

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2012 Coastal Resilience Networks

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-CSC-2012-2003316

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.473, Coastal Services Center

Dates: Letters of Intent (LOIs) must be received by the Coastal Services Center by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time/5:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on March 30, 2012. Full proposals must be received no later than 5:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time/11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, May 4, 2012.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to solicit grant proposals from eligible organizations to implement activities that enhance resilience of coastal communities to natural hazard and climate risks through a regional or national network. Proposals must leverage, enhance, or create a system in which one or more coastal hazard issues can be addressed through partnerships to improve coordination and collaboration throughout the region. Partnerships must include multiple institutions, disciplines, and sectors at the local, state, and federal level. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should provide beneficial public outcomes for coastal communities to address existing and potential future climate and hazard risks to coastal infrastructure, local economies, vulnerable populations, and the natural environment. Eligible funding applicants are: regional authorities, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and state, territorial, and county/local governments. The funding applicants must conduct projects in one or more of the following three U.S. regions: the U.S. Flag Pacific Islands (Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), Gulf of Mexico Coast (Alabama, Gulf Coast of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas) and West Coast (California, Oregon, and Washington).

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

A. Program Objective

As demonstrated by the devastating impacts of recent tsunamis, floods, and hurricanes, coastal communities across the nation are faced with complex problems that require a diverse set of resources and knowledge from multiple institutions, disciplines, and sectors to solve. The objective of this program is to support coastal communities in addressing priorities related to managing and adapting to natural hazards and climate risks in a comprehensive way through applied community scale activities while enhancing or creating a network that connects, integrates, and leverages existing federal, state, and local programs. Activities solicited under this competition are intended to directly contribute to local efforts while also contributing to increased regional and national capacity.

Projects must enhance, leverage, or create a regional network and have project objectives based on a collaborative approach with a direct application to a community or region. The network or framework must provide significant value to local communities by improving coordination and partnership across agencies, disciplines, jurisdictions, and sectors. They must also encompass multiple natural hazards and climate change issues. Existing regional entities such as the Pacific Risk Management 'Ohana (PRiMO), Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), and the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health are examples of broad professional networks that provide a forum and mechanism for connecting, integrating, and leveraging programs and their human and financial resources at a regional scale. In addition, technical networks and systems such as the Digital Coast <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/> support regional approaches by integrating data and services and promoting data access and interoperability. Activities solicited under this competition are intended to leverage existing or create professional and technical networks to move beyond fragmented approaches to addressing coastal risk and toward more integrated, regional approaches.

The projects associated with this announcement will directly support the following objectives:

1. An informed society anticipating and responding to a changing climate and its impacts. (NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Goal)
2. Society is prepared for and responds to sudden and prolonged high impact

events. (NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Goal)

3. Pursue risk-wise strategies based on sound risk and vulnerability assessment methods and risk behavior and communication principles. (NOAA Coastal Services Center Strategic Objective)

4. Protect ecosystem services through conservation strategies to improve climate adaptation and hazard resilience. (NOAA Coastal Services Center Strategic Objective)

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must include a) significant public engagement and outcomes, and b) leverage, enhance, or develop a hazard resilience network as described below.

1. Public engagement and outcomes. Projects must include activities and outcomes that provide significant opportunities for increased public engagement in understanding, managing, and adapting to coastal risks. These outcomes shall provide public benefit for coastal communities to address existing and potential future risk to coastal hazards (i.e., flooding, storm surge, tsunamis, hurricanes, erosion) and climate impacts (i.e., drought, flooding, sea level rise) to coastal infrastructure, local economies, vulnerable populations, or the natural environment.

Projects must include an audience appropriate outreach component that considers, for example, perception of risk; local knowledge, culture, traditions and terminology; and understanding of local hazards and impacts.

2. Regional and national networks. Projects must enhance, leverage, or create a regional network or framework that improves coordination and partnership across agencies, disciplines, jurisdictions, and sectors while encompassing multiple coastal hazards and impacts. Examples of existing networks include but not limited to: the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, the Pacific Risk Management 'Ohana (PRiMO), or Digital Coast.

In addition, proposals should seek to enhance community and regional hazard resilience in one or more of the following five (5) programmatic priorities. Appropriate activities could include community based training and support; collection and management of physical and social science data; development and implementation of technical tools or process guides; community level planning efforts; pre-disaster recovery plans; climate adaptation plans; community based risk and vulnerability assessments; or activities that directly enhance community resilience through a specific and applied outcome with substantial community involvement.

