

American Lobster Research Program 2023

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: American Lobster Research Program 2023

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-SG-2023-2007887

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.417, Sea Grant Support

Dates: Applications must be submitted to Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, May 10, 2023.

Funding Opportunity Description:

The National Sea Grant College Program was enacted by U.S. Congress in 1966 (amended in 2020, Public Law 116-221) to support leveraged federal and state partnerships that harness the intellectual capacity of the nation's universities and research institutions to solve problems and generate opportunities in coastal communities.

The American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) and its fishery are facing a time of significant complexity and uncertainty with far-reaching ecological and economic impacts. In 2021, the American lobster fishery landed 134 million pounds worth approximately 920 million dollars. In Maine, where approximately eighty-percent of the commercially harvested lobster are landed, the value of the 2021 harvest set a record but there is cause for concern. While the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's 2020 stock assessment indicated record high stock abundance in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank, analyses of landing data from the state of Maine show a downward trend from a high in 2016 of 132 million pounds to an average annual 102 million pounds from 2019 to 2021. As ecosystem changes persist, the Gulf of Maine warms at a rapid rate, and southern New England continues to experience low abundance and recruitment failure, it is imperative that research, data, observations, and application are needed to understand and inform the current state and also prepare for the future state of the American Lobster fishery.

The American Lobster fishery's sustainability relies not only on the ecological understanding of the species but also the economic resiliency of the industry. Expanding uses of the marine environment such as offshore wind energy development and regulatory uncertainties related to the Atlantic Large

Whale Take Reduction Plan (FR–210827–0171) have introduced the potential for significant socio-economic impacts to the lobster industry. These changes affect how and where the lobster industry operates, placing additional pressures on fishing communities and a continued need to understand the biological and human dimensions of this significant fishery. Research approaches that examine the social, behavioral, and economic implications of and adaptations to ecosystem and/or regulatory changes are important to enhance community resiliency and fill a knowledge gap for resource managers in need of research and data to inform integrated approaches to complex marine issues.

In FY23, consistent with its mission to enhance practical use and conservation in order to create a sustainable economy and environment, Sea Grant's American Lobster Research Program will fund projects that address priority research needs to enhance our understanding of and address impacts to this significant, complex and dynamic fishery. Projects that involve partnerships among industry, State agencies, and/or academia, including but not limited to co-production and cooperative research, are strongly encouraged.

Topics suitable for investigation on American lobster and its fishery under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) should have a geographic focus on the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and/or southern New England and address one or more of the following funding priorities:

- (1) Population dynamics, including but not limited to distribution and abundance in regards to ecosystem changes.
- (2) Life history parameters, including but not limited to temperature effects, ocean acidification, and other changing climate conditions.
- (3) Species interactions and behavior.
- (4) Social, behavioral, or economic research including but not limited to impact studies, assessments, and policy analyses regarding measures under consideration for inclusion in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan.

Sea Grant anticipates having up to \$2 million dollars to fund a diversity of projects with funding requests up to \$500k in FY23. Projects may be one or two years in duration with a maximum of two years.

This document sets out requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-SG-2023-2007887. Additional guidance and tips on how best to prepare an application are provided in the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#).

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) and its fishery are facing a time of significant complexity and uncertainty with far-reaching ecological and economic impacts. Ecosystem changes across the fishery's geographic range persist. Recent data from the 2020 ASMFC stock assessment shows a mixed picture of high stock abundance in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank while data from the state of Maine show a consistent downward trend in landings over time from 2016 to 2021. This uncertainty underscores the need for continued research, data, and observations to not only understand the fishery's current state but prepare for its future state. Expanding uses of the marine environment and regulatory uncertainties related to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (FR-210827-0171) have introduced the potential for significant socio-economic impacts to the lobster industry. These changes affect how and where the lobster industry operates, placing additional pressures on fishing communities. Research approaches that examine the social, behavioral, and economic implications of and adaptations to ecosystem and/or regulatory changes are important to enhance community resiliency and fill a knowledge gap for resource managers in need of research and data to inform integrated approaches to complex marine issues.

In response, the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant)'s FY2023 American Lobster Research Program, will fund projects that address priority research needs to enhance our understanding of and address impacts to this significant and dynamic fishery in a time of unprecedented ecological complexity and economic uncertainty. The geographic focus for this opportunity is the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and/or southern New England. Projects that involve partnerships among industry, State agencies, and/or academia, including but not limited to co-production and cooperative research, are strongly encouraged.

