

# **NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

# Table of Contents

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY .....	1
Executive Summary .....	1
Full Text of Announcement .....	3
I. Funding Opportunity Description .....	3
II. Award Information .....	4
III. Eligibility Information .....	4
IV. Application and Submission Information .....	5
V. Application Review Information .....	10
VI. Award Administration Information .....	12
VII. Agency Contacts .....	16
VIII. Other Information .....	16

## Executive Summary

### **Federal Agency Name**

OAR National Sea Grant College Program (SG)

### **Funding Opportunity Title**

FY24 American Lobster Research Program

### **Announcement Type**

Competitive

### **Funding Opportunity Number**

NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-25871

### **Assistance Listing Number(s)**

11.417

### **Dates**

Deadline: May 7, 2024

Period of Performance: Projects should have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2024 and an end date of no later than September 30, 2026.

### **Funding Opportunity Description**

The National Sea Grant College Program was enacted by the 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 continue to face significant environmental complexity and socio-economic uncertainty with far-reaching impacts for resource management and community resiliency. In 2022, the American lobster fishery landed approximately 119 million pounds of lobster worth \$516 million dollars. This stands in stark contrast to the 2021 commercial harvest that landed 134 million pounds of lobster worth a record setting \$924 million dollars. Recent surveys have detected a nearly 40% decline in young lobster recruitment from the important fishing areas of Georges Bank and the Gulf of Maine, signaling concern for the fishery's future and challenges for resource managers and lobster fishermen alike. While there are fluctuations each year that reflect environmental factors such as water temperature and economic conditions such as operational costs, the degree of volatility and uncertainty is without precedent. These impacts are particularly acute in the state of Maine, where approximately eighty percent of American Lobsters are landed each year and the lobster fishery is a major driver of the state's marine economy and cultural identity.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's 2020 stock assessment indicated record high stock abundance for American Lobster in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank and continued declines in southern New England. Additional analyses of landing data from the state of Maine show a downward trend from a high in 2016 of 132 million pounds to an annual average of 102 million pounds between 2019 and 2021. As ecosystem changes persist and the Gulf of Maine continues to warm, it is imperative that research, data, and observations document change, inform gaps, and help communities 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 in the face of environmental change but also the economic resiliency of the industry and the communities supported by the fishery. Expanding uses of the marine environment and anticipated management changes will have significant implications for future harvests, alter business models and shift how and where the lobster industry operates. Understanding the economic and social systems impacted by these changes can enhance the industry and communities' capacity for resilience to impending environmental and resource management changes by mitigating negative impacts and supporting emerging opportunities. Research approaches that examine social systems and economic implications of regulatory/management changes are needed to fill a critical knowledge gap and inform integrated approaches to these complex issues impacting the lobster fishery. These include economic impact assessments, policy analyses, dimensions of community well-being, workforce diversification, as well as informal and formal governance structures.

In FY24, 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 cooperative research or co-production, 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:

- Life history parameters under changing climate conditions, including but not limited to temperature, growth, and mortality
- Species distribution and abundance in response to environmental change, including but not limited to deep water settlement
- Impacts of environmental change and/or economic uncertainty on social systems, including but not limited to dimensions of community well-being, formal and informal governance structures, and workforce diversification
- Economic implications of policy and potential regulatory changes and/or other future resource management actions

Sea Grant anticipates having up to \$2 million dollars to fund a diversity of projects with funding requests up to \$600,000 dollars in FY24. Projects may be one or two years in duration with a maximum of two years.

All projects must take place within the United States or territories or their respective waterways.

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include [SAM.gov](#), [Grants.gov](#), and [eRA Commons](#). All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov, if needed (refer to Section IV. Applications and Submission Information, Section C). Organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their full SAM and Grants.gov registrations; however, all registrations must be in place by time of application submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.

This document sets out requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-25871.