1. Preparedness: Coastal communities that are prepared for natural hazards and climate impacts have greater capacity to manage risk and adapt to changing conditions. Individual, family, and community-scale preparedness all contribute to community resilience.

2. Recovery: Coastal communities that have developed comprehensive plans for long-term recovery and redevelopment before being impacted have greater capacity to recover and take advantage of windows of opportunity. Plans that address social, environmental, and economic recovery contribute to community resilience.

3. Risk and vulnerability: Coastal communities that are able to access, understand, and incorporate information about risks and vulnerabilities into decision-making and planning activities have an increased capacity to direct strategies and actions that reduce current and potential future risks. Risk-based approaches contribute to community resilience.

4. Adaptation: Coastal communities that understand and plan for changing environmental, economic, and social conditions have greater capacity to avoid or reduce future impacts.

5. Underserved/under-represented populations: Coastal communities with underserved/under-represented populations may be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of coastal hazards. Community resilience is strengthened when the risk-related knowledge and capacity of these populations and the fostering of networks within and among said underserved/under-represented areas are increased.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1456c (Technical Assistance)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately \$500,000 and is subject to the availability of fiscal year (FY) 2012 appropriations. The anticipated federal funding per award (min-max) is approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000 with periods up to 24 months. The anticipated number of awards ranges from three (3) to six (6), approximately, and will be adjusted based on available funding. Proposals not funded

in the current fiscal period may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

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. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for proposal or project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative funding agreements in order to receive funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects funded in FY 2012 shall have a performance period up to 24 months.

Proposals not funded in the current fiscal period may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument for these awards may be grants or cooperative agreements. If a cooperative agreement is awarded, the federal government will agree to be substantially involved by (for example) acquiring, increasing access to, and enhancing capacity to use data and tools; convening partners and building diverse teams to accomplish broad based work; providing meeting planning and facilitation; developing spatial databases, models, and analyses to address the identified management needs; and/or guiding in the development of social, economic and other human dimension information and analyses. If the NOAA Coastal Services Center is proposed as a partner in a cooperative agreement, applicants should clearly articulate those roles and responsibilities and discuss prospective roles in the project after notification that the proposal is successful.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible funding applicants are, regional authorities, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, Indian Tribal governments, and state, territorial, and county/local governments conducting projects in one or more of the following three U.S. regions; the U.S. Flag Pacific Islands (Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), Gulf of Mexico Coast (Alabama, Gulf Coast of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas) and West Coast (California, Oregon, Washington). The following types of organizations are encouraged to either submit proposals or participate in proposal development and provide in-kind services: land use authorities, port authorities, housing authorities, public works authorities, transportation authorities, critical facility authorities, emergency management authorities, community service organizations, stewardship organizations, and conservation organizations.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no requirement for cost sharing.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

N.A.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for full proposals are available through the apply function on Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages can be requested from Penny Larin at the NOAA Pacific Services Center, 737 Bishop Street, Suite 1550, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96813; or by contacting her at 808-532-3973 or via e-mail Penny.Larin@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants must follow the LOI and full proposal application requirements stated in this announcement or LOIs and full proposal applications will not be considered.

The Letter of Intent (LOI) process is intended to provide potential funding applicants with information regarding the relevance of their project idea to the program objectives in advance of preparing a full proposal. A LOI is required before submitting a full proposal.

The LOI should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to program objectives. The LOI shall include the components listed below. If these components are not included, the funding applicant will not be invited to submit a full proposal application. The LOI shall include the following information on a cover page:

1. Identification of the Coastal Resilience Networks LOI for FY 2012.
2. Project title.
3. Names and institutions of all principal investigators (PI), and specification of the Lead PI and contact information for that person.

The body of the LOI shall be no more than 2 pages, single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font, and should include the following components:

1. Statement of the Purpose: state the intent, goal, and outcome of proposed work.
2. Budget Summary.
3. Description of intended benefits to a local community.
4. Description of the partnerships to be employed in the development and completion of the proposed work.

Full proposal applications must total no more than 10 pages (single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font and exclusive of appendices). The 10-page limit does not include the proposal title page, a table of contents, if one is included, the project summary referenced below under item two (2), and any appendices. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (for example, detailed budget information, support letters, resumes, National Environmental Policy Act information, references, lists of data sources, and maps). Appendices shall not total more than 30 total pages. The total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined should not exceed 5 megabytes in storage space.

Applicants should paginate their proposal and any appendices. Appendices may be paginated as stand alone documents (individually) or collectively. Proposals failing to comply with the format prescribed in this section will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered for further review.

