

Coastal Ecosystems Climate Resilience Funding Opportunity
Informational Webinar Questions and Answers
April 2, 2024

Application Information

1. Is this a one-off funding opportunity or does EPA expect to have another similar funding call in the future?

Answer: This is a topic of ongoing interest for EPA, however, there is currently no timeline for another funding opportunity on this topic. To be notified of future grant opportunities, please sign up for our [listserv](#). You can also search for other funding opportunities at [grants.gov](#).

2. Is a federal agency encouraged to be listed as a collaborator? Are supporting letters from federal programs encouraged?

Answer: The funding opportunity states that federal agencies may not apply and that federal employees are not eligible to serve in a principal leadership role on an assistance agreement. It also states at Section III.A. "The applicant institution may enter into an agreement with a Federal Agency to purchase or utilize unique supplies or services unavailable in the private sector to the extent authorized by law. Examples are purchase of satellite data, chemical reference standards, analyses, or use of instrumentation or other facilities not available elsewhere. A written justification for federal involvement must be included in the application. In addition, an appropriate form of assurance that documents the commitment, such as a letter of intent from the Federal Agency involved, should be included." If a federal agency is involved in the research, please describe that role in the application. It is recommended to have a letter of support included in the application; however, a letter of support should be limited to one page.

3. What is considered part of the U.S. for the applicability of results, e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Micronesia, United States Minor Outlying Islands, Freely Associated Nations such as the Marshall Islands?

Answer: American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are U.S. territories and are considered within scope for this funding opportunity.

4. How does EPA define 'coastal'? The funding opportunity describes seagrass meadows, mangroves, and tidal wetlands as examples. What other systems would be relevant to this funding opportunity?

Answer: Coastal ecosystems are those ecosystems that exist along U.S. coastal waters. Coastal waters are at the interface between terrestrial environments and the oceans, including estuarine and marine environments. Relevant systems may include estuaries and bays, coastal and tidal wetlands, seagrass meadows, coral reefs, mangrove forests, kelp forests, and upwelling areas.

5. When will awards be announced?

Answer: It is anticipated that awards will be announced between 6-12 months after the

solicitation closes. When awards are made, they will be announced and posted on our website.

6. Can you please go over the expected number of awards?

Answer: EPA anticipates funding \$8.4 million to fund up to seven awards. The maximum funding per award is \$1.2 million.

7. What is the expected total budget an applicant can apply for?

Answer: An applicant can request up to \$1,200,000 of federal funding per application. This is the total for three years of research. Any requests more than this amount will result in the application not being considered for review. However, an applicant may receive funding and/or in-kind contributions from non-federal sources as well.

8. What should be the expected start date of the three-year project?

Answer: Applications are not required to include a specific start date. The start date should be any date after the close date listed on the funding opportunity. The start date is flexible and can be changed after the grant has been awarded. Funding is typically awarded six to twelve months after the funding opportunity closes.

9. Which components of the application are required only for subgrantees/subcontractors?

Answer: Please review Section C. (Content and Form of Application Submission) for all materials that mention subawards/contracts. The application should clearly state who is implementing the work, especially for subawards and contractors. The lead institution oversees distributing the budget to subawardees and contractors. The budget justification requires a total funding amount for each subaward or contract.

10. Does this funding opportunity consider a smaller award request for a smaller scope project? Would that be competitive or unorthodox?

Answer: EPA will consider all eligible applications regardless of size or scope. If you propose a smaller scale project, you must show that the research described is responsive to the funding opportunity and can be completed within the budget and time period proposed. This grant program is not a "low bid contract" in which the lowest cost proposal automatically gets funded.

11. What is a competitive procurement?

Answer: This pertains to consulting services and the requirement to procure at least three financial quotes for potential services. Consulting services are allowable and should be placed in the "Contractual" cost category.

