



**Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District
Board of Directors Meeting - Friday, July 21, 2023, at 1:00 pm PST**

Remote Attendance Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82922778261>

In Person Meeting Locations:

West Business Development Center - (707) 964-7571

345 N Franklin Street, **Fort Bragg**, CA 95437

and

Sonoma County Economic Development Board - (707) 565-7170

141 Stony Circle, Suite 110, **Santa Rosa**, CA 95401



AGENDA
Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District
Board of Directors Meeting - Friday, July 21, 2023, at 1:00 pm PST

Remote Attendance Link:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82922778261>

In Person Meeting Locations:
West Business Development Center - (707) 964-7571
345 N Franklin St, **Fort Bragg**, CA 95437
and
Sonoma County Economic Development Board - (707) 565-7170
141 Stony Circle, Suite 110, **Santa Rosa**, CA 95401

CALL TO ORDER by Robin Bartholow, Chairperson

ROLL CALL by Norma Alley

- Chairperson Robin Bartholow
- Vice Chairperson Paul Garza
- Board Member Lisa Badenfort
- Board Member Jon Frech
- Board Member Jeff Kelly
- Board Member Mary Anne Petrillo

AGENDA CHANGES AND DELETIONS - To Current Agenda Only

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENT - Open time for Public Expression

Time reserved for members of the public to speak on matters not otherwise appearing on the agenda.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Matters listed under the Consent Calendar are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion and one vote. Unless otherwise requested by a Board Member, there will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the Consent Calendar and will be considered separately.

There will be one opportunity for public comment on all consent items. Comments are limited to 3 minutes each, and the Chairperson may limit this time if reasonable under the circumstances.

Item 1 Approval of Check Register as of June 30, 2023

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION - Action Items

Item 2 Receive and File the Business Friendly Communities Status Report and Approve the Business Friendly Communities Survey Tool for City and County Distribution

- Item 3 Authorize the District Manager to Submit a Letter of Intent to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office for Coastal Management's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant Program
- Item 4 Approve the Draft FY 22-23 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update and Performance Report and Authorize the District Manager to submit the Report to the Economic Development Administration
- Item 5 Receive the FY 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process Status Report and Provide Direction As Needed
- Item 6 Discuss and Consider Approving the SMEDD Team to Research and Develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study, Scope to be Provided to the Board for Consideration at a Future SMEDD Board Meeting.

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT

UPDATES

- EDA Supplemental Work Plan Status Update
 - Blue Economy- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
 - EDA Supplemental Grant extension was granted to June 30, 2024
 - AgTech Innovation Hub Brainstorming Workshop Report Out
 - Estimated EDA Planning and Supplemental Grant Funds Remaining

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Blue Economy - NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
 - Letter of Intent Deadline: August 21, 2023
 - Full application due: February 13, 2024
- Community Resilience Centers Program, California Strategic Growth Council
 - Intent to Apply Survey Deadline: September 5, 2023
 - Must submit an *Intent to Apply Survey* as early as possible. This form closes at 11:59:59 p.m. PST on Tuesday, September 5, 2023. More info: https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/community-resilience-centers/docs/20230526-CRC_R1_NOFA.pdf
- Climate Resilience Accelerator Program.
 - Deadline: September 10, 2023
 - Biden-Harris Administration announced \$60 million to create a climate resilience accelerator program and support small businesses through Investing in America agenda. The program is a two-phase competitive funding opportunity. Phase one, open for applications through September 11, 2023, will fund selected projects with up to \$250,000 per project for accelerator program design. The second phase of the competition will invite all applicants selected in phase one to apply for funding of up to \$10 million each to implement their program design. <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/biden-harris-administration-announces-60-million-to-create-climate-resilience-accelerator-program>

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OR COMMENTS

Time reserved for members of the Board to report on AdHoc Committee activities and to speak on matters not otherwise appearing on the agenda. No Actions.

UPCOMING EVENTS THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST - not necessarily SMEDD connected

September 21 & 22, 2023, The State of the Redwood Coast Region: Our Elemental Economy, the 3rd annual regional economic development summit, Ukiah, Mendocino County (registration required)

ADJOURNMENT by Robin Batholow, Chairperson

For a copy of Board Packet materials, please visit smedd.org or email Abigail Scott (abigail@smedd.org).



SONOMA MENDOCINO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
Check Register
Checks Issued Through June 30, 2023

Transmittal on July 21, 2023, to the Board of Directors at their Board Meeting

Check No.	Amount	Check Date	Paid to (Payee)	Description
1300	\$2,956.50	1/4/2023	William Adams; Johnson and Thomas LLC	Legal Services
1301	\$28,280.22	1/4/2023	US Dept of Commerce / NOAA	Reimbursement to Grantor (EDA) of unexpended Partnership Planning grant funds: Grant No. ED17SEA3020055; Period 7/1/2017 - 6/30/2022
1302	\$20.00	3/1/2023	Streamline	Web Service
1303	\$28,303.55	3/17/2023	County of Sonoma	Sonoma County staff reimbursement for services for Partnership Planning grant funds: Grant No. ED17SEA3020055; Period 7/1/2017 - 6/30/2022
1304	\$225.00	3/17/2023	Marie Jones Consulting	Provided CEDS Project Prioritization Services



DATE: July 21, 2023 **ITEM: 2**
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Carrie Rogers, RGS Senior Advisor
SUBJECT: Receive and File the Business Friendly Communities Status Report, and Approve the Business Friendly Communities survey tool for city and county distribution, a component of the approved SMEDD Cares Act Supplemental Work Plan.

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: STATEMENT OF ISSUE: The purpose of this item is to receive the Business Friendly Communities Status Report and approve the Business Friendly Communities survey tool, a component of the SMEDD-approved Cares Act Supplemental Grant Work Plan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive and File the Business Friendly Communities Status Report, and Approve the Business Friendly Communities survey tool distribution to the cities and counties within the SMEDD’s jurisdiction.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

Business Friendly Communities is a component of the SMEDD-approved Cares Act Supplemental Work Plan, Task 2: Recovery and Resiliency Technical Assistance. Receiving and approving this Status Report will have no additional financial impact.

BACKGROUND:

Business friendly communities are better able to attract and retain competitive and market leading businesses, providing quality jobs, robust tax revenues to fund critical community amenities and infrastructure, and an enhanced quality of life for residents and visitors. The Business Friendly Check-up establishes a baseline of key metrics that city and community leaders can reference to better understand their communities’ strengths and weaknesses in this area. Such understanding is useful for crafting effective and relevant policies to support continuous improvement in community vitality.

DISCUSSION:

Business Friendly Communities process consists of four steps:

1. An initial online assessment was conducted to understand current business friendly attributes of the 13 incorporated cities within the SMEDD’s jurisdictional boundaries.
2. A Business Friendly Check-up Webinar, which will help cities understand why being business friendly is important.

3. City representatives complete the online Business Friendly Check-up focused on eight key areas:
 - a. Business Friendly Attributes
 - b. Building Permit and Review
 - c. Taxes
 - d. Fees
 - e. Incentives and Special Zones
 - f. Economic Development
 - g. Communication with Businesses
 - h. Commitment to Cutting Red Tape
4. A Business Friendly Check-up Results Report will be provided to the SMEDD City or County Manager or designee, including the top outcomes, SMEDD cities' business friendly practices, along with best practice strategies and tactics from small and large cities.

Summary of Roll-out Timeline and Plan:

- 7/3/23-7/11/23: the SMEDD Board of Directors to participate in the online Business Friendly Check-up, providing comments and suggested improvements.
- 7/21/23: the SMEDD Board of Directors receive and file the Business Friendly Communities Status Report, and consider approving the Business Friendly survey tool and distribution plan.
- Week of 7/24/23: Electronically notify the City Managers/Economic Development Managers and the two County Economic Development Managers about the Business Friendly Check-up and its availability on the SMEDD website.
- 8/9/23: Hold the Business Friendly Communities Webinar, which will be recorded and placed on the SMEDD's website for those cities and counties unable to attend.
- 8/23-10/23: Provide Business Friendly Communities Results Report to the SMEDD City/County Managers/Economic Development Managers with top outcomes, along with best practice strategies and tactics from small and large cities.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1:** Receive and File the Business Friendly Communities Status Report, and Approve the Business Friendly Communities survey tool for city and county distribution, a component of the approved SMEDD Cares Act Supplemental Work Plan.
- 2:** Consider, *modify*, and authorize revisions to the Business Friendly Communities Status Report and Business Friendly Communities survey tool for city and county distribution.
- 3:** Other approach(s) may be developed after public comments and Board deliberations.
- 4:** Decline to act.

RECOMMENDATION for Alternative 1:

Move to:

- Receive and File the Business Friendly Communities Status Report, and Approve the Business Friendly Communities survey tool for city and county distribution, a component of the approved SMEDD Cares Act Supplemental Work Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

[Link to Survey](#)



DATE: July 21, 2023 **ITEM:** 3
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Joshua Metz, RGS Senior Advisor, District Manager
SUBJECT: Authorize the District Manager to Submit a Letter of Intent to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office for Coastal Management's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant Program

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: Coastal communities and organizations in Sonoma and Mendocino County are interested in pursuing coastal resilience and climate adaptation projects. The purpose of this item is to consider authorizing the SMEDD District Manager to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management to submit a full application for the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant program.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Authorize the SMEDD to submit a Letter of Intent to NOAA's Office for Coastal Management to submit a full application for the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant program.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

NOAA will select 20 to 25 applicants (nationally) to receive \$500,000 to \$2 million each to be spent over three to five years. There is no matching requirement for this funding. Coordination work towards the completion of a Letter of Intent by the SMEDD team would be covered under the approved Cares Act Supplemental Grant Work plan. An Indirect Cost item would be included in the final proposal to cover SMEDD team Administrative, Fiscal and Project Management.

BACKGROUND:

The SMEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy includes Goal 1: Develop Innovative and Value-Added Economic Sectors, through a focus on growing the Blue and Green Economies, and Goal 4: Plan for & Implement Resilience. Coastal communities in Mendocino and Sonoma counties are pursuing blue economy, coastal resilience, and climate adaptation projects. There is strategic alignment of these projects and the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.

The Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, which is administered by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management, is a competitive funding opportunity. Approximately \$575 million is available for projects that build the resilience of coastal communities to extreme weather and other impacts of climate change, including sea level rise and drought.

Funding was made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act, a federal government-wide investment that is advancing NOAA's efforts to build Climate-Ready Coasts.

The focus of this grant program is on collaborative approaches to achieving resilience in coastal regions. All proposals should focus on regional efforts that:

- 1) provide local and regional co-benefits (e.g., reducing risk and improving public health, advancing equitable adaptation actions and increasing access to open space);
- 2) advance equity through meaningful community involvement in the identification and implementation of holistic resilience and adaptation strategies and actions; and
- 3) contribute to enduring capacity for adaptation in the region.

NOAA technical assistance is available for organizations applying for and receiving a grant. Many technical assistance options are available, including data, tools, training, and access to NOAA expertise. Visit the technical assistance page to learn more.

There are two parallel but separate funding tracks.

- Track One: Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development
- Track Two: Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions

The First Step: Outline our proposed project and submit a letter of intent. NOAA will invite selected applicants to submit a full application. Details regarding the letter of intent and the application are provided within the funding announcement.

Due Dates:

- Letter of intent due Monday, August 21, 2023
- Full application due Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Eligible Applicants: Coastal states, territories, counties, cities, tribes, and tribal organizations; public or private nonprofit organizations; and institutions of higher education.

Matching Funds: There is no matching requirement for this funding.

Technical Assistance: NOAA may provide technical assistance for applicants developing letters of intent and full proposals. Visit our technical assistance page to learn more.

There are Two Competition Tracks:

- **Track One: Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development**

Track One funding can be used to initiate new, regional-scale collaborations or to advance existing partnerships focused on climate resilience. The goal of Track One is to collectively move more coastal communities closer to taking action, especially those that are marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented.

Funding Availability: NOAA will select 20 to 25 applicants, to receive \$500,000 to \$2 million each, which will be spent over three to five years. Typical Track One awards are anticipated to be \$1 million. Total funding for all Track One awards may be up to \$25 million.

Eligible Activities: NOAA will fund activities to 1) build and expand regional collaboratives; 2) engage and partner with marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities; 3)

assess risk and vulnerability; 4) plan resilience strategies and adaptation actions; and 5) build community and workforce capacity for climate adaptation efforts. The Notice of Funding Opportunity provides additional examples.

- **Track Two: Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions**

Reducing risk and vulnerability requires action. This track provides funding for applicants to implement coordinated adaptation efforts that support a holistic vision for resilience and build the capacity of the communities in a region to sustain efforts into the future, especially those communities that are marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented.