All funding application packages must contain the following components:

1. Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include proposal title, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, duration of proposed project, funding type (grant or cooperative agreement), and funding

request by year (as appropriate).

2. **Project Summary.** Provide a one to two-page summary of the proposed project. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:

- a. Project name/title
- b. Primary contact (name, title, address, phone, fax, e-mail)
- c. Recipient institution
- d. Principal and other investigators (names, affiliated institutions or agencies)
- e. Brief project summary including objectives and intended benefits
- f. Partners
- g. Proposed funding over each year of the project.

3. **Project Description.**

All project descriptions (proposals) must include the following sections:

a. **Goal and Objective(s).** Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Goals and objectives should be specific for each year of the work plan presented. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.

b. **Background.** Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem to be addressed and the status of ongoing efforts to address the identified needs. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to other regional efforts.

c. **Audience.** Identify specific users of the results of the project, describe how they will use the results, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the results.

d. **Approach.** Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles of partners and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. Describe how users are involved in the planning and design process. The work plan must

clearly address data management requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archive that is compliant with federal regulations. If the project includes federal partners, the roles and responsibilities of the federal partners must be clearly identified.

e. **Benefits.** Identify, with a high degree of specificity, the users of the information derived from the work, and the benefits that will be achieved for those users, as well as society as a whole. Document how valid user requirements are guiding the proposed work. Describe how the information from the project will be delivered to those users, and any special considerations or requirements for ensuring or improving the delivery of information.

f. **Milestone Schedule.** Display time lines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes.

g. **Project Budget.** Provide a budget description that follows the categories and formats in the NOAA grants package (Standard Form 424-A) and a brief narrative justification of the budget.

Detailed budget information, such as a repeat of the information in form SF-424A along with more details should be included in an appendix. In this appendix, the budget narrative also shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work and shall identify the elements of the project that the cooperator would recommend for revision or elimination if sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project?

Applicants shall identify, if possible, who is requested to retain ownership of any equipment purchased through grant funds after the project ends. The decision on grant ownership requests will be made by the Grants Officer before or during the grant close out process.

The budget narrative must also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants must state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. Foreign travel must receive prior approval, and therefore, should be included

in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in annual NOAA Grants Management Division workshops for recipients, as well as for meeting with NOAA staff and/or key project personnel.

4. Appendices

Only material that is submitted as a single package will be reviewed. Appendices must be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (for example, detailed budget information, support letters, resumes, lists of data sources, and maps). Appendices cannot total more than 30 total pages.

a. Mandatory Detailed Budget Information, including budgets of subawards and contracts. Information should include the name of the entity receiving funds, the location of the entity receiving the funds (for example, city, state, and Congressional district), the location of the entity receiving funds (city, state, and Congressional district), and the location of the primary place of performance under the contract/subaward.

b. Resumes. Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit resumes to a maximum of three pages for each key investigator.

c. Letters of Collaboration. All supporting letters from partner organizations should be included in the full package. Letters must clearly show commitment and/or collaboration of partners that will be instrumental to the project.

d. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) -- Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA. 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://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html.

As part of an applicant's package, applicants are required to complete selected sections of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (OMB Approval No.: 0648-0538) (as noted on the following page) 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). This questionnaire is located online at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>. The applicant should complete only the required sections of the questionnaire, and include the entire questionnaire as part of their application.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of 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.

Applicants are required to answer the questions indicated in this Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Applicants should answer the NEPA questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible. It is important to note that one of the selection criteria is "adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination..." and NOAA may therefore decide against funding applications that do not answer all of the questions indicated in the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Some of the questions may overlap with material provided in other parts of the application. This overlap occurs because the answers to the questionnaire are provided to NOAA staff members who do not review the other parts of the application. If appropriate, the applicant may copy the information from other parts of the application and paste it into the answers to the questionnaire.

The applicant is to complete the following sections of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants:

Question C1. Is the proposed activity going to be conducted in partnership with NOAA or would the proposed activity require NOAA's direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, describe NOAA's involvement, activity, or oversight, including the name of the office or program that is involved.

Question C2. Would the proposed activity involve any other Federal agency(ies) partnership, direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, provide the name(s) of the agency(ies) and describe its involvement, activity, or oversight.

Question D1. Provide a brief description of the location of the proposed activity.

Question E1. List any Federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, or waivers that would be required to complete the proposed activity. Provide the date the permit, authorization, or waiver was obtained or will be obtained. Provide copies of the permit, authorization, or waiver as appropriate. Was a NEPA analysis prepared for the permit, authorization, or waiver? If yes, state the title of the NEPA analysis and provide copies of the NEPA analysis.

