Introduction to NOAA Office for Coastal Management Grants

NOAA Office for Coastal Management
February 2022

Introduction to Grants

Grants.gov is the system where all federal grant-making agencies post competitive grant opportunities for new and continuing programs. Grants.gov is the single access point for more than 1,000 grant programs and provides access to approximately $650 billion in annual awards offered by the 26 federal grant-making agencies.

The NOAA Office for Coastal Management’s competitive grant announcements can be found on Grants.gov by searching under the following Federal Assistance Listing numbers:

- 11.419 – Coastal Zone Management Administration (including Projects of Special Merit, Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserves Collaborative Science Program)
- 11.420 – Coastal Zone Management Estuarine Research Reserves
- 11.473 – Office for Coastal Management (Bay Watershed Education and Training, Coastal Resilience, Great Lakes Areas of Concern Land Acquisition)
- 11.482 – Coral Reef Conservation Program

All applications for NOAA Office for Coastal Management grant programs should be submitted electronically using Grants.gov. Applicants without internet access may submit hard copy application packages according to the directions stated in the funding announcement.

The following grant terms are commonly used by NOAA:

- **Grant** – The legal instrument reflecting a relationship between NOAA and a recipient whenever (a) the principal purpose of the relationship is to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by federal statute; and (b) no substantial involvement is anticipated between NOAA and the recipient during the performance of the contemplated activity.

- **Cooperative agreement** – A project with substantial involvement (e.g., collaboration, participation, or intervention by NOAA or the federal government in the management of the project) anticipated between the government and the recipient during performance of the contemplated activity. Cooperative agreements are subject to the same Office of Management and Budget, Treasury, and other federal agency laws and policies as grants. See 31 U.S.C. 6305.

- **Letter of intent** – A concise description of a proposed project and its relevance to program objectives. These descriptions are usually two pages or less, may require specific components, and may be optional or mandatory, all according to guidance in the grant announcement.
• **Multi-year award** – An award with a project period of more than 12 months that is partially funded in year one and subsequently funded in increments. Funding for each year’s activity is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress and satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

• **Multiple year award** – A one-year funded award that disperses all funds in year one for a project period that may cover multiple years.

Grant applicants will need to provide assurances in their proposals that reflect applicable federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders. Recipients will also need to follow any terms and conditions subject to the award. Recipient award letters will identify provisions, terms, and conditions incorporated into awards. NOAA award letters commonly address the following:

- Department of Commerce financial assistance standard terms and conditions
- NOAA administrative standard award conditions
- Grants Online award action request guidance
- Special award conditions
- Line item budget
- Uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements for federal award (Office of Management and Budget uniform guidance codified under 2 C.F.R. Part 200). See notes one and two below for additional information on the uniform administrative requirements.
- Department of Commerce pre-award notification requirements for grants
- Other provisions (as noted in financial assistance awards or amendments – CD-450 and CD-451)

**Note 1.** The uniform guidance government-wide requirements, affecting federal awards to non-federal entities, may also apply to for-profit entities in limited circumstances and to foreign entities as described in this guidance and the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

**Note 2.** Uniform guidance applies to all awards and award amendments made on or after December 26, 2014. The award date for a federal award determines which guidance governs sub-awards. Sub-awards must follow the same guidance and requirements as the federal award.

**NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria**

Applicants should be aware that NOAA uses six standard evaluation criteria for its competitive assistance programs. A complete explanation of evaluation criteria and the selection process is outlined in all federal funding opportunities, specifically Section V, which is entitled, “Applicant Review Information.” Criteria weights may vary according to the announcement, except for the data management plan, which carries five points.

**Evaluation Criteria for Projects:**

- **Importance, relevance, and applicability of proposed project to the program goals.** This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

- **Technical and scientific merit.** This assesses whether the approach is technically sound or innovative, whether the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

- **Overall qualifications of applicants.** This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.
• **Project costs.** The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

• **Outreach and education.** NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA’s mission to protect the nation’s natural resources.

  **Data management plan (five points).** This assesses whether the project includes a thorough and effective data management plan.

### Successful Grant Proposal Components

Successful competitive grant proposals often include the following components:

• An outline of a collaborative plan between the grant applicant and the Office for Coastal Management that makes effective use of each organization’s strengths and capabilities.

• An explicit statement within the cooperative agreement proposals of the roles and responsibilities of the NOAA Office for Coastal Management, the grant applicants, the applicant’s partners, and how these roles will be collectively applied to an effective examination of coastal management issues. The proposal includes a plan for the Office for Coastal Management and the grant applicant to work together to fully develop more detailed tasks early in the project when roles are unknown.

• An itemized budget and a detailed budget narrative of project costs, including labor, travel, supplies, and other costs.

• A description of a clear quality-control strategy.

• Details on how a broad range of coastal managers will use the products once the project is completed.

  A clear statement of the planned impacts of the project and products in the coastal management community. Information on outputs and outcomes can be found in guidance developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

### Impact Statements

Recipients of awards sponsored by the NOAA Office for Coastal Management are commonly requested to clearly state any products developed under financial assistance awards and the resulting effects of the project on the coastal management community (e.g., how did or will the recipient’s accomplishments make a positive difference?).

The Virginia Tech University, Office of Communications and Marketing and NOAA Sea Grant Program provide useful guidance on how to write impact statements and include real-world examples.