Funding Availability: NOAA will select approximately 15 applicants to receive \$15 to \$75 million each, to be spent over five years. Typical Track Two awards are anticipated to be between \$25 and \$50 million. Total funding available for all Track Two awards is up to \$550 million.

Eligible Activities: Track Two funding can be used to support activities such as 1) acquiring vulnerable land; 2) building natural infrastructure; 3) hybrid green (natural) and gray (structural) construction activities; 4) strengthening or protecting public access to coastal natural resources; 5) building the region's capacity for ongoing actions that increase resilience; 6) planning and preparing for community-led relocation; and 7) updating state and local codes and policies. The Notice of Funding Opportunity provides additional examples.

DISCUSSION:

SMEDD is well-positioned to become a lead applicant to this program for the SMEDD region because it is by design a regional collaboration, with connectivity to local, County, and State agencies, tribal communities, educational institutions, and community-based organizations. The SMEDD also benefits from awareness and connection to Blue Economy focused cross-sector organizing and recent funding successes in Mendocino County, as well as community organizing in Sonoma County. These characteristics and activities suggest the region is well-positioned to pursue the Track Two: Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions.

The SMEDD Team met with a two-county coalition of interest on Wednesday, July 19, 2023. The meeting covered establishing basic familiarity and common cause, priority projects, coalition composition, lead agency options, and next steps. One outcome was a general consensus about the suitability of SMEDD to become the proposal's lead applicant, subject to Board approval and sufficient funding. The coalition agreed to compile a set of relevant potential projects from the two-county region using the following criteria, and to meet again on Wednesday, July 26, 2023, to review and discuss next steps:

- Project Name
- Project leader and contact
- Project description
- How does the project meet the goals of the regional collaboration/grant?
 - Acquiring vulnerable land
 - Building natural infrastructure
 - Natural and structural construction activities
 - Strengthening or protecting public access to coastal natural resources
 - Building the region's capacity for ongoing actions that increase resilience

- Planning and preparing for community led relocation
- Updating state and local codes and policies
- Projected costs and timeline (must fit within the five year period of the grant)

Meeting the first grant LOI deadline of August 21, 2023, would establish the SMEDD’s intent to submit a final application by the February 13, 2024, deadline. It would then be followed by an organizing and grant proposal development body of work that would leverage remaining Cares Act Supplemental Grant funds. The main effort would involve coordinating inputs from each county and key project proponents, coalescing that material into a coherent and unified package, including project budgets and details.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1:** Authorize the District Manager to submit a Letter of Intent to NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management for the purpose of requesting an invitation to submit a full application for the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant program.
- 2:** Consider, *modify*, and authorize the District Manager to submit a Letter of Intent to NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management for the purpose of requesting an invitation to submit a full application for the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant program.
- 3:** Other approach(s) may be developed after public comments and Board deliberations.
- 4:** Decline to act.

RECOMMENDATION for Alternative 1:

Move to:

- Authorize the District Manager to Submit a Letter of Intent to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Office for Coastal Management’s Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant Program.

ATTACHMENTS:

NOAA CLIMATE RESILIENCE REGIONAL CHALLENGE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
 NOAA CLIMATE RESILIENCE REGIONAL CHALLENGE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY



CLIMATE RESILIENCE REGIONAL CHALLENGE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(Revised July 6, 2023)

CONTENTS

General Information	1
Eligibility Information	3
Program Priorities	8
Letter of Intent Application Process	10
Full Application Process	11
Key Terms	13
Budget	14
Technical Assistance	15
Land Acquisitions	16

GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1. Can one entity (or applicant) be included in multiple letters of intent and applications?**
 A: Yes, any eligible entity can serve as lead for or participate in multiple applications. Applicants should carefully consider whether they have the capacity to execute multiple efforts concurrently.
- 2. Under what authority is NOAA providing these funds?**
 A: Section 40001 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Public Law 117-169); Section 310 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1456c), titled “Technical Assistance;” the Digital Coast Act (Public Law 116-223); the National Climate Program Act (Public Law 95-367); and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Public Law 117-58).
- 3. Are these awards being made as grants or cooperative agreements?**
 A: Cooperative agreements, as described in 31 U.S.C. 6305 and 2 C.F.R. 200.1, meaning NOAA expects to be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards.
- 4. Will NOAA be issuing additional funding opportunities through the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge?**
 A: This grant program is being funded through a single appropriation from the Inflation Reduction Act (Section 40001) and there will only be one competition.



5. How are these funding opportunities different from the other habitat conservation and restoration funding opportunities NOAA is providing through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law?

A: Funding from both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act contribute to NOAA's Climate-Ready Coasts initiative. NOAA is making transformational project-level investments in restoration and conservation under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law through several opportunities, including our Transformational Habitat Conservation and Resilience Grants, funds targeted to our coastal zone management and National Estuarine Research Reserve programs, and through the National Coastal Resilience Fund, which NOAA administers in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The Climate Resilience Regional Challenge will fund a broader, more holistic range of adaptation actions that include, but are not limited to, a focus on restoration and conservation. The challenge also adds its unique focus on building enduring capacity for resilience and adaptation within and across regional networks. The actions anticipated under this program, such as policy and regulatory changes and increasing local capacity, extend beyond the focus, and in some cases, the geographic scale, of the opportunities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and are expected to be complementary and deliver compounding benefits. The investments in capacity-building and regional collaboration, and emphasis on underserved communities, tribes, and others, will help build an even stronger pipeline of projects that can be supported through the National Coastal Resilience Fund, Community Based Restoration Program, and Coastal Zone Management Act programs, over the long term.

6. How is the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge different from the National Coastal Resilience Fund?

A: The [National Coastal Resilience Fund](#) is a public-private partnership administered by NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This grant funding helps restore, increase, and strengthen natural infrastructure, which in turn protects coastal communities and enhances fish and wildlife habitat. The Climate Resilience Regional Challenge funds a broader range of adaptation actions and supplements investments being made through the National Coastal Resilience Fund.

7. How is the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge different from the Climate-Ready Workforce funding opportunity?

A: The Climate Resilience Regional Challenge is broadly focused on advancing local adaptation efforts in coastal regions through regional coordination and on-the-ground project implementation. The [Climate-Ready Workforce](#) focuses on end-to-end recruitment into high quality jobs that enhance climate resilience by leveraging cross-sector partnerships, relevant training, and wraparound services (such as transportation and stipends). Projects funded under Climate-Ready Workforce will measurably increase the number of skilled professionals supporting equitable, local adaptation efforts, including those funded by the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge and other Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act investments.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

8. Who is eligible to apply?

A: Eligible entities include coastal states or territories, counties, cities, or other political subdivisions of a coastal state, including special purpose units of a coastal state or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities; the District of Columbia; institutions of higher education; and public or private non-profit organizations or associations, including those acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of a coastal state, regional councils of government, and regional planning councils. Tribes (tribal governments) and tribal organizations are eligible. Institutions of higher education (as defined in subsection [a] of section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 [20 U.S.C. 1001(a)]) are eligible.

9. Can NOAA partners, such as state coastal management programs, Sea Grant college programs, and National Estuarine Research Reserves, apply?

A: Yes, NOAA partners that are state agencies or institutions of higher education are eligible and can be applicants or collaborators.

10. Which states are considered coastal?

A: Coastal states are defined in the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1453[4]) as any state of the United States in, or bordering on, the Atlantic, Pacific, or Arctic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, Long Island Sound, or one or more of the Great Lakes. The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and former Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (Freely Associated States), including Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau, are eligible.

11. My community is in a coastal state, but we are not right on the coast. Are we eligible?

A: There is no prohibition against any community in any coastal state from participating in any proposed effort. All communities in all coastal states are eligible. However, applicants should closely review the evaluation criteria to determine how the proposed effort will be evaluated. For example, letters of intent will be scored on the “extent the proposed effort prepares the region for implementation of future actions and/or directly reduces risk to coastal communities, infrastructure, economies, and ecosystems from weather and climate impacts.” The stronger the economic, social, and/or environmental benefits to coastal communities and/or coastal ecosystems, the more likely it is that the project will be evaluated favorably.

12. Are activities outside of the United States eligible?

A: No. Foreign governments are not eligible to apply for funding. International non-governmental organizations are eligible to participate as partners (either funded or unfunded) if they are conducting projects in one or more of the eligible coastal states and territories.

13. Are other federal agencies allowed to receive funds?

A: Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds, but may serve as collaborative partners. If federal agencies are partners, applicants are expected to provide details in the application regarding the planned level of federal engagement. Examples may include, but are not limited to, serving in a review capacity, providing technical assistance, and participating in task teams, work groups, and leadership teams.

14. Can the same organization be awarded both Track One and Track Two funding for two different projects?

A: Yes, the same organization can submit separate letters of intent for different projects and be selected for funding under the same or different tracks. The selection factors described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity allow NOAA to distribute the funds across a diverse range of locations for a diverse range of purposes. If both proposals score highly, and both projects have similar geographic and topical focus, it would be less likely that both projects would be selected for funding.

15. Are both federally and non-federally recognized tribes eligible?

A: Yes. Federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations are eligible. Non-federally recognized tribes are eligible if they are non-profit organizations. The term “tribe” is synonymous with “tribal government” and means any American Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, community, component band, or component reservation, individually identified (including parenthetically) in the list published most recently as of the date of enactment of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (25 U.S.C. 5131). The term “tribal organization” means the recognized governing body of any Indian tribe; any legally established organization of American Indians that is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by such governing body, or is democratically elected by the adult members of the American Indian community to be served by such organization, and which includes the maximum participation of American Indians in all phases of its activities (25 U.S.C 5304). While tribal organizations are eligible to apply on behalf of one or more tribes, they must document tribal approval prior to commencing proposed activities (per 25 U.S.C. 5304). Non-profit organizations are eligible to apply, including state-recognized tribes, Native Hawaiian entities, or other non-profit organizations serving the needs of Indigenous Peoples.

16. Are Alaska Native corporations eligible to apply?

A: Yes, Alaska Native corporations are eligible for this competition.

17. Can Track Two be used for both planning and implementation of projects? For construction activities, is there any preference for or discouragement against proposing efforts to plan, design, permit, and construct if it can be completed in the five years?

A: The primary focus of Track Two is on implementation, but all activities allowed under Track One (regional scale coordination, engagement, planning, advancement of equitable outcomes, and capacity-building) can also be conducted under Track Two. Construction and any other proposed activities, regardless of where the applicant is starting, must be implemented within five years, which is the maximum duration of our grants. There is no preferential consideration of ambitious efforts; however, the “Scientific and Technical Merit” evaluation criteria for this funding opportunity assess whether the proposed activities are achievable within the identified time frame and offer a realistic timeline.

18. Are there any activities that cannot be funded through this program?

A: The placement of sand on beaches for renourishment is not eligible for funding under this announcement. In addition, the construction of shoreline stabilization structures are not eligible for funding under this announcement, unless they are part of a hybrid green and gray adaptation action. Shoreline stabilization structures are hard structures used to create rigidity and include breakwaters, riprap, jetties, breakwaters, seawalls, and revetments.

The following activities will also not be considered for federal funding: 1) activities that alleviate the liability associated with legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law; 2) activities that constitute compensatory restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; and 3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation.

19. Is the strategic placement of dredged sediment eligible for funding in Track Two?

A: Constructed nature-based solutions are eligible. This could include subaqueous or terrestrial placement of sediment as part of a nature-based solution (e.g., dunes, living shorelines, horizontal levees). Placement of sand on beaches solely for renourishment is ineligible.

20. Would a proposal be competitive if the majority of the requested funding is for the collection of geospatial data?

A: The percentage of funding dedicated to any one type of activity is not considered in the evaluation criteria. To be competitive, projects must be responsive to all of the program priorities (e.g., risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity, enduring capacity).

21. Could a plan for the management of publicly owned bluffs be eligible for Track One?

A: Yes, planning is an eligible activity in Track One and Track Two. To be competitive, the proposed activities must align with the program priorities (risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity, enduring capacity). NOAA would expect the planning effort to be at a regional scale, responsive to known climate risks, include engagement with disadvantaged communities, and complement other related activities to move communities closer to implementation of resilience and adaptation actions.

22. Would coastal tribal hatcheries be eligible under Track Two funding?

A: Tribes and tribal organizations are eligible to apply. Specific activities related to tribal hatcheries may or may not be eligible. For example, construction of new facilities and/or buildings is not an eligible activity. However, the construction of natural or hybrid green and gray infrastructure to protect tribal fish hatcheries would be eligible. Applicants interested in tribal hatcheries should consider NOAA's Inflation Reduction Act programs related to Climate Resilient Fisheries and Tribal Priorities. More information can be found on the NOAA Inflation Reduction Act website.