Question F1. Is there the potential for the proposed activity to cause changes that would be different from normal ambient conditions (for example, temperature, light, turbidity, noise, other human activity levels, etc.)? If yes, describe the changes and the circumstances that would cause these changes.

e. Data Sharing Plan. A Data Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required in an appendix if the project collects environmental data. A typical plan should include descriptions of the environmental data types created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the expected temporal and spatial coverage of the data; the standards to be used for data format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; and procedures for providing access, sharing, and security. NOAA believes it important that data sets developed with its support (funding) should be shared with the scientific community. Additionally, PIs should indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past. The Data Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA standard evaluation criterion "Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the mission goals."

f. Other appendices such as detailed budget information, support letters, resumes, references, lists of data sources, and maps.

C. Submission Dates and Times

LOIs. The deadline for receipt of LOIs is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time / 5:59 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time, March 30, 2012. For LOIs submitted by e-mail, the date and time indication of the receiving server will be the basis of determining timeliness. Note that receipt may be delayed if e-mail servers are not functioning efficiently. Applicants submitting multiple LOIs must use a unique project title for each LOI and may send all LOIs in one e-mail or in multiple e-mails. Hard copy submission of LOIs, will be date and time stamped when they are received. LOIs will not be considered if received by the Coastal Services Center after 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, March 30, 2012.

Full Proposals. Full proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time / 5:59 p.m Hawaii Standard Time May 4, 2012. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication by Grants.gov will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received. Full proposals received after the submission deadline will not be reviewed or considered. Full Proposals will not be considered if received by the Pacific Services Center (hard copy with electronic copy on CD) or electronically on Grants.gov after 5:59 p.m Hawaii Standard Time, May 4, 2012.

Applicants may not submit a full proposal unless they receive an invitation from NOAA to do so after submitting an LOI. Any full proposal that is submitted without having received an invitation will not be reviewed.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications under the Center are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to receive information about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website < http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc >.

E. Funding Restrictions

N.A.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Letters of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to < nos.psc.resilience@noaa.gov >. Insert Coastal Resilience Networks LOI for FY 2012 as the subject line of the e-mail. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copy LOIs (an original and two copies, shall be submitted to James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Room B-119; Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413.

Full proposal application packages, including any letters of collaboration, should be submitted through the apply function on Grants.gov. The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov. Please be advised that potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. The registration process may take up to three weeks to complete; please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is the site to submit completed applications.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and two hard copies and one electronic copy on a CD of the proposals and related forms should be mailed to the attention of Penny Larin, NOAA Pacific Services Center, 737 Bishop Street Suite 1550, Honolulu, HI 96813. No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted. Full proposal application packages, including any letters of collaboration, should be submitted together in one package.

Letters of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to < nos.psc.resilience@noaa.gov >. Insert Coastal Resilience Networks LOI for FY 2012 as the subject line of the e-mail. If an applicant does not have Internet access and hard copy LOIs are submitted, submit an original and two copies of the LOI to James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Room B-119; Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413.

Full proposal application packages, including any letters of collaboration, should be submitted through the apply function on Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and two hard copies and one electronic copy on a CD of the proposals and related forms should be mailed to the attention of Penny Larin, NOAA Pacific Services Center, 737 Bishop Street Suite 1550, Honolulu, HI 96813. No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

LOIs Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (50 points): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Question related to this criterion includes: Does the project demonstrate integration of federal, state, territorial, and/or local activities? Does the project leverage or establish a professional or technical network? Does the project effectively enhance resilience or capacity of a coastal community through addressing one or more of the program priorities? Are project outcomes and goals specific and applied to a local community(ies) or a region? Does the project engage the public and local and regional stakeholders? Does the project contain an outreach component which considers audience perceptions of risk?

2. Technical and scientific merit (50 points): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are

clear project goals and objectives. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposal promote interoperability or integration with components of regional and national systems or networks? Does the proposed approach incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work?

