



# NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Full Application Guidance

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October 5, 2023

This guidance, containing information from the [notice of funding opportunity](#), was developed to serve as a resource to applicants. It is not intended to replace the funding notice, but rather serve as a reference guide. Please refer to the [funding notice](#) for application specifics.

Applicants should submit full applications through [Grants.gov](#). If necessary, applicants may provide an original paper copy of their full application by mail.

Invited applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on February 13, 2024. See pages 23 to 37 of the [notice of funding opportunity](#) for a complete description of the information required. In addition to the federal application forms from the SF-424 form family (found [here](#)), applications must include no more than the following five files (PDF files only):

- PDF 1. Project Summary (three-page limit).
- PDF 2. Project Narrative (25-page limit).
- PDF 3. Budget Narrative (no page limit).
- PDF 4. Supplemental Materials, Appendices (50-page limit recommended).
- PDF 5. Letters of Support and Collaboration (no page limit).

Page limits assume an 11- or 12-point font and one-inch margins, and may use single spacing. Applicants should number pages in their full proposal and any appendices. There is a 100 megabyte file size limit on individual files. If you have issues related to the file size limitations, please contact [resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov](mailto:resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov).

## PDF 1: Project Summary (three-page limit)

All proposals must briefly describe the activities to be implemented with the requested funds, including

- Project title
- Funding track applying for
  - Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development (Track One)
  - Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions (Track Two)
- Requested NOAA funding amount
- Proposed project start and end dates
- Applicant name and the name and affiliation of their project director with contact information
- Brief description of the resilience vision, proposed activities, and intended outcomes, including equity components
- Brief description of the geographic region, including coastal counties and tribes
- List of collaborators and/or partners
- Congressional districts
- Estimated number of jobs partially or wholly supported
- Brief description of proposed engagement with marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities
- For Track Two, include a list of each adaptation action (approximately three to eight) and the entity that will implement the activity
- Summary budget table for major project activities, including sub-awards and contracts
- Brief description of the leveraging of resources from NOAA and other federal, state, territorial and/or local activities or programs

Tip: Keep the project summary brief and provide the information exactly as requested in the funding opportunity. Images, maps, or graphics on the project summary aren't necessary or helpful. Keeping the information brief will ensure that your application is properly routed to the appropriate reviewers.

## PDF 2: Project Narrative (25-page limit)

Tip: The project narrative is the bulk of your proposal. Following the page, font, and line spacing requirement is essential, as outlined in the [notice of funding opportunity](#). Within the first two pages, ensure that the reader will have the basic information about your project, including the major activities and the outcome or product of the project. It may be helpful to begin with your one-page summary as your outline and add details and information to your specific goals, objectives, and activities.

The project narrative should be responsive to the evaluation criteria to receive a consistent review against competing applications. Sufficient detail should be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to the program priorities—risk reduction, regional coordination and collaboration, equity and inclusion, and enduring capacity. The project narrative should also provide enough detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the technical and scientific merit

of the proposed work; adequately review the qualifications of the applicants; determine if costs are realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe; assess whether the proposal includes a strategy to engage other organizations, groups, and individuals; and assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to federal policy considerations, such as those related to the [National Environmental Policy Act](#), [Endangered Species Act](#), [Historic Preservation Act](#), and [Marine Mammal Protection Act](#).

The project narrative should contain the following:

- Background;
- Overall resilience vision, strategies, and activities;
- Framework for collaboration;
- Engagement, workforce development, and knowledge transfer;
- Strategy for advancing equity and support for underserved communities; and
- Evaluation.

Optionally, at the end of the narrative, the narrative may also include anticipated technical assistance from NOAA. This is optional and not required. If included, this text will not count toward the 25-page limit.

**Background.** Provide sufficient background information to describe the geographic scope of the region, including a map showing participating jurisdictions and location of proposed efforts, as applicable. Describe the climate risk, vulnerability, or resilience and adaptation challenge(s) to be addressed, the specific problems, gaps, or needs to be addressed, and the status of and relationship to ongoing efforts to address them. Describe the rationale for this geographic scope based on specific threats from weather and climate impacts.

**Overall resilience vision, strategies, and activities.** Describe the vision for resilience and the adaptation strategies and activities to accomplish this vision. The described strategies should address the overarching program priorities: risk reduction; regional collaboration and coordination; equity; and enduring capacity. Describe the significant benefits that will be derived from a regional approach. In cases where funding is being requested for a component of work that is part of a larger design or effort, applicants should clearly identify what portion will be implemented with the requested funding.

- For Track One, describe the proposed activities to build the collaborative, as well as specific strategies and associated milestones for progressing the collaborative toward implementation.
- For Track Two, describe the adaptation actions (approximately three to eight) and the connection to the overall resilience vision. For each of the proposed adaptation activities, describe the specific activities to be undertaken, timelines for major tasks, target milestones, the expected outcomes, and the relationship to the program priorities. Describe any potential obstacles to successful completion of proposed activities.