The American Lobster Research Program is part of Sea Grant's American Lobster Initiative. This Initiative is a two-part effort that supports a regional extension program in the Northeast and a national research competition. The American Lobster Research Program is run by the National Sea Grant Office to address critical knowledge gaps about American lobster and support the economic resiliency of its iconic fishery in the face of a changing climate.

B. Program Priorities

It is a priority of the American Lobster Research Program to fund a robust and diverse set of projects that address research priorities needed to advance ecological understanding, inform management, and improve resiliency of the American Lobster fishery in a time of unprecedented ecosystem change and economic uncertainty. Projects that involve partnerships among industry, State agencies, and/or academia, including but not limited to co-production and cooperative research, are a priority and strongly encouraged.

Topics suitable for investigation on American lobster and its fishery under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) should have a geographic focus on the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and/or southern New England and address one or more of the following funding priorities:

- (1) Population dynamics, including but not limited to distribution and abundance in regards to ecosystem changes.
- (2) Life history parameters, including but not limited to temperature effects, ocean acidification, and other changing climate conditions.
- (3) Species interactions and behavior.
- (4) Social, behavioral, or economic research including but not limited to impact studies, assessments, and policy analyses regarding measures under consideration for inclusion in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under the National Sea Grant College Program Act of 1966, as amended (33 USC 1121 et seq.).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Subject to the availability of funding, this announcement describes how eligible applicants should apply for NOAA-OAR-SG-2023-2007887. Sea Grant anticipates having up to \$2 million dollars to fund a diversity of projects with funding requests up to \$500K in FY23. Projects may be one or two years in duration with a maximum of two years.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards, or that any application will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, it does so at its own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for any incurred project costs if a project fails to receive full funding.

B. Project/Award Period

The anticipated start date is September 1, 2023, with projects to be completed no later than August

31, 2025.

Pre-award spending may be authorized 90 days prior to the start date of the award. However, all costs incurred before NOAA makes the award are at the recipient's risk (i.e., NOAA is not required to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive an award or if the award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs).

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument is a cooperative agreement to an eligible institution. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial involvement of the federal government during performance of the proposed work is anticipated. The nature of the substantial involvement includes communicating and coordinating with the National Sea Grant Office as part of Sea Grant's American Lobster Initiative, including the Lobster Regional Extension Program. For more information, contact the competition manager at sg.grants@noaa.gov.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible and encouraged to participate in this funding opportunity: any individual; any public or private corporation, partnership, or other association or entity (including any Sea Grant College, Sea Grant Institute or other institution); or any State, political subdivision of a State, Tribal government or agency or officer thereof. Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive federal funding under this competition; however, federal scientists and other employees can serve as uncompensated partners or co-Principal Investigators on applications. Federal labs and offices can also make available specialized expertise, facilities or equipment to applicants but cannot be compensated under this competition for their use, nor can the value of such assets be used as match.

The National Sea Grant College Program champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by recruiting, retaining and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives and ways of thinking. We encourage applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this opportunity.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Non-federal matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the federal funding request must be provided unless a waiver justified by statute is granted, such as the waiver for insular areas granted by the Department of Commerce pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a. If you believe your application may qualify for a waiver, please contact the National Sea Grant Office before submission to discuss it. The cumulative match at the end of each year of the grant must not fall below 50 percent of the cumulative federal request up to that point. In-kind contributions directly supporting this application may count towards this matching requirement. See the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#) for more information.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available online and can be downloaded from www.grants.gov under opportunity NOAA-OAR-SG-2023-2007887. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

B. Content and Form of the Application

This section provides an overview of these required proposal elements (and where to locate them). Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Elements" below. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

Additional guidance on Sea Grant-specific form completion can be found here: [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#)

The submitting applicant must redact all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the application materials prior to final submission to grants.gov. PII that must be redacted from the application includes, but is not limited to, social security number, date of birth, student identification number (from transcripts) or other information which if lost, compromised, or disclosed without authorization, could result in harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfairness to an individual.