23. Is the hiring of personnel to manage and implement proposed activities an eligible use of funds?

A: Yes, costs associated with hiring full- and part-time employees is an eligible activity. NOAA expects many applicants will need to increase staffing to ensure successful implementation of proposed activities. Associated costs should be minimized to the greatest extent practicable.

24. Would the relocation of a sewer pump station in a floodplain be eligible for Track Two? This would affect one jurisdiction, but not necessarily an entire region.

A: Proposals that do not address all four program priorities (risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity, enduring capacity) are not likely to score well. NOAA encourages applicants to bundle activities into an integrated suite of regional resilience actions that ensure benefits at the community level while collectively addressing the program priorities. To be eligible, any proposed activity that includes retrofit or construction of infrastructure must include green (natural) features. For additional information on green and gray infrastructure approaches, please refer to the Digital Coast natural infrastructure resources page and USACE Engineering with Nature website. Technical assistance with natural infrastructure can be requested by emailing resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov.

25. What types of educational activities are eligible for funding in either track?

A: Professional education and training activities are encouraged to address the enduring capacity priority. Other education-related activities (e.g., fellowships, internships) are eligible and are encouraged to support workforce development efforts. Education activities that do not directly support the program priorities of building enduring capacity for adaptation and resilience or contributing to workforce development are not likely to score well.

26. How are regional collaboratives defined?

A: For the purposes of this competition, a group of entities that apply together are considered a regional collaborative. More specifically, regional collaboratives are defined as groups composed of collaborators and partners that are unified by a common vision for how to significantly increase the resilience of their region. They are led by or include locally oriented institutions and governments, and share adjacent or overlapping geographical interests or administrative boundaries, or benefit from the same natural, social, economic, or infrastructure systems. The collaborators and partners that comprise the regional collaborative should have a clear, shared sense of the need for action and willingness to engage in a collaborative process that links diverse interests to achieve shared goals in a regional setting. Collaboratives should include or engage with representatives from the relevant jurisdictions and sectors to collectively address weather and climate impacts. Regional collaboratives must identify the geography that they represent, and the identified geography must be exclusively in coastal states and territories or otherwise enable U.S. coastal communities to prepare for weather and climate impacts, consistent with the Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., in the District of Columbia or in areas impacting coastal waters). Collaborators and partners are not required to be physically located in coastal states.

27. Does NOAA expect applicants to establish regional collaboratives similar to the ones on the program website?

A: The regional collaboratives referenced in the program website are meant to serve as examples. Applicants should determine the most appropriate form and function needed to address the program priorities in their respective region. Applicants to Track One should come together as a regional collaborative to develop a unified vision for increasing resilience at a regional scale. Applicants for Track Two funding may be a regional collaborative as defined for Track One, or the applicant can be a single entity. Regardless, all entities interested in applying for Track Two funding should be committed to working closely with relevant partners, including representatives of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities.

28. Does an applicant have to be a regional collaborative to apply?

A: A regional collaborative is a group of individuals or entities with a unified vision for resilience that can apply to this funding opportunity together, and may or may not be a legal entity. Applicants can apply for funding to develop and/or enhance existing regional collaboratives under either track. Applicants to Track One must either be an existing regional collaborative or propose to develop a new collaborative. Applicants to Track Two are not required to be a regional collaborative. All applicants to both tracks should strive for significant collaboration at a regional scale that is inclusive of tribes and/or disadvantaged communities.

29. Are there any required outcomes or products for new or existing collaboratives applying to Track One?

A: No, there are no required outcomes or products. However, within two years of receiving funding, the applicants should be able to demonstrate that a regional collaborative effort is functional, and progress toward implementation is being made. The Notice of Funding Opportunity includes examples of outcomes or products that would reflect progress.

30. Can funding under Track One support one grant for multiple regional collaboratives, and include activities to build bridges between regions?

A: Yes, as long as each regional collaborative can achieve significant, tangible resilience and adaptation outcomes for their region with the funding available from NOAA. NOAA encourages all applicants, whether proposing efforts to initiate or support single or multiple regional collaboratives, to ensure the proposed activities address the program priorities (risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity, enduring capacity), facilitate the implementation of regional resilience actions, and ensure benefits at the community level. Activities to transfer knowledge to other regions are also encouraged. Applicants may propose the majority of activities in one region and activities to transfer knowledge to one or multiple regions.

31. I am interested in applying for funding, but I only have one specific activity in mind. I am looking for partners to propose similar or related efforts in a regional context. Who can help me find potential partners?

A: The Office for Coastal Management can provide technical assistance during the application phase, and can connect applicants with NOAA partners and other regional contacts. Applicants can send an email to request assistance to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov.

32. How large or small can a region be? Can the region cover a large area that is also a single jurisdiction?

A: The applicant-specified region should be of a size and scope that can facilitate the implementation of resilience and adaptation actions at a regional scale and provide direct benefits to local communities. A region may include multiple coastal jurisdictions, and tribes working together within a single coastal state, county, municipality, or coastal watershed. Alternatively, a region may include multiple parts of geographically connected states or tribal lands facing similar weather and climate impacts. Although there is no specific minimum or maximum size by geographic distance or number of jurisdictions, the region must be in eligible coastal states and territories, and may be made up of or include tribal lands. NOAA encourages applications that benefit tribal lands and/or tribal priorities. Applicants should be able to demonstrate, with the amount of funding requested from NOAA, significant, tangible resilience and adaptation outcomes that benefit the specified region as a whole and within individual coastal communities.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

33. What types of weather and climate impacts can be addressed by proposed projects? Does an applicant need to focus on impacts of both extreme weather and climate change?

A: The impacts of drought, extreme heat, sea level rise, floods, wildfires, and other future weather and climate impacts can be addressed through this program. For all proposals to both tracks, the greater the benefits to coastal populations, ecosystems, and economies, the more likely the proposal is to score well. Applicants are not required to focus on both weather and climate impacts; one or both are sufficient.

34. Can Track One activities include scientific investigations into resilience evaluation and enhancement?

A: The NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge does not support research activities. However, the development and implementation of performance measurement, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms are eligible. If innovative approaches to performance measurement are proposed, the primary purpose should support the program priorities (risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity, enduring capacity), and not for the sole purpose of conducting research.

35. Is the capitalization of a revolving loan fund or other type of fund that provides grants for climate resilience an eligible activity for Track Two?

A: Yes, the capitalization of public revolving loan funds or other types of grant-making funds that support climate resilience activities are eligible. Any funds that are passed through as sub-awards must comply with all relevant federal regulations. All proposed activities must be completed within the period of performance of the federal award.

36. Is the development of new forecast models for flood risk assessment eligible within Track One?

A: Climate risk and vulnerability assessments are eligible Track One activities. Applicants could propose a new forecast model if it is necessary to complete a risk assessment, and should describe why the new model is needed. Applicants proposing the development of new tools and models should review the evaluation criteria to ensure associated costs are necessary and reasonable.

37. Is this program concerned with social and cultural impacts of climate change in coastal areas, or just economic and environmental factors? If so, is there a preference for addressing either or all?

A: NOAA is concerned with climate change impacts to people, the economy, and the environment. Adaptation actions to address climate impacts on social and cultural systems, as well as on natural systems and the economy, are encouraged. There is no additional weight given to any specific type of climate impact, and all applicants should ensure risk reduction outcomes are tangible and measurable.

38. What types of scientific expertise and services does NOAA have that applicants can leverage to build climate resilience in coastal communities?

A: NOAA's programs and network of partners collectively provide a broad range of scientific expertise and services related to climate adaptation for coastal areas. National-scale platforms like NOAA's [Digital Coast](#) and the [U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit](#) provide free online access to NOAA and other partner resources, including adaptation-related data, tools, training, case studies, and scientific reports. In addition, NOAA has a network of regional, state, and place-based programs that support climate adaptation in coastal areas. To request additional assistance with identifying specific expertise and resources specific to your region and needs, email resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov.

LETTER OF INTENT APPLICATION PROCESS

39. What is a letter of intent?

A: A letter of intent is a preliminary, non-binding indication of an organization's intent to submit an application. In order to submit an application, applicants must receive an invitation from NOAA based on the information provided in the letter of intent.

40. Can applicants submit multiple letters of intent?

A: Yes. There is no restriction on the number of letters of intent for any eligible entity. Applicants submitting multiple letters of intent must use a unique project title for each letter. Applicants may submit them together, in one email, or via multiple emails. Each letter of intent must apply to only one track. Applicants must clearly identify the track that should be used to evaluate the letter of intent (Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development, or Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions).

41. I submitted a duplicate letter of intent or application package on *Grants.gov*. How do I withdraw that letter of intent or application?

A: The applicant should send an email to the email address provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov) and provide details regarding the letter or application that should be withdrawn. In the case of a full application, the applicant should provide the *Grants.gov* tracking number of the package they are asking to be withdrawn.

42. Is a letter of intent required, or just recommended, in order to submit a final application?

A: The letter of intent is required for this competition. Only applicants that have submitted a letter of intent AND have been invited to submit an application will be considered for funding.

43. For the letter of intent, the criteria include a factor to evaluate "connections with or intent to connect with NOAA's partnerships." Who are NOAA's partners, and what does NOAA expect to see in the letter of intent?

A: Examples include, but are not limited to, state coastal management programs, National Estuarine Research Reserves, Sea Grant college programs, Regional Climate Centers, Climate Adaptation Partnerships (formerly known as Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments, or "RISAs"), Integrated Ocean Observing System regional associations, and NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program partners. This network of partners includes a vast range of information, resources, and services related to climate resilience and adaptation. NOAA encourages applicants to leverage and build upon previous investments made by NOAA partners. NOAA encourages applicants to describe either their anticipated engagement with NOAA partners, or their outreach to NOAA partners, as part of the application process. Letters of support from NOAA partners are not required.

44. How can the private sector assist public agencies and nonprofits that are seeking these funds? Can private companies be included as a sub-recipient in the letter of intent or proposal?

A: NOAA encourages the private sector to support public agencies and nonprofits that apply. Private sector entities should initiate conversations with potential applicants to determine if their expertise is needed. Private sector entities can receive funding through sub-awards from award recipients, and may be identified in the letter of intent, or listed as “to be determined.” The name of any identified qualified contractors and methods of selection should be included in the budget narrative for full applications. NOAA anticipates the private sector to support applicants with program and project management, risk assessment, planning, engineering, construction, and other professional services.

45. The letter of intent template requests that applicants describe anticipated NOAA technical assistance needs. Will applicants score higher or lower if they ask for technical assistance?

A: Technical assistance needs and associated requests are not considered during the evaluation process. NOAA asks for technical assistance needs to assess what kinds of services are needed to improve internal planning.

FULL APPLICATION PROCESS

46. I need help with my application on *Grants.gov*. Can NOAA help me?

A: NOAA does not operate the application submission process on *Grants.gov*. We recommend you review the resources available at *Grants.gov*, including the [support section](#) and [applicant FAQs](#). Applicants may also direct their *Grants.gov*-related questions to support@grants.gov.

47. Can pre-award costs be considered using these funds?

A: Per 2 CFR 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the performance start date at the applicant’s own risk. Pre-award costs more than 90 days before the start of the award may also be considered, but require prior approval from NOAA. This does not change the period of performance start date. Pre-award costs should be considered and discussed during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the federal award, and only with the written approval of the federal awarding agency. This could include proposal preparation costs (as defined at 2 CFR 200.460) that are not covered in indirect costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. All costs incurred before NOAA makes the award are at the recipient’s risk.

48. Are letters of support from NOAA’s partners required? What about letters of support from NOAA programs?

A: No, letters of support from NOAA partners are not required, although applicants are encouraged to connect with relevant NOAA partnerships and place-based programs in their regions as part of the application development process. Efforts or plans to connect with NOAA partnerships and place-based programs should be described in the letter of intent. To learn more about and connect with NOAA’s network of regional, state, and place-based partners specific to your region, please send us an email at resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov.

Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowed and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers. If an applicant requests technical assistance from NOAA or has other involvement with current NOAA programs or staff as part of an application, the applicant should describe the nature and extent of the desired roles and responsibilities within the application. The specific roles and responsibilities for NOAA involvement will be negotiated with successful applicants as part of the award development process.

49. Is there a page limit to the application?

A: There are page limits for various aspects of the application package. 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.

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 and Appendices (50-page limit recommended)

PDF 5. Letters of Support and Collaboration (no page limit)

50. How long do applicants have to spend the funds? What is the award period of performance?

A: NOAA anticipates that the period of performance for awards under both tracks will be 36 to 60 months. The maximum period of performance for any award is 60 months. Under extenuating circumstances, no-cost extensions beyond the initial period of performance can be requested and will require approval by NOAA.