**Framework for collaboration.** Describe the general approach of the collaborative team, including the organizational structure and function. Describe efforts by collaborators and partners to engage and provide benefits to marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities, and tribes. Describe the roles of collaborators, if relevant, including their experience and capacity in completing similar efforts. Describe how collaborators will interact with each other and with partners to accomplish the proposed efforts, and how they will contribute to the outcome of the project. Describe whether collaborators and partners are proposed to receive funding under the award as subrecipients or contractors.

Also, describe how other federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local government agencies will be connected to, integrated, and leveraged in the project, including connections to other federally supported resilience and adaptation efforts and investments. Describe resources leveraged by the applicant, including information sources, assessments, studies, plans, programs, and partnerships, and previous or ongoing efforts. Describe efforts to develop a plan for sustaining coordination and collaboration beyond the award period.

- The application should include a letter or letters identifying the project director or lead for the collaborative team and evidence that each collaborative team member has read the application and is committed to executing its roles, responsibilities, or commitments.

Engagement, workforce development, and knowledge transfer. Describe how the public and other stakeholders will be engaged in the development of the desired outcomes, how information will reach its target audience(s) and have a positive impact within and outside the region, and how best practices for communicating risk to target audiences are employed. Describe activities to support the transfer of knowledge by organizing, creating, capturing, and/or distributing knowledge to ensure its availability for future use. Appropriate activities for knowledge transfer may include the development of information products, tools, training, or risk communication and outreach. Describe any efforts to identify workforce needs that will be required to implement resilience and adaptation actions into the future. Describe workforce requirements needed to implement identified projects, including types and levels of positions related to resilience or adaptation planning; coastal restoration design, permitting, engineering; risk modeling; land and natural resources valuation; applied social science; geospatial analysis; and other expertise as required.

**Strategy for advancing equity and support for underserved communities.** In this section, applicants should describe how engagement and benefits to marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities and tribes will be supported. Tribes and other lead entities who are themselves, or who represent the interests of, marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities, should describe how the proposed efforts expand participation of these populations. All applicants should describe ways in which the collaborative team will foster an inclusive environment and recruit from, engage with, and collaborate (provide financial resources) with members of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities. Applicants are encouraged to highlight previous efforts and relationships that add value to the proposed activities. Applicants should also describe opportunities for individuals in underserved communities through educational opportunities, job training, job creation, workforce development, leadership development, and training programs.

**Evaluation.** Describe the approach for evaluating performance of the proposed activities and outcomes using clear measure(s) of success. For both tracks, this includes monitoring the effectiveness of proposed activities and reporting the impact of associated outcomes during the period of performance. For Track Two, this should also include plans to monitor longer-term effectiveness of proposed strategies and adaptation actions beyond the period of performance where appropriate, including collecting quantitative and qualitative data on outcomes and impacts. Costs associated with evaluation and the collection of additional data or information for monitoring effectiveness are eligible for funding. However, only for the duration of the award's period of performance.

**OPTIONAL (will not be counted as part of the 25-page limit):** Anticipated technical assistance from NOAA. Briefly describe, if known, any anticipated needs for technical assistance from NOAA during project implementation. This section is optional because requests for technical assistance are for NOAA's planning purposes and are not a part of the full proposal evaluation criteria. NOAA defines

technical assistance for the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge as targeted, customized support to help individuals and organizations build their knowledge, ability, and capacity to achieve specific goals and outcomes. Examples of the services that may be provided can be found in the “Assistance for Funded Proposals” section of the [technical assistance page](#) on the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge website. If known, include specific topical expertise needed and NOAA offices or programs (e.g., climate program office for climate data access, modeling, or analysis). NOAA will work with successful applicants to explore the types of technical assistance that NOAA may provide for project implementation. Data acquisition, specific training needs, potential workforce supplementation (e.g., a fellow under your mentorship and oversight), and consultation on designing meaningful engagement with underserved communities may be discussed during award negotiations; mention of these services in the full proposal will help NOAA understand project needs.

### PDF 3: Budget Narrative (no page limit)

Tip: Provide a budget narrative following the format and categories in the [Budget Narrative Guidance for NOAA Grants](#). The budget narrative should clearly identify and justify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work. A [Budget Justification Template](#) is also available to assist applicants.

For Track One proposals, clearly identify the costs associated with the activities intended to build the collaborative and progress towards implementation. For Track Two proposals, the budget narrative should include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) for each of the adaptation actions (approximately three to eight) by year.

**Geospatial data acquisitions.** Mechanisms are available for geospatial data and services acquisitions associated with funded proposals; please review the technical assistance section of the [FAQ](#) for details and contact [resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov](mailto:resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov) if you have additional questions.

**Signage.** Applicants should also include costs for signage in proposed budgets for construction and non-construction land acquisition activities. Signage that is visible to the public is required for projects that exceed \$5,000,000 in federal funds or result in six months of on-the-ground construction activity, provided the signage does not involve great administrative burden to the recipient. The costs to procure, distribute, and install signage should be included in proposed budgets. Please make sure signage meets the specific design criteria in the “[Building A Better America Brand Guide](#)”, and no alterations or modifications shall be made. The sign must be placed in a visible location that can be directly linked to the work taking place and must be maintained in good condition throughout the work period. If work is taking place in communities where English is not the predominant language, applicants are encouraged to translate the language on the signs. Applicants are encouraged to use recycled or recovered materials when procuring signs.