Required Elements:**Full Proposal Required Elements**

(please also see VIII. Other Information for additional post-application required elements for submission):

- 1. Project Narrative.** The Project Narrative must include the following elements:
 - a. Project Description.** The total number of pages in the project description must not exceed 15 pages. Excess pages will not be included for review. The cover page, works cited, Resume/CVs, letters of support, and current and pending support sections do not contribute to the page limit.
 - Cover page (does not count towards page limit)
Project title, names of the principal investigator, co-investigators, and/or partners, along with their institutional affiliations, program priority and the total amount of the federal request and non-federal match for each year of the project
 - Problem statement (½ page maximum)
Provide a 3-5 sentence summary of the problem, how this project will address it, and who may benefit from its results.
 - Project background
Expand upon the specific problem(s) this project seeks to address and justify its importance.
 - Project objectives
Provide a list of specific objectives. For each objective, provide a brief statement explaining how it supports one or more program priorities in Section 1(B).
 - Project details and collaboration plan
Provide an explanation of the methods you will use to address your project objectives and your plan for collaboration among the team. This section must address questions such as: how will the principal investigators, co-investigators and partners work together throughout the duration of the proposed work, what roles will each have in achieving the objectives, and whether or not the work will build on previous research or leverage the expertise of local communities and stakeholders.
 - Anticipated outcomes and results
Describe the expected outcomes and deliverables that will support or advance the program priorities listed in Section 1(B). Explain how these outcomes can be applied to the current and/or future needs of the lobster fishery and/or fishing communities.
 - Project timeline
Please provide a timeline for accomplishing the proposed work for the entire duration of the project that includes approximate dates for major milestones and the

accomplishment of anticipated outcomes.

Applicants submitting proposals that involve the use of human test subjects should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB approval from their institution and providing that documentation to NOAA once the approval is obtained and prior to any NOAA-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.

- Community engagement, outreach, or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA) plan

Provide a plan or strategy to ensure that stakeholders beyond those who actively participate in the proposed work, will learn about and/or utilize the project's results. This plan should reference coordination with the American Lobster Initiative's regional extension program (see Section IV.G).

Applicants are encouraged to review the resources and best practices compiled by NSGO related to diversity, equity, and inclusion: [Sea Grant DEIJ Community of Practice](#).

- Works cited (does not count towards page limit)
If applicable, works cited should be listed here.
- Resume/Curriculum vitae (CV) for each PI and co-PI (does not count towards page limit) - Each person's Resume/CV should describe their qualifications to do the work and should not be longer than 2 pages. Excess pages will not be included in the review.
- Letters of support (does not count towards page limit)
All letters of support should be included here. It is suggested that principal investigators consider obtaining a letter of support that speaks to the project's utility and/or potential utility.
- Current and pending support (does not count towards page limit)
If applicable, describe any current or pending sources of funding support such as pending or existing grants, for example.

b. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)

- i. Applicants **must** ensure that the questionnaire is completed in full and includes detailed information regarding project location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information.
- ii. A separate questionnaire must be completed for each relevant action/project in

the proposal.

- iii. The questionnaire can be found [here](#).
- iv. Guidance on how to complete the questionnaire, including how to describe work that will not involve any environmental impact, can be found [here](#). Examples of questionnaires can be found [here](#).

c. Data Management Plan

- i. All applications **must** include a Data Management Plan that is compliant with NOAA's [Public Access to Research Results](#) Plan. The Data Management Plan should not exceed 2 pages. The Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of metadata and data expected to be created during the course of the project, plans for disseminating the metadata and data to the broader community, and plans for long-term archiving of the metadata and data.

2. Budget Narrative

The budget narrative must include the following budget documents (Sea Grant 90-4 forms and budget justification) in the following order and format. Sea Grant 90-4 forms and budget justifications must be included for each individual project within an application. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found at:

https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf

a) Sea Grant 90-4 Form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362)

Sea Grant 90-4 forms are required to provide budget breakdowns and budget justifications by year and object class for the proposal. A Sea Grant 90-4 form should be completed for each project year, as well as a total budget for the entire project duration (i.e., Year 1, Year 2, and Years 1-2). The Sea Grant 90-4 form can be downloaded at:

<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>

b) Budget Justification

For each year of the project, a Budget Justification is required. Each Budget Justification should explain the budget items in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. For projects involving partners, budgets are expected to reflect typical daily/hourly wages and costs associated with partner activities in addition to other relevant project costs such as travel costs, boat time, or other participant expenses. Each Budget Justification should be attached as a PDF to each Sea Grant 90-4 Form, as appropriate. Guidance on completing the Budget Justification is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guidance.