## Full Text of Announcement

### 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 environmental and socioeconomic impacts. Ecosystem changes across the fishery's geographic range persist. 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, management changes, and regulatory uncertainties have introduced the potential for significant socio-economic impacts to the lobster industry. Understanding the economic and social systems impacted by these changes can enhance the industry and communities' capacity for resilience to impending environmental and resource management changes. Research approaches that examine social systems and economic implications of regulatory/management changes are needed to fill a critical knowledge gap and inform integrated approaches to complex marine issues.

In response, the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant)'s FY24 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 environmental 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 cooperative research and co-production approaches 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 cooperative research and co-production approaches are a priority and strongly encouraged.

Topics suitable for investigation on American lobster and its dynamic 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, build community resilience and support sustainable management of the fishery by enhancing our knowledge and capabilities to understand and address:

- Life history parameters under changing climate conditions, including but not limited to temperature, growth, and mortality
- Species distribution and abundance in response to environmental change, including but not limited to deep water settlement
- Impacts of environmental change and/or economic uncertainty on social systems, including but not limited to dimensions of community well-being, formal and informal governance structures, and workforce diversification
- Economic implications of potential regulatory changes and/or other future resource management actions

### **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 the 2024 American Lobster Research Program. The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) anticipates approximately \$2,000,000 in FY2024 federal funds will be available to eligible applicants. Projects may be one or two years in duration with a maximum of two years.

Each award will be no greater than \$600,000 dollars. Applications require 50% match in non-federal funds.

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 October 1, 2024, with projects to be completed by September 30, 2026.

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](mailto:sg.grants@noaa.gov).

## **III. Eligibility Information**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

The following entities are eligible to submit to this opportunity:

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.

To be eligible to apply or receive an award, applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations; [SAM.gov](#), [Grants.gov](#), and [eRA Commons](#). For each, the complete registration process can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants must begin this activity as soon as possible and well before the proposal due date. For more information on how to meet these registration and application submission requirements without errors, we advise all to carefully review relevant Applicant and Grantee Training modules: <https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training>. Additionally, we advise that all carefully read ‘Additional Application Package Forms’ within the ‘Full Proposal Required Elements’ section below.

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 Share 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.

# **IV. Application and Submission Information**

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

Application packages are available online and can be downloaded from [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) under opportunity NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-25871. 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 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.

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.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This proposal package will be using a different set of forms than applicants to Sea Grant competitions have completed in the past. Instead of the “SF424 NOAA Standard Non-Construction Application Package” of forms, this application will include the “SF424 NOAA Research & Related (R&R) Forms Package.” **While many of the forms may be familiar, please pay special attention to the headings and instructions in this section.**

Prior to submission, carefully review the PDF Guidelines for submission found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>. Recent applicants have encountered rejected applications for formatting issues, especially:

- Do not use “bundling” or “portfolio” features to combine PDFs into a single document. Everything must be visible in the PDF.
- Descriptive filenames may only be 50 characters or less (including spaces).
- Keep attachment file size to 100 MB or less.
- eRA won’t accept any pages larger than the U.S. standard letter paper size (8.5” x 11”).

We strongly recommend that applicants attempt to submit their full proposals at least a few days prior to the due date in case these or other issues impact your submission, as they are not reasons we can extend the deadline. If you have issues during the submission process, please contact the [eRA Service Desk](#).

### **Required Elements:**

Applications must include the following elements. 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.

### **Full Proposal Required Elements**

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

#### **1. Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)**

This form must be completed and include a profile for the Principal Investigator and any co-PI(s). CVs and RELEVANT Current and Pending Support for each person’s profile will also be attached to this form. The first listed PD/PI on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the “Credential, e.g., agency login” field of form. Failure to register in eRA Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application. eRA Commons registration can take 2-3 weeks to be approved, so it is encouraged to start the registration process as soon as possible. NOAA is not involved with eRA registration.

Additional personnel included on the form do not need to include this information, however eRA will create a warning recommending those personnel also have valid eRA Commons IDs. Again - it is not required that those additional personnel include valid eRA Commons IDs regardless of the warnings created by the eRA system.