51. How will NOAA ensure geographic distribution of selected awards?

A: All proposals will be evaluated and scored to create a ranked list. The selecting official shall consider the geographic area of the highest scoring proposals and may recommend applications for funding out of rank order to ensure geographic distribution nationally. The selecting official may also select high-scoring proposals out of rank order according to other selection factors, which are listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

52. When can successful applicants begin their projects?

A: Awards are anticipated to begin on or after October 1, 2024.



KEY TERMS

53. How is resilience defined?

A: “Resilience” is the ability of a coastal community to prepare and plan for, absorb impacts of, recover from, and more successfully adapt to weather and climate impacts.

54. What is meant by “transformational resilience”?

A: “Transformational resilience” refers to the process and associated actions that result in dramatic, positive changes in a coastal community’s ability to prepare and plan for, absorb impacts of, recover from, and more successfully adapt to weather and climate change impacts.

55. What is a resilience hub?

A: Resilience hubs are defined by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network as community-serving facilities augmented to support residents, coordinate communication, distribute resources, and reduce carbon pollution while enhancing quality of life. Hubs provide an opportunity to effectively work at the nexus of community resilience, emergency management, climate change mitigation, and social equity, while providing opportunities for communities to become more self-determining, socially connected, and successful before, during, and after disruptions. For the purposes of this competition, resilience hub(s) must use pre-existing facilities. Funding cannot be used to construct new buildings, although upgrades to existing facilities are allowable.

56. Do supported resilient hubs have to be at public facilities?

A: Resilience hubs in existing facilities should be located in places community members trust, find welcoming, and can access conveniently. The facility should be resilient and provide services before, during, and after an event. Funding under this solicitation can be used for operating costs associated with the resilience hub. Regardless of whether the facility is owned by a public or a nonprofit entity, funding recipients must have a lease for the expected life of the proposed resilience hub, and the facility must provide public access for the duration of the lease. Construction of new facilities is not eligible for funding under this competition.

57. How does NOAA determine if a community is marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented?

A: NOAA relies on applicants to describe specific populations and communities they intend to engage, and how they are marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented. Several national tools and resources are listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity that applicants can use to identify and assess populations and communities based on U.S. census data. NOAA also values local knowledge of community characteristics that are not reflected in national tools, especially in places where the data may not be complete or available.

58. What is knowledge transfer? And what are some examples of knowledge-transfer activities that regional collaboratives may want to consider?

A: Knowledge transfer is the sharing or disseminating of knowledge from one entity to another for problem solving. In the case of this competition, knowledge transfer may entail organizing, creating, capturing, and sharing knowledge gained by the proposed activities to others to ensure its future use, both inside the region and elsewhere. Appropriate activities for knowledge transfer may include, but are not limited to, the development of informational products, tools, training, or risk communication and outreach. It may also include improving access to data and information related to current and future environmental, economic, and social conditions, and building capacity to integrate this information into sound planning and decision-making.

BUDGET

59. How much funding can each proposal request? Is there a minimum funding amount per proposal?

A: Through Track One, the minimum requested amount is \$500,000 and the maximum requested amount is \$2 million. The typical Track One award amount is anticipated to be \$1 million. Through Track Two, the minimum requested amount is \$15 million, and the maximum requested amount is \$75 million. The typical Track Two award amount is anticipated to be between \$25 and \$50 million.

60. Are matching funds required?

A: Pursuant to the Inflation Reduction Act, Public Law: 117-169, Section 40001, there is no non-federal matching requirement for this funding.

61. Is the amount of funding requested a consideration in the evaluation criteria?

A: No, the amount of funding requested is not a consideration in the evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria does consider the extent to which the estimated costs are realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. In cases where funding may not be available to cover all costs, NOAA may negotiate the funding level for proposed activities selected for funding.

62. Will applicants score higher if their proposal includes a non-federal match, even though it is not required?

A: Non-federal matching resources (cash or in kind) are not required, nor are they part of the evaluation criteria. If non-federal resources are voluntarily committed, they must be tracked and reported throughout the period of performance.

63. Is there a cap on the percentage of overhead for institutions?

A: Yes, for entities with an established indirect cost rate with the federal government, the rate is capped at the amount set forth in the negotiated agreement. If an award recipient does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, the indirect costs are capped at 10 percent of modified total direct costs, unless subject to an exception. Non-federal entities may use this de minimis rate indefinitely, but may choose to negotiate an indirect cost rate at any time. This de minimis rate option is not available to state and local governments and tribes. Applicants with a negotiated indirect cost rate may reduce the indirect cost rate to demonstrate leveraging of resources, which will be evaluated as part of project costs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

64. Are applicants required to use the digital resources included on the program website?

A: The online resources included on the program website are meant to help applicants better understand the program priorities (risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity and inclusion, and enduring capacity). The resources serve as a starting point, but are not meant to be comprehensive. The resources include both documents and tools, and are binned by program priority and listed in alphabetical order. NOAA does not expect applicants to use all resources or cite specific resources within their letter of intent or application.

65. What mechanisms are available for geospatial data and services acquisitions associated with funded proposals?

A: If an applicant plans to acquire geospatial data or services as part of their proposed work, NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management can assist in the efficient acquisition of these services via the [NOAA Coastal Geospatial Services Contract](#). Applicants are strongly encouraged to use this contract because it is an efficient way to acquire these services and can eliminate the need for the applicant to go through their own contracting processes. NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management can provide guidance, cost estimation, development of geospatial specifications, statement of work development, vendor negotiation, acquisition, data access, and dissemination.

If the applicant chooses to use NOAA’s technical assistance and contracting mechanism, the proposal should fully describe the requirement as stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and reiterated here:

“Applicants proposing geospatial data acquisitions should include information about the type, timing, and location of the data to be collected within the Project Narrative and estimated cost within the Budget Narrative. Estimated costs should not be included in the standard NOAA budget forms (SF424, SF424-A/B, SF424-C/D) given the proposed acquisition will take place outside of the grant award if the proposal is selected for funding.”

If an applicant chooses to use their own contracting or acquisition mechanisms, they should describe that fully in their proposal and budget narrative, and request that funding in the standard NOAA budget forms (SF424, SF424-A/B, SF424-C/D).

66. How is technical assistance defined, and what types of technical assistance will be provided by NOAA?

A: Technical assistance is defined as targeted, customized support to help and empower individuals and organizations to build their knowledge, ability, or capacity to achieve specific goals and outcomes. Examples of technical assistance during the application period include

- instruction on the eligibility of specific activities, as well as on navigating the application process;
- direction on accessing and interpreting climate data, models, and tools, including geospatial and socioeconomic information;
- guidance on mechanisms for geospatial data and services acquisitions associated with funded proposals;
- connection to subject matter experts and resources within and outside of NOAA;
- introductions and suggestions for regional contacts as potential partners; and
- discussions of technical assistance opportunities to support a funded proposal.

Visit the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge [technical assistance webpage](#) for more information.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

67. For land acquisition projects, which entities can hold title to land (fee simple or easement interest) acquired through infrastructure funds?

A: Land acquisition projects funded under this competition must provide for non-federal public ownership (fee-simple title or easement interest) by a non-federal public entity or ownership by a private entity whose organizational purpose or goal is conservation, restoration, or preservation of land and natural resources. Non-federal public ownership includes state agencies, federally recognized tribal governments, local governments, or entities eligible for assistance under section 306A(e) of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 USC 1455a[e]), provided that each has the authority to acquire and manage land for conservation purposes.

68. Could multiple land acquisitions be included in one proposal?

A: Yes. NOAA recommends that applicants limit the scope to acquiring no more than three separate parcels within a single proposal. Properties containing multiple parcels covered under a single appraisal, title report, and survey plat could count as one parcel (e.g., a subdivided property with the same landowner).

69. Can an applicant submit a proposal for an acquisition that needs to close ahead of when the award will be issued? For example, if the acquisition closes in June, can the applicant use bridge funding to pay for it, and use Inflation Reduction Act funds (if selected) to pay themselves back?

A: The cost of land acquisition may be reimbursed as a pre-award cost if the acquisition occurred between the selection date (the date that the NOAA selection official recommends a list of projects for funding) and the start date for an approved grant award. Reimbursement of funds is subject to NOAA's approval of due diligence documents; closing on a property prior to the award start date is at the applicant's risk.

70. Would acquisitions that include areas that would be developed for public access (e.g. docks, boardwalks, kiosks) be eligible?

A: Yes. To be competitive, land acquisitions and any subsequent development activities must align with the program priorities, including risk reduction. Acquisitions that provide co-benefits are encouraged, including providing passive public access to coastal areas for recreation. Acquisition of land for active recreation, such as sports facilities, water parks, playgrounds, or similar uses, are ineligible, except for at a de minimis scale. Construction and retrofit of public access infrastructure, including the restoration of boardwalks, boat ramps, bridges, bathrooms, or walkways, is eligible for funding under this competition, if consistent with the program priorities.

71. Can funding be used as part of a collection of funding sources to buy a property (i.e., for larger and thus more expensive properties), or must an applicant fully acquire the property without other contributing funds?

A: Yes, applicants can leverage different funding sources to acquire a property. Separate funds will need to be tracked separately and clearly. Applicants must clearly document other funding sources and amounts, and what percentage of the property's acreage the NOAA funding is allocated to.

72. When acquiring property with federal funds, are purchase prices limited to fair market appraised value? Or are these funds allowed for purchases that exceed such appraisals?

A: NOAA supports acquisitions at fair market appraised value and up to five percent over the appraised value, in limited circumstances, if sufficient written justification and demonstration of an attempt to negotiate at appraised value is provided. Above that five percent, NOAA does not allow funds to be used to purchase over the appraised value. However, if the recipient wants to contribute their own funds to make up the difference between appraised value and purchased price, then that would be allowable, although NOAA still discourages transactions that could distort market values.

73. Can funds be used for conservation easements (i.e., less than fee-simple land acquisition)?

A: Yes, funding can be used for the acquisition of less than fee-simple easement interest in a property if the conservation easement will be held by an eligible public entity or a private entity whose organizational purpose or goal is conservation, restoration, or preservation of land and natural resources.

74. Would collaboration between several land trusts to acquire critical coastal land be an eligible activity?

A: Yes, land acquisitions are eligible. One entity would need to apply on behalf of the others and sub-award funds. For the project to be competitive, it must also address all program priorities.

75. Would migrating or relocating a town be eligible, including purchase of land and construction of facilities?

A: Planning, designing, or preparing for implementation of community-led relocation efforts are eligible. The construction of new facilities is not an eligible activity within this program. The acquisition of land for conservation and/or for the purpose of constructing or restoring natural infrastructure is also eligible. However, acquired land purchased with funds from this program must be held for conservation in perpetuity. Development activities on land acquired with funds from this program, including the construction of facilities, must be consistent with conservation purposes.

76. If there is Indigenous cultural significance to a land acquisition project, does that satisfy the requirement for co-benefits under Track Two?

A: Yes, the protection and/or preservation of culturally significant resources would be considered a co-benefit of a proposed land acquisition.

Inflation Reduction Act: NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Funding Opportunity Description 4
 - A. Program Objective 4
 - B. Program Priorities 15
 - C. Program Authority 16
- II. Award Information 17
 - A. Funding Availability 17
 - B. Project/Award Period 17
 - C. Type of Funding Instrument 18
- III. Eligibility Information 19
 - A. Eligible Applicants 19
 - B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement 20
 - C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility 21
- IV. Application and Submission Information 21
 - A. Address to Request Application Package 21
 - B. Content and Form of Application 21
 - C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) 37
 - D. Submission Dates and Times 37
 - E. Intergovernmental Review 39
 - F. Funding Restrictions 39
 - G. Other Submission Requirements 40
- V. Application Review Information 41
 - A. Evaluation Criteria 41
 - B. Review and Selection Process 49
 - C. Selection Factors 52
 - D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates 53
- VI. Award Administration Information 53
 - A. Award Notices 53
 - B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements 54
 - C. Reporting 62
- VII. Agency Contacts 63
- VIII. Other Information 63

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Inflation Reduction Act: NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCM-2023-2008068

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.473, Office for Coastal Management

Dates: Letter of Intent Date: Letters of Intent are required and must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by electronic mail by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on August 21, 2023. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile applications will be accepted. Electronic mail must be sent to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov.

Full Application Date: Invited full applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 13, 2024. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge (Challenge) will support collaborative approaches to achieving resilience in coastal regions with an emphasis on risk reduction, regional collaboration, equity, and building enduring capacity. The Challenge is a \$575 million competition with a Letter of Intent phase and two exclusive funding tracks designed to meet the needs of coastal communities wherever they are in the resilience and adaptation process.

Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development (Track One) supports building capacity for, development of, and collaboration on transformational resilience and adaptation strategies for coastal communities. Successful applicants will receive \$500,000 to \$2,000,000 to support regional scale coordination, engagement, planning, advancement of equitable outcomes, and capacity building for resilience and adaptation. Total funding for all Track One awards may be up to \$25 million.

Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions (Track Two) supports implementation of transformational resilience and adaptation strategies and associated actions for coastal

communities anchored in previous planning efforts. Applicants must propose a suite of complementary adaptation actions that together build the resilience of multiple communities within a coastal region, including those that have been marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented. Applicants can apply for not less than \$15,000,000 and not more than \$75,000,000, with most awards being between \$25,000,000 and \$50,000,000. Total funding available for all Track Two awards is up to \$550,000,000.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

1. Background

U.S. coastal counties are home to 40% of the nation's population, employ 54.6 million people, and produce \$9.6 trillion in goods and services. These counties and their communities are experiencing not just rapid but accelerating change and increased risks from the combined effects of storms, precipitation, sea level rise, and other physical stressors. The Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA4, 2018) highlighted the significant risk to coastal property and public infrastructure from increases in the frequency, depth, and extent of tidal flooding due to sea level rise, with cascading impacts to the Nation's economy. Higher storm surges due to sea level rise and the increased probability of heavy precipitation events increase the risk. By the latter part of this century, many more coastal communities will suffer financial impacts as chronic high tide flooding leads to increased infrastructure damage. As the pace and extent of coastal flooding and erosion accelerates, climate change impacts along our coasts are compounding pre-existing social inequities and communities are facing difficult questions about the costs and tradeoffs associated with adaptation strategies, including if, how, or when to relocate infrastructure.

Coastal communities also face additional threats from the changing climate, including extreme heat, wildfire, drought, and ocean acidification. These stressors also impact coastal economies, social systems, and important coastal ecosystems. In response to these climate threats, the "Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad", (E.O. 14008 at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-202100095/pdf/DCPD-202100095.pdf>) lays out a range of responsibilities for federal agencies to tackle the climate crisis, including a directive to align Federal financial programs to support robust climate action and deliver environmental justice in communities across America. The order also calls upon federal agencies to align the creativity, courage, and capital necessary to make our Nation resilient and points to the essential role of coastal communities in improving our resilience to weather and climate impacts.

Climate change does not respect jurisdictional boundaries and poses a challenge that surpasses the capacity of any single organization or government agency to resolve, necessitating cross-jurisdictional and cross-sectoral adaptation solutions. While many coastal communities have begun to identify their climate risks, mechanisms are needed to effectively coordinate and execute resilience and adaptation actions across jurisdictions and

sectors in a way that will meaningfully engage marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities. Regional collaboration can dramatically improve how we achieve coastal resilience by aligning adaptation strategies across jurisdictions and sectors to achieve co-benefits. Co-benefits are the supplemental positive impacts (e.g., job creation, habitat conservation, recreation, etc.) that can result from adaptation actions in addition to the direct risk reduction benefits (e.g., reduced cost of flooding). Regional collaboration on climate adaptation also promotes the leveraging of resources, enables collective action that includes input from and benefits to marginalized, underserved and underrepresented populations, and allows for development of more durable solutions that multiply the value of individual efforts.

Entire segments of our society have been marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented in efforts to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and adapt to weather and climate impacts, despite being at greater risk due to lack of resources, accessibility constraints, and systemic institutional barriers. This includes Tribes and Indigenous People who are disproportionately affected by climate change and face additional institutional barriers in order to adapt to the most severe impacts (Fourth National Climate Assessment). Executive Order 14096, Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All" (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/04/26/2023-08955/revitalizing-our-nations-commitment-to-environmental-justice-for-all>), and its predecessor E.O. 13985 (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>), emphasize the need for Federal agencies to take actions to redress unfair disparities and remove barriers to government programs and services. E.O. 14096 places even greater urgency on the Federal Government to “. . . build upon and strengthen its commitment to deliver environmental justice to all communities across America. Our Nation needs . . .”. Executive Order 14008 also established the Justice40 Initiative, directing that 40% of the overall benefits from federal climate and clean energy investments flow to disadvantaged communities and that such communities accrue the benefits of those investments.

With funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (P.L. 117-169, Section 40001), NOAA has designed the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge to catalyze equitable adaptation through regional scale collaboration and implementation of adaptation actions that will reduce future damage from weather and climate impacts. The Federal investments being made through NOAA's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge also provide a unique opportunity to build enduring capacity for adaptation in coastal areas, including marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities. This investment further supports the directive in Executive Order 14008 (referenced above) to secure environmental justice and spur economic opportunity for disadvantaged communities. Adaptation actions

supported by this funding will contribute to the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Promoting Equitable Access to Nature in Nature-Deprived Communities, which seeks to support locally led conservation and park projects in nature-deprived communities. NOAA will partner with award recipients to provide technical assistance (e.g., scientific expertise, knowledge of coastal resource management, technical and training capabilities) in support of these regional efforts and to help ensure lasting progress toward equitable resilience and adaptation. For more information on the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge and to learn about technical assistance from NOAA, visit: <https://coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/>

In recognition that some communities are just beginning to address climate challenges, while others have been planning for many years, this funding opportunity includes two distinct and exclusive tracks:

- Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development (Track One): Funding under Track One supports the development and operation of regional collaboratives to generate transformational resilience and adaptation strategies for coastal communities, including those that have been marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented. This funding track will meet communities where they are in the adaptation process, advance equitable resilience, adaptation planning and partnership building, and establish more entities with local capacity for implementing future on-the-ground resilience and adaptation actions. Track One funding, combined with technical assistance from NOAA, will allow successful applicants to plan for holistic resilience and adaptation investments, initiatives and policies, and build enduring capacity for future adaptation efforts.
- Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions (Track Two): Funding under Track Two supports transformational resilience and adaptation actions that are ready for implementation and will greatly and measurably reduce risk and vulnerability in coastal areas while advancing equity. This funding track supports implementation of a suite of complementary resilience and adaptation actions that:
 - extend benefits beyond the boundaries of one town and avoid detrimental consequences for others (e.g. stormwater improvements that reduce coastal erosion in one community but increase flooding in another);
 - are holistic and provide co-benefits (e.g., a system of nature-based installations that protect multiple communities and provide open space and access to nature); and
 - provide equitable outcomes that benefit the entire community, including marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented residents.

This funding, combined with technical assistance from NOAA, will enable successful applicants to implement resilience and adaptation actions that provide measurable risk reduction outcomes and support related initiatives and policies, while building enduring capacity for future adaptation efforts.

2. Program Overview

The Climate Resilience Regional Challenge is a two-track competition. Applicants must clearly identify in their application the track that should be used to evaluate their proposal (Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development, or Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions). Applicants should select a category based on the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. If a category is not identified by the applicant within the proposal, NOAA will identify a category for the applicant. No appeals regarding placement will be considered.

All applicants must identify the geographic region that they propose to serve for the purposes of this competition. The geographic region must be located within one or more coastal states or territories as defined in the Coastal Zone Management Act (See Section III.A Eligibility), and should be of a size and scope to be able to demonstrate, with the amount of funding available from NOAA, significant, tangible resilience and adaptation outcomes that benefit the identified region and local coastal communities. NOAA encourages applications that benefit tribal lands and/or tribal priorities, and a region may be made up of or include tribal lands. A region may include lands governed by multiple Tribes within a single compact area, such as a watershed. Alternatively, a region may include multiple parts of geographically connected states or tribal lands facing similar weather and climate impacts. Specified regions should be of a size and scope to facilitate the implementation of resilience and adaptation actions and ensure benefits at the community level.

All proposals should focus on regional efforts that:

- 1) provide local and regional co-benefits (e.g., reducing risk and improving public health, advancing equitable adaptation actions and increasing access to open space);
- 2) advance equity through meaningful community involvement in the identification and implementation of holistic resilience and adaptation strategies and actions; and
- 3) contribute to enduring capacity for adaptation in the region.

All proposals should demonstrate collaboration between relevant entities in the specified region and build upon previous and ongoing efforts related to achieving resilience within the specified region, where such activities exist. Successful proposals will leverage scientific information, indigenous knowledge, and local knowledge and technical skills that are distributed across a diverse group of organizations and sectors, including NOAA and other federal, state, tribal and local government agencies. These leveraging opportunities include previous or ongoing investments in resilience and adaptation, such as information sources (e.g., assessments, studies, plans, tools, training, technical assistance), and mechanisms (e.g., funding, programs, partnerships). Applicants can review the Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge (at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/OSTP-CEQ-IK-Guidance.pdf>) for ways to improve the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge.

Track One - Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development

Through Track One, NOAA will award \$500,000 to \$2,000,000 to successful applicants to support regional scale collaborative efforts focused on building resilience for coastal areas and communities. NOAA expects to select between 20-25 winning collaboratives but may select more or less based on the merits of the applications. Total funding for all Track One awards may be up to \$25 million. Funding amounts listed here are approximate. Typical award amount is anticipated to be \$1,000,000.

For the purposes of this program, regional collaboratives are defined as groups comprised of collaborators and partners (see Section I.A.3 for definitions) that are unified by a common vision for how to significantly increase the resilience of their region, are led by or include locally-oriented institutions and governments, and share adjacent and/or overlapping geographical interests or administrative boundaries or benefit from the same natural, social, economic, and/or infrastructure systems. The collaborators and partners that comprise the regional collaborative should have a clear, shared sense of the need for action and willingness to engage in a collaborative process that links diverse interests to achieve shared goals in a regional setting. This shared vision should align with the “NOAA 2022-26 Strategic Plan (<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/budget-finance-performance/value-to-society/noaa-fy22-26-strategic-plan>), and reflect the interests of relevant coastal Tribes and jurisdictions, such as states, territories, counties, parishes, cities, towns, villages, tribal lands and culturally significant areas. Collaboratives should include and/or engage with representatives from the relevant jurisdictions and sectors to collectively address weather and climate impacts.

Entities applying to Track One should come together as a regional collaborative with a unified vision for increasing resilience at a regional scale. This vision and the preliminary strategies and activities needed to advance towards that vision should be clearly articulated in Letters of Intent and full applications. Track One funding can be used to support further development of the vision and strategy, including necessary coordination, engagement, and planning. Engagement must include convening multiple stakeholders from the public and private sectors (e.g., federal, state, and/or local agencies; Tribes, and tribal organizations; non-governmental organizations; community-based organizations; and business and industry) and include- marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities.

Track One funding will support the building of new and strengthening of existing collaboratives toward identifying joint actions to advance climate resilience and adaptation in the respective region. Applicants to Track One should include a clear strategy for making significant progress toward implementation of adaptation actions within two years of the start of the award. Milestones that reflect progress of a collaborative include the following: articulation of shared priorities; identification of a collaborative leadership structure, and the roles and responsibilities for each position; formulation of operating norms and practices, including decision-making processes; establishment of routine communication mechanisms, both within the collaborative and with stakeholders; initiation of strategic planning activities; and pursuit of training and capacity-building events. Other activities that reflect progress toward implementation of adaptation actions include: identification and assessment of the most significant weather and climate risks and potential impacts; engagement of those most impacted by weather and climate impacts for co-development of solutions; initiation and/or completion of vulnerability assessment(s); collection of necessary data to evaluate options (e.g., economic data, modeling results); development and sharing of policy, program and technical advice; identification and evaluation of adaptation options and potential pathways to implementation; pursuit of activities that position the collaborative to undertake future implementation activities (e.g., design and engineering plans); and identification and evaluation of funding and financing sources.

Track One funding can be used for the following:

- Establishing and expanding durable regional partnerships, including organizational development of a regional collaborative, identification of strategies and actions, and strategic planning;
- Conducting outreach and communication activities related to regional resilience and adaptation;
- Convening inclusive and accessible engagement activities to enhance the breadth of the collaborative teams, especially with marginalized, underserved, and

- underrepresented communities;
- Analyzing risk, vulnerability and adaptation actions for the region and conducting related assessments;
- Planning for the implementation of equitable resilience and adaptation actions, including integration with other planning efforts;
- Undertaking environmental and engineering reviews needed to support future resilience and adaptation actions;
- Developing and implementing laws, regulations, and policies related to resilience and adaptation actions;
- Identifying and pursuing funding and financing options for resilience and adaptation actions;
- Identifying the workforce requirements to implement resilience and adaptation actions into the future;
- Developing and implementing training and capacity building for resilience and adaptation in coastal communities, especially for marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities;
- Designing, planning and implementing performance management and evaluation activities related to the collaborative partnerships; and
- Pursuing other activities essential to moving forward with regional coastal resilience and adaptation activities.