Per the RFA: "Note: Prior to naming a contractor (including consultants) or subrecipient in your application as a "partner," please carefully review Section 18 IV.d, "Contracts and Subawards," of [EPA's Announcement Clauses](#) that are incorporated by reference in this announcement (See Section I.H). EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements as well as EPA's rule on Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in EPA Programs in 40 CFR Part 33. The agency does not accept justifications for sole source contracts for services or products available in the commercial marketplace based on a

contractor's role in preparing an application."

Clarification on Research and Scope

- 1. The Request for Applications (RFA Section I.E) states" The goal of this research is to collectively provide coverage for all the nation's relevant coastal areas. For example, if individual metrics or indicators are developed at regional levels, then those metrics or indicators should be developed for all regions in the United States as part of this research. The final suite of metrics, indicators, or methods developed by the project research area should not be limited to one geographic region." Can you clarify the geographic scope that is considered relevant for the Research Area?**

Answer: EPA acknowledges the variety of coastal ecosystems that exist in the U.S. and U.S. territories. The geographic extent of the applicability of the outputs and outcomes for a particular ecosystem(s) will be evaluated for responsiveness and relevance to the funding opportunity. For example, although kelp forests do not exist along all the nation's coastlines, research would be considered relevant and within scope if it demonstrates applicability to kelp forest ecosystems wherever they are present in the US and Territories.

For example, if an application proposes to focus work on one particular type of coastal ecosystem (e.g., mangroves, wetlands, kelp forests), the application should clearly describe how the results will be applied to the other areas in the United States where that ecosystem exists.

If an applicant has additional questions on scope, they may contact the technical contact listed in the funding opportunity.

Technical Questions

- 1. The funding opportunity mentions research conducted in a specific region should have those metrics be translatable to the entire U.S. Does this mean only those projects that have transferable metrics being developed will be considered?**

Answer: The metrics should be applicable to the broadest extent possible. See answer to the previous question above.

- 2. Should successful proposals hit all the research goals? Is it likely for proposals focused primarily on one or two of the goals likely to succeed? Particularly, if ecosystem valuation were not part of a proposal, would that be considered a likely candidate for success?**

Answer: There are two distinct research areas. Applicants must respond in-depth to at least one of the two research areas. Applications may respond to one research area in- depth and integrate across the two research areas. Applications should clearly identify which research area(s) the application is addressing throughout the proposal. Applications that do not address at least one of the research areas in-depth may not be rated as highly under the evaluation process described in Section V as those that do. Applications that address more than one (integrate across) research area will not necessarily be rated more highly than those that address

just one research area. Please carefully read Section E. of the funding opportunity for greater detail of the two research areas.

3. Can the destruction of pollutants by technology can be considered related to coastal resilience?

Answer: Coastal ecosystem resilience is defined as "the capacity of the coastal ecological system to persist through and rapidly recover from stressors and disturbances." Therefore, destruction of pollutants by technology could be considered related to coastal resilience if it improves the capacity of the ecosystem to persist and recover from stressors/disturbances. However, Research Area 1 seeks to "characterize, quantify, and define indicators or metrics of resilience for various types of coastal ecosystems," and therefore focuses on increasing understanding and characterization of what defines/contributes to resilience in coastal ecosystems. EPA is most interested in looking at a particular coastal ecosystem(s) as a whole when characterizing the factors that make them resilient. Please review Section I.V.A and B for the review criteria of applications.

4. Can proposals that focus on a multi-state region to develop and apply an economic valuation approach be eligible, if the proposal discusses the broader future applicability of the methods, potential transferability of the results?

Answer: Yes, if the applicant describes how the outputs and outcomes would be applied more broadly to similar ecosystems or scenarios in the U.S. A project would be considered in scope if the application is responsive to the funding opportunity's goal of advancing the science of economic valuation of resilience benefits, and if the application describes or demonstrates how the results or methods from a site-specific or local study can be applied to similar coastal communities/ecosystems across the United States.

5. The funding opportunity mentions various ecosystems that might be assessed in different ways, does that mean we applicants need to consider only one of them, like seagrass?