#### **2. Research and Related Budget Form**

The Research and Related Budget is a single form that will need to be completed covering the entire award by budget period following the instructions from Grants.gov. At the end of the Research and Related Budget form, “Section L” provides space for one attachment titled, “Budget Justification.” The budget narrative for the project must be attached there. The budget narrative should explain the budget items by object class category (both federal and non-federal/match) in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found at: [NOAA Grants Management Division's Budget Narrative Guidance](#)

#### **3. Research & Related Other Project Information Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)**

This form must be completed for the application, and should also be used to attach the Project Abstract Summary Form, the Project Narrative, Bibliography & References Cited (if applicable), and any other relevant forms or information as applicable. See form-specific instructions available on Grants.gov for additional instructions as needed.

##### ***a. Project Summary/Abstract Attachment***

Using 4,000 characters or less, the Project Abstract should provide an overview of the application. Ensure the Project Abstract succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. It should be a self-contained description of the application and should contain a general statement of objectives and methods to be employed. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and understandable to a technically literate lay reader. Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive or proprietary/confidential information. This project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available on public websites and/or databases including USASpending.gov.

Project Abstract Elements:

- Use the following format:
  - Purpose:
  - Activities to be performed:
  - Expected Outcomes:
  - Intended Beneficiaries:
  - Subrecipient Activities:
- Keep it short. In most cases, each element above should be a couple of sentences to a paragraph in length.
- DO NOT repeat the Proposal Title. The Proposal Title is always presented with the Project Description, so including it in the abstract is not necessary.
- Include a high quality description that includes specificity regarding the purpose of the project. Characteristics of strong abstracts include a plain language description of the purpose for the project (which may include specific performance goals, indicators, milestones, or expected outcomes of the project), activities to be performed, deliverables and expected outcomes, intended beneficiary or recipient.
- Keep it simple. Do not use abbreviations, acronyms, technical terminology, or agency-specific terms. The intended audience is Congress and the general public, not specific interested parties and/or federal employees. The education level of the reader should be assumed to be the fifth grade of elementary school. Even those who are highly educated will appreciate a simply written document when they have hundreds of projects to review in one sitting.

***b. Project Narrative Attachment***

The total number of pages in the project description should not exceed fifteen (15) pages (excluding the cover page, any letters of support, or any current and pending support). Excess pages will not be included in the review. Applicants do not need to use the entire 15-page maximum. Depending on the proposed activities, a shorter description may suffice. Any works cited, resumes, CVs, letters of support, and current and pending support sections included do not contribute to the suggested page limit.

Project Narrative Elements:

- Cover page (does not count towards page limit)
  - Project title, names of the principal investigator, co-investigators, and/or partners, along with their affiliations
  - Program funding priority
  - Total amount of the federal request and non-federal match for each year of the project
  - Project Abstract
- 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 listed in Section B of the Funding Opportunities Description.
- 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 community members.
- Anticipated outcomes and deliverables
  - Describe the expected outcomes and deliverables that will support or advance the program priorities listed in Section B of the Funding Opportunities Description. 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 or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA) plan
  - Provide a plan or strategy to ensure that community members 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.
  - Applicants are encouraged to review the resources and best practices compiled by NSGO related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Resources for Applicants & Reviewers section found here: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/>.
- Letters of support (if included, 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.

**c. Works Cited Attachment (does not count towards page limit)**

If applicable, provide a bibliography of any references cited in the Project Narrative. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Include only bibliographic citations. Applicants should be especially careful to follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the application.

**d. Other Attachments**

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

- 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.
  1. A separate questionnaire must be completed for each relevant action/project in the proposal.
  2. The questionnaire can be found in the Resources for Applicants & Reviewers section found here: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/>.
  3. Guidance on how to complete the questionnaire, including how to describe work that will not involve any environmental impact, can be found in the Resources for Applicants & Reviewers section found here: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/>. Examples of questionnaires can also be found by following that link.