3. Overall Application

In addition to the forms required above, standard Federal Forms and Assurances are required for the overall application and can be found with the application package on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or on the [Sea Grant website](#). These include:

a) SF-424 Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0004)

This form, titled “Application for Federal Assistance,” must identify the entire funding period as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and the non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution’s accurate UEI and Point of Contact, and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.

b) SF-424A Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0006)

This form, titled “Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs,” must describe the entire funding period (broken out by year if multi-year) in federal and non-federal dollars, for the entire application. Fill out Section B of this SF-424A form to show the overall budget breakdown by object class by year with separate columns for each year of federal funding as well as each year of non-federal funding. If there is insufficient space, an additional SF-424A form, Extra Section B should be used (see below).

c) SF-424B Assurances (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0007)

The form, titled “Assurances – Non-Construction Programs,” must be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

d) CD-511 (Grants.gov, US Department of Commerce)

The form, titled “Certification Regarding Lobbying,” must be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee. In some instances, the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form may also be required. See the instructions on the CD-511 for further information.

e) SF-LLL (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046)

The form, titled “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,” must be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee, if appropriate.

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 unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

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

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be submitted to Grants.gov by **11:59 p.m. Eastern time on Wednesday, May 10th, 2023.**

Applications to be received and validated by grants.gov by the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on May 10, 2023. Applicants should be aware that National Sea Grant Office staff will only be available to answer questions until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Please note: validation or rejection of an application by Grants.gov involves receipt of multiple email messages and may take up to two business days after submission.

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov. Because first-time registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks or more, it is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their registration may need to be renewed prior to submitting to Grants.gov. 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 to establish. Please consider these notes in developing your submission timeline.

If you experience a Grants.gov “systems issue” (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before an applicable funding cycle deadline, please (i) print any error message received; and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization’s computer system or equipment are not considered “systems issues.” Similarly, an applicant’s failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered Authorized Organization Representative submits the application, or (iii) receive an email message from Grants.gov are not considered systems issues. A Grants.gov “systems issue” is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed “systems issue,” NOAA may allow more time for applicant submission due to system problems at Grants.gov at the time of application submission that are beyond the control of the applicant.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the National Sea Grant College Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

F. Funding Restrictions

The Sea Grant Act at 33 USC 1124(d)(2) states:

“No payment under any grant or contract under this section may be applied to:

- (A) the purchase or rental of any land; or
- (B) the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of any building, dock, or vessel; except that payment under any such grant or contract may be applied to the short-term rental of buildings or facilities for meetings which are in direct support of any Sea Grant Program or project and may, if approved by the Secretary, be applied to the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of non-self-propelled habitats, buoys, platforms, and other similar devices or structures, or to the rental of any research vessel which is used in direct support of activities under any Sea Grant Program or project.”

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants successful in this opportunity will work with Sea Grant’s American Lobster Initiative, including its Lobster Regional Extension Program, to coordinate and communicate on the progress of their project. Successful applicants will be required to participate in project progress meetings held twice per year and engage with the Lobster Regional Extension Program, as applicable, to extend

their findings to stakeholders. For more information, contact the competition manager at sg.grants@noaa.gov.

Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov. If you experience a Grants.gov “systems issue” (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before an applicable funding cycle deadline, please see the information located in Section D. Submission Dates and Times. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

I. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (25 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the American Lobster Research Program, the program goals are the Program priorities listed in Section I.B. This criterion also includes the extent of partnership and collaborative activities planned for the project.
2. Technical/scientific merit (25 points). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals, objectives, and data management considerations. For the American Lobster Research Program this includes the extent to which the proposed work fills a gap with new scientific knowledge or builds off existing work.
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.
4. Project costs (20 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the American Lobster Research Program, this includes articulation and consideration of partner expenses.
5. Outreach and Education (10 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the American Lobster Research Program, this includes coordination and communication with the National Sea Grant College Program's American Lobster Initiative and its Lobster Regional Extension Program.

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

Applications that are missing required elements listed in Section IV. B. above, or applications coming from ineligible applicants may be rejected without further review.

Applications that pass the administrative review will be reviewed by a technical panel drawn from experts in a range of disciplines that are relevant to the applications. Each proposal will receive at least three written reviews from the panelists assessing its merits with regard to the evaluation criteria. These reviews will be averaged to produce a rank order. The selecting official shall award in the rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the selection factors provided in Section V.C. The selecting official shall make final recommendations for awards to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

The proposals, supplemented with information from the Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire, will also be reviewed by the program manager to assess the environmental compliance of the proposed actions. The program manager, NEPA staff lead, or grants specialist may contact the applicants to discuss questions about the environmental effects, merit, or administrative correctness of the application, and may delay approval of the application, or impose conditions on the award preventing funding or execution of certain activities, until all questions are satisfactorily answered.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall recommend awarding in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