Answer: Applications can consider one type of ecosystem or may consider multiple coastal ecosystems. If an application proposes to focus work on one particular type of coastal ecosystem (e.g., mangroves, wetlands, kelp forests), the application should clearly describe how the results will be applied to the other areas in the United States where that ecosystem exists.

6. If the research project focuses on Research Area 1, do we need to emphasize the economic valuation of the ecological resilience proposal?

Answer: No. Applicants must respond in-depth to at least one of the two research areas. Applications may respond to one research area in-depth AND integrate across the two research areas (for example including economic valuation while responding in-depth to Research Area 1). Applications should clearly identify which research area(s) the application is addressing throughout the application. Applications that do not address at least one of the research areas in-depth may not be rated as highly under the evaluation process described in Section V as those that do. Applications that address more than one (integrate across) research area will not necessarily be rated more highly than those that address just one research area. Please carefully read Section E. of the RFA for greater detail of the two research areas.

7. Does nutrient management for a sustainable fishery in a typical (not salt marsh, seagrass, or mangrove) estuary relate to coastal resilience?

Answer: In the funding opportunity, coastal ecosystem resilience is defined as "the capacity of the coastal ecological system to persist through and rapidly recover from stressors and disturbances." Nutrient management for sustainable fisheries may be considered related to coastal resilience if it improves the capacity of the ecosystem to persist and recover from stressors. However, the goal of Research Area 1 is to "characterize, quantify, and define indicators or metrics of resilience for various types of coastal ecosystems." Work related to nutrient management for sustainable fisheries would need to demonstrate how it characterizes, quantifies, or defines indicators or metrics of resilience.

8. Research Area 1 lists ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrass ecosystems, can my project explore research related to phytoplankton?

Answer: To be responsive to Research Area 1, the research should characterize, quantify, or define indicators or metrics of resilience in coastal ecosystems. If the research related to phytoplankton responds to this goal, then it would be relevant.

Eligibility

1. Are projects for coastal areas in the Great Lakes eligible for this funding opportunity?

Answer: No, coastal areas in the Great Lakes are not relevant to this funding opportunity. For this opportunity, coastal ecosystems include estuarine and coastal marine regions.

2. Can a national lab be a sub-awardee?

Answer: A Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) may be a subawardee, but personnel from these facilities may not serve as Principal Investigator (PIs) or co-PIs. As stated in the funding notice, Section III.A: "National laboratories funded by Federal Agencies (Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers, "FFRDCs") may not apply. FFRDC employees may cooperate or collaborate with eligible applicants within the limits imposed by applicable legislation and regulations. They may participate in planning, conducting, and analyzing the research directed by the applicant, but may not direct projects on behalf of the applicant organization. An award recipient may provide funds through its assistance agreement from the EPA to an FFRDC for research personnel, supplies, equipment, and other expenses directly related to the research."

3. Can a small and minority-owned environmental consulting firm be a subawardee?

Answer: For-profit companies may not apply or be considered subawardees. However, the funding notice does have provisions for eligible applicants to use the services of consultants as part of the research. Please see Section IV.C.5.iv.f of the funding opportunity.

4. Are Regional Planning Councils eligible lead applicants?

Answer: If the organization is a non-profit (and not a lobbying organization), it should be eligible to apply or to be a subawardee. Please contact the Eligibility Contact listed in the solicitation

with more specifics the organization to make sure.

5. Are federally supported cooperative institutes at universities eligible?

Answer: Research institutes at non-profit universities are generally eligible to apply. Please contact the Eligibility Contact listed in the solicitation with more specifics about the organization to make sure.

6. Can an awardee hire a consultant using a sole source award?

Answer: There are situations in which an applicant may justify use of a sole source consultant. For the purposes of the application, though, all that is needed is to include a brief description of the budget being allocated to the consultant and the purpose.

7. Can a consultant be qualified to apply?

Answer: No, a consultant (i.e., individual or for-profit company) is not eligible to apply directly to this funding opportunity.

8. Are federal agencies eligible to apply?

Answer: No, federal agencies are not eligible to apply.