2) the recipient establishing their own procedures and hosting capabilities for collected environmental data; or (3) hosting by another authorized organization (such as NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information). Regardless of hosting method, the recipient is responsible for

collecting, managing, and appropriately structuring data and metadata. The NOAA MDP does not require any specific data format, access method, or other technical guidance beyond what is described in this section, however the use of open-standard formats and widely used methods is encouraged. The proposal budget may include reasonable costs associated with compliance with this data management guidance. The NOAA MDP encourages grantees to coordinate with NOAA staff on the best approach to meet this public access requirement. In some cases, as appropriate, NOAA may request project data and share / post project data on NOAA systems, potentially in addition to the agreed data sharing/access approach. The proposal may request permission not to make data publicly accessible and the proposal should explain rationale for lack of public access. If funded, the applicant will need to obtain approval from Responsible NOAA Official listed below.

- (c) Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied, see Section IV. Application and Submission Information (Subsection B.4 “Data Management Plan” above). The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance described in this section. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance.
- (d) The NOAA MDP may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.
- (e) Applicants are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than one year upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made

publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal. Manuscripts submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository must also be 508 compliant. For more information about the repository, see <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/welcome>.

- (f) Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data Management Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.
- (g) Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under:
https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf
- (h) The Responsible NOAA MDP Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients: Amanda Dwyer (amanda.dwyer@noaa.gov); 240-533-0402.

10. NEPA Requirements:

As stated in Section IV.B., and as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, 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.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's award package, and under their description of program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

Applicants to be recommended for funding will be required to answer relevant questions from the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants (OMB Control Number 0648-0538; <https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/grants.html>). These applicants may be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an Environmental Assessment or other NEPA analysis, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an Environmental Assessment that covers the proposed

activities, if one exists, if NOAA determines that it is required. This may also be required of applicants proposing activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA MDP's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Applicants will be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do this will result in denial of an application. Applicants will be notified if additional analysis is required after the peer review stage. Successful applications cannot be recommended for funding until NOAA completes the NEPA process.

Specific award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding NEPA compliance requirements (and compliance with other applicable law requirements) and in some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a specific award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment. Projects that would require permits to complete the project should list them and include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired.

NOAA may make funding recommendations based on the level of effort needed to fulfill NEPA requirements. The NOAA MDP PEA and FONSI can be found on the NOAA MDP website: http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp_pea.pdf.

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

11. 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.

12. 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 it 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.

13. 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 America, Buy America (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.

-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.

-DEFINITIONS. “Construction materials” includes 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(2) —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.

(1) Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives.

(2) IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

14. NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harrassment 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>.

C. Reporting

Reporting requirements are described at 2 CFR 200.328-.330, 2 CFR Part 170, and in the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress

and financial reports are generally due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods, however more frequent reporting may be required. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA electronic grants management system and are due no later than 30 days after each reporting period ends. Interim reports for the last reporting period may not be required in some cases. A final report is due no later than 120 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. A project progress report template may be provided by the NOAA MDP. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the NOAA electronic grants management system award package, however the following information should be reported at minimum: For interim progress reports, the Performance Narrative should include a description of project activities and accomplishments that covers the reporting period only, and contain at least the following components: overall short and long-term goals for the project and a description of the approved award activities that were performed to achieve those goals; a comparison of actual accomplishments to the schedule established in the award. This should include a narrative and details on the status of approved activities (completed, not-completed, on-going), and an explanation of why targets may not have been met or other extenuating circumstances surrounding project progress; quantitative performance metrics (e.g., weight of debris removed, number of vessels removed, weight of debris disposed through alternative methods, number of volunteers); details on any perceived challenges or potential roadblocks to future progress; an updated timeline of remaining tasks, and a summary of any changes made to the project's approved plan that occurred during the reporting period.

For the final progress report, the Performance Narrative should be a comprehensive description of project activities and accomplishments that covers the entire award period, and contain the following components: overall short and long-term goals and background, including relevance of the project to reducing the impacts of marine debris on NOAA trust species populations and habitats and/or increasing awareness about marine debris issues; a description of any NOAA trust species or habitats that the project benefited; how important the project was to a particular species or habitat; how important the project was to human use values of a given resource (e.g., commercial, recreational uses, or other ecosystem services); the prevention activities conducted, including any behavior change measurement practices used; lessons learned (e.g., Best Management Practices (BMPs) or protocols followed, new techniques tested, innovative partnerships established); a description of any deviations from original plans and challenges faced; other general accomplishments (e.g., results and outcomes). Reports should explain the project's performance measures (e.g., weight of debris removed, number of vessels removed, weight of debris disposed through alternative methods, number of volunteers, volunteer hours, etc.) and provide a summary of monitoring

results, if any; a description of outreach activities and products; and next steps for any additional marine debris prevention efforts, debris removal, monitoring, or research needs, as applicable.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 is required for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (31 U.S.C. 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 on all subawards over \$30,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Amanda Dwyer (amanda.dwyer@noaa.gov); 240-533-0402.

VIII. Other Information

Not Applicable.