- Availability of funding.
- Balance/distribution of funds:
 - geographically
 - by type of institution
 - by type of partners
 - by research priority
 - by project types
- Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.
- Program priorities and policy factors.
- Applicant's prior award performance.
- Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.
- Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Consequently, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. Investigators may be asked to answer questions; and/or modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets (including overall funding level) to address the issues raised by the reviewers, the competition manager, the Selecting Official, or the Grants Officer before an award is made. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, awards are expected to start September 1, 2023.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification when the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA grants officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the authorizing official and the PI of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected. Anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to all applicants, regardless of whether they were selected to be funded.

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 and may be accessed online at

<https://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 Terms and Conditions - Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system at <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/home/Login/LoginController.jspf>

and is also available at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/external_links.html , as well as https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf

(4) Limitation of Liability - Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

(5) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA Federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, 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 package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

(6) Review of Risk - After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Responsibility/Qualifications records in the System for Award Management (formerly Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIS)) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration

by the awarding agency.

(7) Data Sharing Plan - 1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards. 2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a data management plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The data management plan should be aligned with the data management guidance provided by NOAA in the announcement. The contents of the data management plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. 3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the data management plan from funded proposals, or use information from the data management plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data. 4. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

(8) Indirect Cost Rate - If an applicant does not have a current indirect cost rate with a federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Cost (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. Do not include participant support costs when determining the indirect cost base. Additionally, applicants should be aware that most indirect cost rate agreements require that participant support costs be excluded from the MTDC base when calculating indirect costs. Applicants should reference their official agreements. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Raishan Adams, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, at raishan.adams@noaa.gov.

(9) 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.

(10) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) - In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the Application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

C. Reporting

Financial reports are submitted semi-annually via Grants Online. Research performance progress reports (RPPR) are submitted annually via Grants Online using the RPPR format. Awardees will coordinate and communicate progress of their project with other elements of Sea Grant's American Lobster Initiative such as the Lobster Regional Extension Program, in order to share project objectives and results. Awardees will also work with Sea Grant's Lobster Regional Extension Program to participate in project progress meetings held twice per year.

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 Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsrs.gov/> on all sub-awards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

VII. Agency Contacts

Contact the American Lobster Initiative Lead, National Sea Grant College Program at the following email. Please use the term 'American lobster' in your email's subject line.

The National Sea Grant Office mailing address is:
NOAA Sea Grant
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

sg.grants@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Demographics Information:

- NOAA will not provide collected demographics information to reviewers for any purpose, including evaluation, and will not consider demographics information during selection.
- Applicants must submit documentation by either including a statement within the application, or via email to sg.grants@noaa.gov, that they have responded to the new requirement to provide the following information for all named collaborators on the proposal. (2022, OMB approved for PRA under DOC generic clearance information collections, 0690-0030 and 0690-0035).
- Note: Applicants may use their own method of collecting this information. The NSGO has also developed an [online form](#) as an optional method for collection. Submission to this form would count as fulfillment of this requirement.
 1. Do you or your organization identify with any of the following groups that the federal government, in Executive Order 13985, has identified as underserved? List all that apply.
 - a) Black
 - b) Latino
 - c) Indigenous and/or Native American
 - d) Asian American
 - e) Pacific Islander
 - f) Other person of color
 - g) Members of religious minorities
 - h) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons
 - i) Persons with disabilities
 - j) Persons who live in rural areas
 - k) Persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality
 - l) No, I do not identify with any of these groups

Once applications have been recommended for funding, applicants must submit a Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form (for each project within the application) through the 90-2 Webform portal (<https://webform.pier.seagrant.noaa.gov/>). This is due within 30 calendar days after the applicant has been notified via email that their application has been awarded. A detailed step-by-step guide for completing the web-based 90-2 Form is available on Inside Sea Grant (<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>). Once the project is approved and funded, that information will be publicly available and searchable on the National Sea Grant College Program public website (<http://seagrant.noaa.gov>).

Recipients are required to use the National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER) project database to communicate with the National Sea Grant Office on

activities relating to this award. This includes tracking progress and impacts, in addition to performance metrics.

All public-facing products produced with funding from the award(s)/project(s) must ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The grant application and final report of all funded grants are public documents, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the application will aid identification of what may be specifically exempt. The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other federal employees, and also by federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with 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.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA or the Department of

Commerce are not responsible for any direct costs of proposal preparation. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.