NOAA strongly encourages new collaboratives to form and apply to this Challenge. Existing collaboratives are also encouraged to apply and build upon their current efforts and expand involvement to new collaborators and partners. Each collaborative must identify an eligible entity that will apply for and receive federal funds if the application is selected for funding (See Section III.A Eligible Applicants). The regional collaborative itself is not required to be a legal entity, nor will there be any competitive advantage for being a legal entity. For new and existing collaboratives that wish to establish themselves as a new legal entity, Track One funding may be used for that purpose.

Track Two - Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions

Through Track Two, NOAA anticipates awards for no less than \$15,000,000 to no more than \$75,000,000, and anticipates that most awards will be between \$25,000,000 and \$50,000,000. Successful applicants will use the funding to support implementation of complementary adaptation actions (approximately three to eight), including construction and non-construction activities. NOAA expects to award no more than 15 Track Two awards but may select more based on the merits of the applications. Total funding available for all Track Two awards is up to \$550,000,000. Funding amounts listed here are approximate.

Track Two funding is intended to support the implementation of a complementary suite of ambitious and achievable actions (approximately three to eight) that are grounded in existing plans and/or strategies aimed at addressing the resilience and adaptation challenges within a specified region. Applicants for Track Two funding may be, but are not required to be, a regional collaborative as defined for Track One (i.e. they can be a single entity). However, all entities interested in applying to Track Two should be committed to working closely with relevant partners, including representatives of underserved communities, on their applications and in potential implementation of funding under a collective vision for increasing resilience within their specified geographic region. The adaptation actions proposed for funding should have been developed through engagement with multiple stakeholders (e.g., federal, state, and/or local agencies; Tribes and tribal organizations; and non-governmental organizations), especially those that have been marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented, and aligned with the overall climate resilience and adaptation vision being proposed for the region. The collective vision and a list of collaborators and/or partners (see Section I.A.3) for the regional effort should be clearly identified in the Letter of Intent and full application. The proposed suite of actions to achieve the vision should measurably reduce risk and build resilience in the identified region, and provide benefit to those that are most at risk due to social and economic factors.

Applicants to Track Two should also propose efforts to build enduring capacity for continued pursuit of equitable adaptation within the region and include activities to transfer knowledge and experience gained from the implementation of adaptation actions to other jurisdictions and sectors within and beyond the geographic region. Applicants should also consider the workforce requirements for successful implementation of the proposed and future adaptation actions and include development of training programs or other capacity building services that strengthen or build the region's talent pool, emphasize in-demand skills, connect workers with quality jobs, and develop accessible career pathways for professionals within the region (if relevant). Proposals including workforce development activities should follow Department of Commerce (DOC) best practices that can be found at <https://www.commerce.gov/issues/workforce-development>.

Example activities for Track Two include:

- Planning (including design and permitting) and construction of natural infrastructure that reduces weather and climate impacts;
- Acquiring land to reduce the impacts of weather and climate and to protect coastal habitats and human communities;
- Strengthening or protecting public access to ocean and coastal resources and

- related activities, including working waterfronts;
- Pursuing new or updated outreach and risk communication efforts;
- Planning, designing, or preparing for implementation of community-led relocation efforts;
- Advancing state/tribal/local standards, policies, and codes to build resilience;
- Acquiring coastal data and developing decision support tools to inform resilience and adaptation measures;
- Pursuing hybrid green (natural) and gray (structural) projects, including modifying public infrastructure to deliver multiple benefits and significant positive impact for the long-term;
- Establishing resilience hub(s) that use pre-existing facilities to support residents and coordinate resource distribution and services before, during, or after a natural hazard event;
- Development and implementation of performance measurement, monitoring, evaluation, and/or reporting mechanisms;
- Efforts that support relevant workforce needs, in line with Department of Commerce (DOC) best practices (<https://www.commerce.gov/issues/workforce-development>); and
- Activities under Track One that support the implementation of adaptation actions.

Any proposed construction activities are required to, at a minimum, be in conformance with the highest Federal standards available, unless higher local and state standards are available, and specifications that incorporate the latest hazard-resistant designs. Proposals should clearly describe how the construction activities, including construction of natural infrastructure, will measurably reduce exposure, vulnerability, or risk to known weather and climate impacts and/or decrease recovery time for future extreme weather events. This includes natural infrastructure projects that use existing or rebuilt natural landscapes (i.e., forests, floodplains, and wetlands) to increase resilience to climate impacts, often resulting in environmental, economic, and social co-benefits. It also includes hybrid green and gray projects that combine gray infrastructure with nature-based solutions to create systems that improve resilience to climate impacts, while also often resulting in environmental, economic, and social co-benefits. For more information on potential nature-based solutions, please see U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering with Nature Initiative; EPA's Green Infrastructure website; and NOAA's Natural Infrastructure for Coastal Hazards website.

Proposals for large scale actions that provide significant impact are encouraged; however, 'demonstration' or 'pilots' are also eligible. If a 'demonstration' or 'pilot' scale effort is proposed, applicants should describe the need for the effort, expected positive benefits, and the steps to be taken to transfer knowledge and experience within and outside

the region. All construction activities must be located on publicly owned land, tribal land, or land where a public entity holds a lease or easement which shall, at a minimum, be for the expected life of the project (as defined by the project applicant and NOAA, but for a minimum of 20 years). NOAA will review leases and easements conveying property to public entities to ensure that the public interest is adequate and consistent with competition requirements. All construction activities must be able to be completed within the period of performance. For additional information on application requirements for construction activities, see Section IV.B PDF 4 Supplemental Materials/Appendices.

All proposed land acquisitions must provide resilience and adaptation benefits to a coastal community. Resilience and adaptation benefits include reducing damages from weather and climate impacts or avoiding future losses caused by conversion of land from its natural, undeveloped, or recreational state to other uses. To be eligible, grantees and sub-awardees must acquire property or permanent conservation easements from willing sellers within eligible States and provide for non-Federal public or tribal ownership or ownership by a private entity whose organizational purpose or goal is conservation, restoration or preservation of land and natural resources. Interest in land must be held for conservation in perpetuity. If the grant recipient is a State agency that does not have authority to hold title to lands, the property may be held by another eligible non-Federal public entity if there is an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding, subaward agreement or other legal agreement in place with the State agency to ensure conservation and resilience benefits. Applications requesting funding for land acquisition should describe the proposed strategy for long-term stewardship of the site once acquired, including ongoing monitoring and management, and, if restoration of ecosystem services is proposed, how that will be accomplished. Land acquisitions must also provide for passive public access or other public benefit on some portion of the property, as appropriate and consistent with resource protection, or clearly describe why passive public access would be detrimental. For additional information on application requirements for land acquisitions, see Section IV.B PDF 4 Supplemental Materials/Appendices.

3. Definitions.

For the purposes of this competition:

- “Resilience” is defined as the ability of a coastal community to prepare and plan for, absorb impacts of, recover from, and more successfully adapt to weather and climate impacts.
- “Adaptation” refers to adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic changes and their effects.

- “Regional collaborative” or “collaborative” or “collaborative teams” are interchangeable and are defined as a group of individuals or entities with a unified vision for resilience that choose to apply to this Challenge together. Collaboratives are comprised of collaborators with a unified vision for resilience that are led by or include locally-oriented institutions and governments, and that share adjacent and/or overlapping geographical interests or administrative boundaries, or benefit from the same natural, social, economic, and infrastructure systems. Applicants to Track One must be collaboratives. Applicants to Track Two may be collaboratives.
- “Collaborator” is defined as an eligible entity who contributes substantially to the regional team’s overall strategic direction and decision-making, and is committed to long-term interactions based on shared missions and goals. Collaborators may receive federal funds as the lead recipient or through subawards and contracts, or may participate without federal funding. Collaborative teams in Track One must have collaborators and regional implementation efforts under Track Two may have collaborators.
- “Partners” are individuals and entities that are supportive of the proposed effort but do not participate in overall decision-making and do not commit to regular and sustained engagement in collaborative activities. Applicants to both Track One and Track Two may have partners. If the applicant to Track Two is not a collaborative, it must have strong partners. In both Track One and Track Two, partners may receive funds through subawards or contracts from the applicant or may participate without federal funding.
- “Equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment (E.O. 13985).
- “Underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life (E.O. 13985).
- “Marginalized” refers to populations excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life. Examples of marginalized populations include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, and/or immigration status (National Institutes of Health).
- “Underrepresented” means a population that is typically underrepresented in service provision, and includes populations such as persons who are minorities, poor persons, persons with limited English proficiency, older individuals, or persons from rural areas (see 29 U.S.C. § 3002(18)).

- “Environmental justice” means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment.
- “Disadvantaged communities” is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality as those communities that are marginalized, underserved and overburdened by pollution and they are identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screen Tool.

NOAA uses the phrase ‘marginalized, underserved and underrepresented’ throughout the NOFO, which encompasses the concepts of environmental justice and disadvantaged communities.

B. Program Priorities

The NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge seeks to transform the resilience of U.S. coastal communities, ecosystems, and associated economies to weather and climate impacts. Applications submitted for both Track One and Track Two should consider the following program priorities in the development of their proposals:

- Risk Reduction. Building resilience requires implementing adaptation actions that reduce risk to coastal populations, infrastructure, economies, and ecosystems from the impacts of drought, extreme heat, sea level rise, floods, and wildfires, and/or other future weather and climate impacts. For Track One, applicants should assess weather and climate risks and apply risk information to identify, plan and design future adaptation actions. For Track Two, applicants should propose a complementary set of adaptation actions (approximately three to eight) that collectively reduce risk by increasing community preparedness, decreasing community exposure, and/or improving community recovery. Proposed adaptation actions can include nature-based and hybrid green and gray actions. Those adaptation actions should provide co-benefits and alleviate multiple stressors within communities, such as improving public health, achieving reductions in pollution burden, enhancing habitat or other environmental benefits, and providing access to safe parks, natural areas, and waterways. Applicants must include metrics for risk reduction in their applications.
- Regional Coordination and Collaboration. Regional coordination and collaboration, driven by an integrated, achievable, and ambitious vision for how to improve the resilience of the region, is critical to addressing weather and climate impacts. All applicants to both tracks should focus on ensuring that relevant entities are engaged as collaborators and/or partners in building resilience across states, counties, cities, and Tribes within the region. Applicants should focus on the identification of shared

needs, priorities, challenges, and strategies that can be addressed by actions at the local and regional scales. Successful applicants will support public engagement to inform planning efforts and build effective relationships between government entities and communities.

- Equity and Inclusion. Inclusive and equitable adaptation strategies and actions require co-development with members of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities to ensure that benefits flow to them. These adaptation strategies and actions should include Tribes, tribal priorities, and indigenous knowledge.

- Enduring Capacity. Enduring capacity refers to sustaining a level of community readiness that promotes continuous adaptation to the impacts of weather and climate, including developing and maintaining specific workforce capabilities and capacities. All applicants to both tracks should focus on building capacity for adaptation that can be sustained into the future within the region (post-award period) including with community-based organizations and for marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities. Successful applicants will also propose efforts to extend anticipated benefits beyond their region through information sharing and transfer of knowledge to other regions.

In addition to these program priorities, NOAA will consider other standard factors in evaluating the extent to which applications address these program priorities including: technical merit; qualifications of the applicant(s); project costs; and outreach and engagement (See Section V.A. for the Evaluation Criteria and weighting for Track One and Track Two).

For additional information on the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge program, visit: <https://coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/>.

C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the following statutes to provide grants and cooperative agreements for the purposes described in this announcement, including Section 40001 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Public Law 117-169), Section 310 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1456c) (titled “Technical Assistance”), the Digital Coast Act (Public Law 116-223), the National Climate Program Act (Public Law 95-367), and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Public Law 117-58).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total funding for all Track One awards is anticipated to be up to \$25 million. NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than \$500,000 or more than \$2,000,000 in federal funds from Track One under this solicitation. Total funding for all Track Two awards is up to approximately \$550 million. NOAA anticipates receiving applications requesting not less than \$15,000,000 and not more than \$75,000,000 in federal funds for investments that will result in significant resilience and adaptation actions in the region. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. At its discretion, NOAA may reduce the scope and budget of a proposed award or provide separate awards for individual adaptation actions that are proposed as part of a Track Two proposal that may require additional oversight by or collaboration with NOAA.