Full Application Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25 points): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Coastal Resilience Network Program this includes the following categories:

a. Leveraging, enhancing, or creation of a network or framework: Does the project demonstrate integration of federal, state, territorial, and local activities? Does the project leverage or establish a professional or technical network? (10 Points)

b. Program Priorities: Does the project effectively enhance resilience or capacity of a coastal community through addressing one or more of the program priorities? Are project outcomes and goals specific and applied to a local community(ies) or a region? (10 Points)

c. Partnerships: Does the proposal include strong letters of collaboration from partners and community members? Does the project demonstrate engagement with all relevant partners needed to effectively develop or leverage the project and networks? Does the project demonstrate community level support and engagement? (5 Points)

2. Technical and 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 and objectives. For the Coastal Resilience Networks Program this includes the following categories:

a. Clearly defined, focused and realistic objectives: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? (9 Points)

b. Integration with existing resources, networks, plans, or frameworks: Does the proposal promote interoperability or integration with components of regional and national systems or networks? (9 Points)

c. Does the proposed approach incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or

technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work? (7 Points)

3. Overall qualifications of the funding applicants (20 Points): This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Coastal Resilience Networks Program this includes the following categories:

a. Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Are the investigators qualified and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed? (8 points)

b. Are the partners involved in the project qualified? Are investigators from other agencies and institutions within the region included as key personnel on the project to capitalize on available expertise and promote a regional approach? (8 points)

c. Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? (4 points)

4. Project costs (15 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Coastal Resilience Networks Program this includes the following categories:

a. Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project? (7 points)

b. Is the cost effectiveness of the project optimized through strategic partnerships with collaborating institutions, agencies, or private-sector partners? (8 points)

5. Outreach and education (15 Points): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources. For the Coastal Resilience Networks this includes the following categories:

a. Engagement: Does the proposal demonstrate that the target user community has been engaged in development of the desired project outcomes? Does the project

engage the public and local and regional stakeholders? (8 Points)

b. Outreach activities: Does the proposal demonstrate that information generated by the project will reach its target audience and have a positive impact in the local community and the region? Does the project contain an audience appropriate outreach component? (e.g., perception of risk; local knowledge, culture, and terminology; understanding of local hazards and impacts) (7 Points)

B. Review and Selection Process

LOI Review Process: All LOIs may be evaluated by federal and nonfederal staff members in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation to determine whether the proposed project is responsive to the goals as advertised in this notice. Appropriate mechanism will be established to avoid conflict of interest. The Pacific Services Center will respond to each LOI by e-mail informing the applicant (i.e., the lead PI) whether or not they are encouraged to submit a full proposal. We anticipate sending responses by April 5, 2012.

Full Proposal Review and Selection Process: Applicants may not submit a full proposal unless they receive an invitation from NOAA to do so after submitting an LOI. Any full proposal that is submitted without having received an invitation will not be reviewed.

An initial administrative screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals will be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by at least three independent peer reviewers through an independent peer mail review and/or an independent peer panel review. A mix of Federal and non-Federal reviewers will be used. No consensus advice will be given by the independent peer reviewers through mail reviews or on the review panels. The merit reviewer's ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The Selecting Official shall award according to rank order unless there is a specific justification for selecting out of rank order based upon factors listed in Section V.C. The Selecting Official or designee may also negotiate the funding level of the proposals to be recommended for funding. The Selecting Official will send the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

Appropriate mechanisms will be established to avoid conflicts of interest during the proposal merit review process.

Proposals that are not funded in the current fiscal period may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive review process.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The competition manager may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically.
 - b. By type of institutions.
 - c. By type of partners.
 - d. By research areas.
 - e. By project types.
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or 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.

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The start date on proposals should be on October 1, 2012; or the first day of any proceeding month after October 1, 2012 but no later than January 1, 2013.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Applications recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by e-mail that their application was recommended for funding. The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office is NOT the official award notice. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer either by postal mail or electronically.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail that their application was not recommended for funding status within 10 business days after the final program office recommendations have been approved by the NOAA GMD.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010). More information on the universal identifier and national policy requirements are on the following two webpages:

[http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?
c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl)

[http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?
c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl)

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements. Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the

Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). This notice may be obtained under http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a080211c.html.

2. Limitation of Liability: Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). See the NEPA information in Section

IV, B, of this announcement.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports electronically through the NOAA Grants On-Line System. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Room B-119; Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413, phone 843-740-1185, fax 843-740-1224, e-mail James.L.Free@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

Official notification of an award notice is provided by the Grants Management

Division, not the program office. If one incurs any costs before receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

The Coastal Services Center will not release the names of applicants submitting LOIs or proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is online at

<http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/> .

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. Applicants in their final progress report will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and products in the coastal management community; and b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

If equipment is purchased with grant funds, applicants are subject to inventory requirements in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(f)(3), 15 CFR 24.32(b) or 15 CFR 24.32(d)(2) as an appendix to progress reports. Further, the program office recommends that recipients request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project period ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete an "other" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(g)-(h) and 15 CFR 24.32(g)(2).

Please be advised that potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.)

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.473). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.