#### **4. Additional Application Package Forms**

In addition to the forms required above, standard federal forms and assurances are required and can be found with the application package on Grants.gov. These include:

*a. SF-424 R&R Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)*

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 any non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution’s accurate EIN and DUNS and point of contact, and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee. Total federal and non-federal amounts listed in the SF-424 R&R, the Cumulative Budget of the Research and Related Budget form, and budget narrative must be the same.

Applicants will be required to enter their organization’s Congressional District in the SF424 R&R form. For tips on finding and entering your Congressional District correctly, please review the information found here: <https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2017/06/21/how-to-find-your-congressional-district-for-the-sf-424-form/>

*b. 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.

*c. CD-511 (Grants.gov, US DOC)*

The form, titled “Certification Regarding Lobbying,” must be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.

*d. SF-LLL (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046) - optional form, include if appropriate*

This form, titled “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,” is an optional form and should be included if appropriate. If included, it must be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

#### **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.

#### **D. Submission Dates and Times**

Applications must be submitted to Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on May 7, 2024.

*Please note: validation or rejection of an application by Grants.gov and eRA may take up to two business days after submission. Eligible applicants should consider this process in developing their submission timeline. For eligible applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.*

### **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**

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov, if needed (refer to Section IV. Applications and Submission Information, Section C). Organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their full SAM and Grants.gov registrations; however, all registrations must be in place by time of application submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.

The first PD/PI listed on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g. agency login" Applicant Identifier field on the SF424 form. Failure to register in the Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

After submission to Grants.gov, the PI listed on the application will receive an email notification from the eRA email address [era-notify@mail.nih.gov](mailto:era-notify@mail.nih.gov). This email will either confirm a successful submission to eRA or list errors and warnings associated with the application. Errors must be addressed, the application resubmitted via Grants.gov, and an email received by the listed PI indicating a successful submission to eRA for an application to be successfully received by NOAA.

## **V. Application Review Information**

### **Evaluation Criteria**

<b>1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 25</b>
This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this opportunity, the program goals are the Program priorities listed in Section B of the Funding Opportunities Description. This criterion also includes the extent of partnership and collaborative activities planned for the project.	
<b>2. Technical/scientific merit</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 25</b>

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this opportunity, this criterion includes the extent to which the proposed work fills a gap with new scientific knowledge or builds off existing work to inform program priorities listed in Section B of the Funding Opportunities Description.

<b>3. Overall qualifications of applicants</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 20</b>
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This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

<b>4. Project costs</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 20</b>
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This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For this opportunity, this criterion includes articulation and consideration of partner expenses and convening costs such as participant support, as applicable.

<b>5. Outreach and education</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
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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 this opportunity, this criterion includes coordination and communication with the National Sea Grant College Program's American Lobster Initiative and its Lobster Regional Extension Program.

### 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 recommend awarding 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 program manager, NEPA staff lead, or grants specialist may contact the applicants to discuss questions about the 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.

### Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award 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:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - a. geographically
  - b. by type of institution
  - c. by type of partners
  - d. by research priority
  - e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.

4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.
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 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.

### **Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

Subject to the availability of funds, projects are expected to start October 1, 2024.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Award Notices**

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

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

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT**

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

**RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions (Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at <https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp>, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.**

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

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

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

**HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH.** For research projects involving Human Subjects an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or an exemption determination will be required in accordance with DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section G.05.i "Research Involving Human Subjects" found at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

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

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.** Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

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

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

More information can be found on NOAA's Data Management Procedures at:

[https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data\\_Sharing\\_Directive\\_v3.0\\_remediated.pdf](https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf) and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information>

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

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

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

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

**SCIENCE INTEGRITY.** 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

**REVIEW OF RISK.** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

**REVIEWS AND EVALUATION.** The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with §200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

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: Michele Mazzocchetti, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, [michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov](mailto:michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov).

## **C. Reporting**

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

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 FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsrs.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

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 and may include the American Lobster Initiative Regional Research & Outreach Summit.

## **VII. Agency Contacts**

The National Sea Grant Office mailing address is:

NOAA Sea Grant  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

[sg.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:sg.grants@noaa.gov)

## **VIII. Other Information**

### **Section 508 Compliance**

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.