Any funds provided to successful applicants will be at the discretion of NOAA Office for Coastal Management and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD). NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for the direct costs of application preparation if the applicant fails to receive funding or efforts in their proposal are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all top-ranked applications. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested, and the merit and ranking of the applications. Applicants should be in compliance with requirements in any existing NOAA grants. Top ranked proposals not initially funded may be considered for funding subsequently if additional funds become available, without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

B. Project/Award Period

Applicants may submit applications covering up to a 60-month period with an anticipated start date of October 1, 2024. Pre-award costs and advance payments may be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before the NOAA GMD provides an award document is at the applicant's own risk. An award may be funded in full for all years, or in increments (usually annually) at NOAA's discretion. More information on pre-award costs can be found in Section IV.F Funding Restrictions.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements, as described in 31 U.S.C. 6305 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, meaning that NOAA expects to be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards, which may include the provision of NOAA technical assistance and other activities. NOAA's involvement is intended to support the success of award recipients by complementing regional and local knowledge and expertise with additional science and services. NOAA's specific involvement will be negotiated with successful applicants and specific roles and responsibilities will be formalized as part of the final cooperative agreement. NOAA's involvement may also include other roles described in OMB Guidelines at 43 Fed. Reg. 36860 (Aug. 18, 1978), including but not limited to further collaboration on the scope of work, training of recipient personnel, review of procurement materials to the extent authorized by 2 C.F.R. § 200.325, tracking progress towards the successful completion of the project, providing Federal personnel to work on the effort, and specifying direction or redirection of the scope of work due to inter-relationships with other efforts, such as requiring recipients to achieve a specific level of cooperation with other efforts.

Collectively, NOAA's programs and partnerships encompass a significant amount of climate science as well as resilience and adaptation expertise. Applicants are encouraged to connect with relevant NOAA programs and partnerships as part of the application development process, however NOAA employees are not permitted to assist with writing applications for Federal funding. For more information on NOAA technical assistance and relevant NOAA programs and partnerships, visit:
<https://coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/>.

If an applicant requests technical assistance and/or other involvement with current NOAA programs or staff as part of an application, the applicant should describe the nature and extent of the desired roles and responsibilities within the application. The specific roles and responsibilities for NOAA involvement will be negotiated with successful applicants and included as part of the final cooperative agreement. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowable and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with other relevant Federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and municipal and county governments. Planned involvement of other federal agencies should be clearly described in the project proposal. Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement but may serve as collaborative project partners. If federal agencies are partners, applicants

are expected to provide detail on the planned level of federal engagement in the application.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible entities who may apply include:

- coastal States, territories, or Tribes;
- counties, cities, or other political subdivisions of a coastal State or territory, including special purpose units of government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities;
- the District of Columbia;
- institutions of higher education; and
- non-profit organizations or associations, including those acting in cooperation with a State, tribal, local or territorial government; regional councils of government and regional planning councils.

Coastal states are defined in the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1453(4)) as any state of the United States in, or bordering on, the Atlantic, Pacific, or Arctic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, Long Island Sound, or one or more of the Great Lakes, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and former Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands including Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau.

The term “Tribe” is synonymous with “tribal government” and means any Indian or Alaska Native Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, community, component band, or component reservation, individually identified (including parenthetically) in the list published most recently as of the date of enactment of this subsection pursuant to 25 U.S.C. 5131. The term “tribal organization” means the recognized governing body of any Indian tribe; any legally established organization of Indians which is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by such governing body or which is democratically elected by the adult members of the Indian community to be served by such organization and which includes the maximum participation of Indians in all phases of its activities (25 U.S.C 5304). While tribal organizations are eligible to apply on behalf of one or more Tribes, they must document tribal approval prior to commencing proposed activities (per 25 U.S.C. 5304). Non-profit organizations are eligible to apply, including state-recognized tribes, Native Hawaiian entities or other non-profit organizations serving the needs of indigenous peoples. Institutions of higher education (as defined in subsection (a) of section 101 of the Higher

Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)) are eligible.

For the purposes of this competition, a group of entities who are applying together are considered a regional collaborative (also referred to as a collaborative or a collaborative team). Collaborative teams must identify a lead entity to submit an application (i.e., the funding recipient, who is the non-federal entity that receives a Federal award directly from a Federal awarding agency, per 2 CFR 200.1). The lead entity is responsible for the award as a whole, including monitoring, reporting, and communicating progress to NOAA. The lead entity should work with other collaborators and partners through subawards and contracts under 2 CFR 200.1 and other arrangements pertinent to the collaborative's activities that do not involve the transfer of funds. In addition, the lead entity must identify a Project Director (PD), who is the individual with the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the activities supported by the grant. Applicants should be aware that the terms Project Director (PD) and Principal Investigator (PI) are used interchangeably. Existing collaboratives that are legal entities and may receive and expend Federal funds are eligible. Regional collaboratives must identify the geography that they represent for the purposes of this competition and the identified geography must be exclusively in coastal states and territories or otherwise enable U.S. coastal communities to prepare for weather and climate impacts, consistent with the Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., in the District of Columbia or in areas impacting coastal waters). It is not required that all collaborators and partners be physically located in coastal states.

Foreign governments are not eligible to apply for funding under this announcement. However, international non-governmental organizations are eligible to participate as funded or unfunded partners in the collaborative if they are conducting projects in one or more of the eligible coastal states and territories.

For-profit organizations may participate as contractors, subrecipients if applicable, or through other arrangements pertinent to the project that do not involve the transfer of funds.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Pursuant to the Inflation Reduction Act, Public Law: 117-169, Section 40001, there is no non-federal matching requirement for this funding. However, applicants are encouraged to leverage NOAA funding with other funds or in-kind contributions from a broad range of other public and private funding sources. Leveraged funds are funds that contribute to an effort funded through this program in addition to the requested federal funds from NOAA. NOAA understands that applicants may face challenges in identifying resources to leverage. The budget narrative should describe any sources of leveraged funds, and in-kind services or efforts to identify leveraging opportunities and any associated challenges. Efforts to leverage

resources will be considered as part of the evaluation criteria as described in Section V.A.

Applicants may choose to designate part or all their Federally negotiated indirect costs as leveraged funds (Refer to Section IV.B PDF 4 Supplemental Materials/Appendices which includes additional information about Indirect Costs). Other federal funds can be included and described in the budget narrative as leveraged funds.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than \$500,000 or more than \$2,000,000 in federal funds for Track One, or less than \$15,000,000 or more than \$75,000,000 in federal funds for Track Two under this solicitation.

Applicants should also note that the following activities will not be considered for federal funding:

- 1) activities that alleviate the liability associated with legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law;
- 2) activities that constitute compensatory restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; and
- 3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on www.Grants.gov. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from www.grants.gov, or using the Grants.gov Workspace feature, contact www.grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

If an applicant does not have effective access to Grants.gov, application packages shall be requested by emailing resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov. Additional resources to support applicants with the application process can be found at: <https://coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/>

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Letter of Intent (LOI)

For this funding competition, 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 priorities. NOAA will invite applicants to submit a full proposal if their LOI strongly aligns with the program priorities and includes the required components listed below. An applicant may not submit a full proposal unless they receive an invitation from NOAA after review of a submitted LOI. NOAA anticipates that proposed activities may change between the LOI and the full application. Any full proposal submitted without having received such an invitation will not be reviewed.

Applicants are required to designate a Project Director (PD) within the Letter of Intent and the full application. The Project Director is the individual identified by the lead entity with the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct all activities supported by a grant. The PD will serve as the primary point of contact between NOAA and the regional collaborative during the competition and throughout the period of performance for any awards.

The required LOIs shall be sent via electronic mail to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov with “NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge - Letter of Intent” as the subject line. Letters of Intent must be received by electronic mail by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 21, 2023. Refer to Section IV.D. below for additional information about LOI submission. Applicants submitting multiple LOIs must use a unique project title for each LOI and may send all LOIs in one email or in multiple emails.

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their application by email, or if you do not receive an automated response that your application was received by NOAA, send an email to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov to make alternative arrangements. If necessary, applicants may provide an original paper copy of their LOI by mail. See Section IV.D. below for instruction on submitting a paper application.

The Office for Coastal Management (OCM) will respond to each LOI by electronic mail informing the applicant and their Project Director (PD) whether they are invited to submit a proposal. Applicants who submit an LOI through paper mail will be notified via paper mail at the return address contained within the LOI. NOAA anticipates sending responses by October 11, 2023. If the applicant and the PD does not receive notification by October 12, 2023, the applicant must contact the OCM Grants Coordinator via resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov and request the status of their LOI. The results of the LOI review will be released only to the applicant and the PD unless there are extenuating circumstances. The proposal submission deadlines in this announcement will apply to all

applicants. The LOI should include the following information on a cover page:

- Identification of the NOAA Office for Coastal Management as the intended recipient of the LOI.
- Funding Track applying for: Regional Collaborative Building and Strategy Development (Track One) or Implementation of Resilience and Adaptation Actions (Track Two).
- Project title.
- Applicant name and name and affiliation of their Project Director along with contact information.
- Brief description of the geographic region.
- List of collaborators and/or partners.
- Proposed project start and end dates.
- Total anticipated funding request.

The body of the LOI should be no more than 5 pages, single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font, and must include the following components:

- Description of the geographic region and the resilience vision.
- High-level description of the proposed activities and the intended outcomes.
- Summary of the relationship of proposed activities to ongoing efforts.
- Description of how the activities align to the Program Priorities in 1.B, including description of involvement or engagement of, as well as what benefits will be provided to marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities.
- Description of involvement of or engagement with other federal, tribal, state, territorial and/or local agencies, activities, or programs.
- Summary description of anticipated costs including any sub-awards and contracts. For Track Two, include preliminary estimates for each of the proposed adaptation actions.
- Description of any technical assistance needed from NOAA, if known. Please refer to Section II.C. above, and note that NOAA employees are not permitted to assist with writing applications for Federal funding.

A template is available that organizes the information NOAA is requesting in the LOI at: <https://coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/>

2. Full Application

Applicants should submit full applications through the www.Grants.gov website as described in Sections IV.D. and G. below. If for any reason applicants are unable to submit

their application through Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, send an email to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov to make alternative arrangements. If necessary, applicants may provide an original paper copy of their full application by mail (see Section IV.D. below for instruction on submitting a paper application).

A complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each full application must include the application forms from the SF-424 form family relevant to what is being proposed:

- Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424.
- Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A
- The non-federal entity must submit a line-item budget (SF-424A) and corresponding budget narrative for each of the funding periods anticipated when applying for a multi-year award.
- Assurances for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424B.
- Budget Information for Construction Programs: Form SF-424C.
- Assurances for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424D.
- Certification Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511.
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable).

In addition to the Federal application forms listed above, applications submitted through the www.Grants.gov website should include a maximum of five files (PDF files only) in addition to the Federal application forms. Page limits assume an 11- or 12-point font and 1-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. Applicants can upload multiple files to avoid exceeding the 100 megabyte file size limit. The following files are required:

- PDF 1. Project Summary (3 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).

PDF 1. Project Summary (3 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) or 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 geographic region.
- Brief description of the resilience vision, the proposed activities, and the intended outcomes, including equity components.
- List of collaborators and/or partners.
- 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 (including, if known, brief description of anticipated needs for technical assistance that NOAA may provide).

PDF 2. Project Narrative (25 page limit).

The project narrative should be responsive to the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. 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 program priorities described in Section I.B of this announcement;
- determine the technical/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:

- i. **Background.** Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Describe the geographic scope of the region, including a map showing participating jurisdictions and location of proposed efforts as applicable. Describe the rationale for this geographic scope based on specific threats from weather and climate impacts, enlisting those with capacities to address those threats, and pursuing and implementing adaptation strategies and actions that increase the resilience of a region. 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.
- ii. **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 described in Section I.B including: 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. Applicants should provide supporting documentation in PDF 4 (Supplemental Materials/Appendices) that is sufficient to allow reviewers to understand work that has been completed and work that is being proposed for 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. See Program Overview/Track One (Section I.A.2) for more information on the types of activities that could be undertaken in Track One.
 - 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, the expected outcomes (including but not limited to risk reduction), and the relationship to the program priorities. Describe timelines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate

and final activities, and clearly state key project outcomes. Describe how the expected outcomes address program priorities described in Section I.B and any potential obstacles to successful completion of proposed activities. See the description for PDF 4 Supplemental Materials/Appendices for additional information to include in the application for construction activities and land acquisitions.

- iii. Framework for Collaboration. Describe the general approach of the collaborative team, if relevant, including the organizational structure and function. Describe efforts by collaborators and/or partners to engage and provide benefits to marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities, and Tribes. This should clearly identify both efforts completed during the application development process and those that are proposed for funding related to establishing or supporting the regional collaborators. 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, including specific communication mechanisms to be used, and how they will contribute to the outcome or results of the project. Describe whether collaborators and/or partners are proposed to receive funding under the award as subrecipients or contractors. Note that subaward means an award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award, including a portion of the scope of work or objectives. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a Federal program. Contract means a legal instrument by which a non-Federal entity purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a Federal award. See 2 C.F.R. § 200.1.