### PDF 4: Supplemental Materials and Appendices (50-page limit recommended)

Supplemental materials and appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal and should not exceed a maximum of 50 pages. All supplemental materials should be combined into a single PDF as appendices, including a cover page that lists all of the documents and associated page numbers. The compiled PDF should be uploaded under the “Other Attachments Form” in [Grants.gov](#). Only material that is submitted as a single package will be reviewed by merit reviewers. The following documents should be included in the supplemental materials:

**Resumes.** Provide resumes for the project director and other key personnel critical to the success of the proposed efforts. Ensure that all resumes address the qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit each resume to a maximum of two pages.

**Data management plan.** Any environmental data that is created in your project must eventually be available to the public. The data sharing plan must outline how you will do this. Provide a data management plan as described in the [notice of funding opportunity](#).

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).** Refer to Section VI.B.4. of the [notice of funding opportunity](#) for information about the types of environmental information that should be described in the application.

**Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (if applicable).** The proposed budget may include an amount for indirect or “facilities and administrative” costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project.

A copy of the current approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application package. If an award recipient does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, it may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). Non-federal entities may use this rate indefinitely but may choose to negotiate an indirect facilities and administrative cost rate at any time. This de minimis rate option is not available to state and local governments or tribes.

**Supporting documentation.** For all construction activities proposed under Track Two, including construction of natural or green and hybrid infrastructure, applicants should provide details regarding the current status of proposed activities including whether the project is in conceptual stage, preliminary design, final design and permitting, or construction ready. Applicants should provide information that is sufficient to allow reviewers to understand work that has been completed and work that is being proposed for funding. This may include project designs, maps, permitting information, and other compliance related documentation. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how current and future coastal hazard risks, including flood risks, inundation, erosion, and sea level rise, have been considered in the planning and design of construction activities.

To ensure compliance with [Executive Order 13690](#), the [Federal Flood Risk Management Standard](#), applicants with any proposed construction activity must plan to an expanded floodplain of a higher vertical elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain area that addresses current and future flood risk due to the effects of climate change and other future changes. Executive Order 13690 encourages climate-conscious resilient design. Applicants must select from several different approaches to establish the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard floodplain: 1) climate-informed science approach; 2) freeboard value approach; or 3) 0.2-percent-annual-chance (500-year) flood approach. Some useful tools for meeting this requirement include: the “[Federal Flood Risk Management Standard \(FFRMS\) Floodplain Determination Job Aid](#)” and the “[Determining the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard \(FFRMS\) Floodplain tutorial](#).”

Proposals including construction activities should include a comprehensive project schedule describing all activities from the start of the award, including when the project will begin and demonstrating that the project will be able to complete construction within the period of performance. Proposals should clearly state the month and year in which the project’s final design was or will be completed, all permits needed to begin construction, and information on the status of permitting (e.g., date when permit applications

were submitted or date when permits were issued). In cases where funding is being requested for a component of work that is part of a larger design or effort, applicants should clearly identify what portion will be implemented with the requested funding.

For all land acquisitions proposed under Track Two, applicants should provide details regarding the current status of the proposed acquisition and information that is sufficient to allow reviewers to understand work that has been completed and activities that are being proposed for funding. Proposals with land acquisitions must include a complete and self-contained appraisal prepared by an independent state-approved appraiser. The negotiated price of the property or conservation easement should be based on the fair market value as established by the appraisal. Appraisals must reflect nationally recognized appraisal standards, including the “[Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition](#)” (the yellow book). If an appraisal has not been completed at the time a proposal is submitted, the applicant may propose a good faith estimate of the cost for the acquisition based on market value or agreement with the willing seller. However, if the acquisition is selected for funding, an appraisal will be required before funds can be released. The cost of the acquisition cannot exceed the estimated cost in the application. If the appraised value of the property is higher than the estimated cost in the proposal, the applicant must make up the difference. If the appraised value is lower than the estimated cost, NOAA may reduce the federal share of the acquisition as appropriate.

### **PDF 5: Letters of Support and Collaboration (no page limit)**

Tip: Letters that show collaboration with your partners, stakeholders, or key audiences that are tailored to their specific organization and your program are most desirable.

Letters of support and collaboration should be combined into a single PDF. The compiled PDF should be uploaded under the “Other Attachments Form” in [Grants.gov](#). Only material that is submitted as a single package will be reviewed by merit reviewers, including letters of support. Letters of support received by NOAA after the application has been submitted will not be considered in the merit review process.

- i. Letters of collaboration. Include a letter of commitment from each collaborator (including letters signed by multiple collaborators) that documents review of the application and includes a statement of commitment to supporting and executing the activities proposed in the application. Letters of collaboration do not need original signatures.
- ii. Letters of support. Letters from partners, including individuals, agencies, organizations, or institutions that cooperate with or are supportive of the project should be included in the application package. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowed and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers. Letters of support do not need original signatures. If a regional collaborative does not include at least one unit of local, tribal, or state government as a collaborator, the applicant must include at least one letter of support from a unit of local, tribal, or state government.