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 to be leveraged by the applicant, including information sources, assessments, studies, plans, programs, and partnerships, and previous or ongoing efforts to marry technical and scientific capacity with local knowledge and values. Describe efforts to develop a plan for sustaining coordination and collaboration following the period of performance of the federal award. Letters of collaboration from identified collaborators, partners, and any letters of support from communities, or other interested parties should be included in a separate PDF.

For applicants that are collaboratives, the application should include a letter or letters identifying the Project Director/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 related to the collaborative team. NOAA discourages form letters of support and encourages letters describing concrete engagement and commitments from all identified collaborators and partners.

- iv. 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 generated by the applicant will reach its target audience(s) and have a positive impact within and outside the region, and how the proposal uses best practices for communicating risk to target audiences. Describe activities to support the transfer of knowledge within and outside of the region by organizing, creating, capturing, and/or distributing knowledge to ensure its availability for future use. Appropriate activities for knowledge transfer may include but are not limited to the development of information products, tools, training, or risk communication and outreach. It also could include improving access to data and information related to current and future environmental, economic, and social conditions, and building capacity to integrate this information into sound planning and decision making. Describe efforts, if any, to identify workforce needs that will be required to implement resilience and adaptation actions into the future. For Track Two, 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.
- v. Strategy for Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities. NOAA is committed to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Applicants should address these factors in the design of their proposed projects. The NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge program will advance the Justice40 Initiative requiring that 40 percent of the overall benefits of this effort flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. NOAA encourages all applicants to use the information available through the following tools to assist them in identifying and

assessing the marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities that are connected to their proposed adaptation actions. Applicants should use the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) as the primary tool to identify disadvantaged communities. Applicants are encouraged to use the information available through any of the following tools to assist in assessing how the benefits of a project will reverse or mitigate the burdens of disadvantaged:

- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
(at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>);
- the National Risk Index
(at <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/products-tools/national-risk-index>);
- the Environmental Justice Index
(at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/eji/index.html>);
- EJScreen (at <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>);
- US Census Community Resilience Estimates
(at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/data/tools.html>); and other relevant tools.

In this section, applicants should describe how engagement and benefits to marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities and tribes will be supported in the proposal. 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 and meet the needs of these populations and the role of marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities in decision-making. All applicants should describe ways in which the collaborative team will foster an inclusive environment and recruit from, engage with, and collaborate with members of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, or other organizations or institutions serving the needs of these populations. Applicants should describe the provision of financial resources to enable engagement and collaboration with marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, or other organizations or institutions serving the needs of these populations. 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 structured toward long-term careers and not limited to entry-level skill building.

vi. Evaluation. Describe the approach for evaluating performance and results 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. NOAA may request modifications to proposed evaluation activities during the negotiation process for selected awards to support federal performance measurement and reporting activities. 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. If data collection is proposed, applicants are encouraged to plan for longer-term data management needs in coordination with NOAA, as described in Section VI.B.6 of this announcement.

PDF 3. Budget Narrative (no page limit).

Provide a budget narrative that follows the categories and formats in the NOAA grants package (see object classes on Form SF-424A). The budget narrative should clearly identify and justify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work. 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).

The budget narrative should be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown and calculations used to derive the line item subtotals in each object class of the SF-424A budget. All budget forms (i.e., SF-424, SF424-A (or SF424-C for construction awards) must match the budget narrative. Each identified non-construction subaward should include form SF-424A. Each identified construction subaward can include form SF-424A, but must include form SF-424C. NOAA may require awards to comply with additional statutes, standards, or regulations such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. NOAA may request additional information for any awards (construction or non-construction projects) selected for funding during the award negotiation process to ensure compliance.

An award or subaward requires use of the SF424-C when it is considered a construction award. An award or subaward is considered a construction award when the primary purpose of the financial assistance is to support construction activities and the primary purpose of the project is construction, such as renovation or rehabilitation of existing buildings, and

construction or development of real property infrastructure improvements (e.g., site preparation, utilities, streets, curbs, sidewalks, parking lots, other streetscaping improvements, etc.). In contrast, alteration activities incidental to the primary purpose of an award are generally not considered to constitute a construction award. For example, if the primary purpose of an award or subaward is to allow a recipient to conduct educational or business seminars, the renovation of an educational exhibit or staging area would not be considered construction.

NOAA staff will review budget information to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic. Applicants should include detailed budget information regarding all known contracts and subawards, including funding to regional collaborators beyond the applicant, and indicate the basis for the cost and price estimates in the narrative. Describe activities to occur or products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Detailed budget information includes:

- Name of identified qualified subrecipient or contractor, affiliation, contact information, and method of selection. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection.
- Period of Performance. Include the dates for the performance period. If it involves several tasks, include the performance period for each task.
- Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed.
- Criteria for Measuring Accountability. Include an itemized line-item breakdown as well as total contract/award amount. If applicable, include any indirect costs paid under the contract/award and the indirect cost rate used.
- Itemized Budget. Include categories used in the program budget for subrecipients or cost-based contractors. If applicable, include any direct cost paid under the subaward or contract, and the indirect cost rate used.

All subawards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.331-200.333 for subawards, and 200.317-200.327 for procurements.

Any proposed geospatial data acquisitions should use the NOAA Coastal Geospatial Services Contract (more information at <https://coast.noaa.gov/idiq/geospatial.html>). If an applicant intends to acquire geospatial data but does not intend to use the NOAA Coastal Geospatial Services Contract, they should contact resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov to discuss the rationale and alternative data collection and management options before completing the application. Applicants proposing geospatial data acquisitions should include information about the type, timing, location, and of the data to be collected within the Project Narrative and estimated cost within the Budget Narrative. Estimated costs should not be included in the standard NOAA budget forms (SF424, SF424-A/B, SF424-C/D) given the proposed

acquisition will take place outside of the grant award if the proposal is selected for funding. Once selected for funding, NOAA will coordinate the acquisition process with the applicant during the award negotiation process. NOAA will work with tribal agencies and tribal organizations on appropriate data sovereignty and sharing agreements on any tribally collected data within the constraints of applicable federal laws. Data approved for public access by the Tribes and all other data collected through the Coastal Geospatial Services Contract will be made available via the Digital Coast.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs or price is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project. Note that equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000. See 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 Equipment, 2 C.F.R. § 200.313, and 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.317-327.

The cost or price, purpose, and method of selection for identified and planned acquisition contracts should be thoroughly justified in the Budget Narrative. Describe products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Procurements are subject to policies described in 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.317-.327. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection.

The budget narrative should describe any sources of leveraged funds or in-kind services. Leveraged funds are funds that are spent on a funded project in addition to the requested federal funds from NOAA. NOAA understands that applicants may face challenges in identifying resources to leverage. In these circumstances, NOAA encourages applicants to describe the challenges they have encountered.

The budget narrative should 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 should state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any necessary coordination meetings at regional or national levels. Applicants are encouraged to factor in travel costs for up to two representatives of each collaborative to participate in three national meetings in the Washington, D.C. area for recipients of awards from this program during the period of performance. Applicants may also factor in travel costs for participation in a bi-annual NOAA Grants Management Division workshop, located in Silver Spring, Maryland or potentially the U.S. west coast.

If a foreign air carrier is anticipated to be used for any portion of travel, prior approval is required under the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section G.05.d., and therefore, such travel should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. See Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions at: https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf.

Applicants should also include costs for signage in proposed budgets for construction and non-construction land acquisition activities. Signage which is visible to the public is required for projects that exceed \$5,000,000 in federal funds or result in 6 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. Signs shall meet the specific design requirements in the Building A Better America Brand Guide and no alterations and/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.

Detailed guidance for budget justification from NOAA's Grants Management Division is available: https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf.

PDF 4. Supplemental Materials/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:

- i. 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.

- ii. Data Management Plan. Provide a Data Management Plan as described in Section VI.B.6. of this Announcement.
- iii. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Refer to Section VI.B.4. of this Announcement for information about the types of environmental information that should be described in the application.
- iv. 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. See 2 CFR 200.1 and 200.412-415.

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) unless subject to an exception in 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f). Non-federal entities may use this rate indefinitely but may choose to negotiate an indirect (F&A) cost rate at any time. This de minimis rate option is not available to state and local governments, and Tribes.

Alternatively, the negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC. If an applicant proposes establishing a new rate, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review.

Raishan Adams, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Raishan.Adams@noaa.gov

Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for sub-awardees;

however, indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.403 “Factors affecting allowability of costs.”

- v. 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 (FFRMS), applicants must, at a minimum, identify the current 100-year floodplain in relation to any proposed construction activity. The FFRMS requires federal agencies to use best-available information in identifying the floodplain and to reduce risks and costs associated with future flood disasters for federal investments in and affecting floodplains to meet higher flood risk standards. NOAA may request additional information to ensure compliance during the negotiation

process for awards that are selected for funding. Applicants should also describe how the project design conforms with the latest published editions of additional relevant codes, specifications, and standards that incorporate the latest hazard-resistant designs.

Proposals including construction activities should include a comprehensive project schedule describing all activities from the start of the award, including when the project will commence 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).

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.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants should:

- 1) be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM.gov) before submitting an application;
- 2) provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on an application; and
- 3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency.

NOAA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once but must be periodically renewed. On April 4, 2022, the federal government began using a new Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number provided by SAM. Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed to receive a UEI, which is provided by SAM. If your entity is already registered in SAM.gov, your new UEI has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov. This includes inactive registrations.

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through www.grants.gov. An entity potentially interested in applying should immediately register for SAM or check to assure that their previous registration is up to date and any necessary renewal has been processed.

D. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for receipt of Letters of Intent (LOI) is August 21, 2023 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. For LOIs submitted by email, the date and time indication of the receiving server will be the basis of determining timeliness. Note that receipt may be delayed if email 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 email or in multiple emails. If

an applicant does not receive acknowledgement that its LOI was received by NOAA, it should send an email to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov. For paper copy submission of LOIs, see below.

Full applications must be submitted by February 13, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. Late applications will not be considered for funding. Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to Grants.gov, a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt. Information regarding electronic submission through Grants.gov and the address for paper applications is contained below and in Section IV.G. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. All applications must contain all required forms signed by an authorized organization representative. Digital signatures are allowed.

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their application through Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, send an email to resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov to make alternative arrangements. If necessary, applicants may provide an original paper copy of their LOI or full application by mail. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements described above, a SF-424 form with original ink or valid electronic signature and date from an authorized recipient organization representative and the entire package should be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark or provided to a commercial carrier with tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 pm Eastern on February 13, 2024. Private metered postmarks are unacceptable. Address all mailed applications to:

Grant Coordinator, Business Operations Division
ATTN: Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413
resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov

Paper applications received more than seven calendar days after the deadline will not be reviewed, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications. Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration and letters of support, shall be submitted together in one package. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. In addition, email resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov to inform NOAA that a paper application is forthcoming. Applicants should consider the possibility of unforeseen events that could affect their Internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before application due dates. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations beyond their control affecting their ability to submit packages

before deadlines may not result in changes to the application deadline.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted under this notice are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on Form SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC). To find out about and comply with a State's process under Executive Order 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>.

F. Funding Restrictions

The placement of sand on beaches for renourishment is not eligible for funding under this announcement. In addition, the construction of shoreline stabilization structures are not eligible for funding under this announcement, unless they are part of a hybrid green and gray adaptation action. Shoreline stabilization structures are hard structures used to create rigidity and include breakwaters, riprap, jetties, breakwaters, seawalls, and revetments.

Per 2 C.F.R. § 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. As such, pre-award costs may be incurred up to 90 days prior to the effective date of and in anticipation of the award, if such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Pre-award costs incurred after the publication of this Funding Opportunity but more than 90 days before the state of the award may also be considered, but require prior approval from NOAA. This does not change the period of performance start date. Pre-award costs and advance payments should be considered and discussed during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award and only with the written approval of the Federal awarding agency. This could include proposal preparation costs (as defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.460) that are not covered in indirect costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. All costs incurred before NOAA makes the award are at the recipient's risk (i.e., NOAA is not required to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive a Federal award or if the Federal award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs).

Pre-award costs eligible for land acquisitions include costs necessary for conducting appraisals, title work, and environmental assessments. The cost of land acquisition may also

be reimbursed as a pre-award cost if the acquisition occurred between the date this Notice of Funding Opportunity is published and the start date for an approved grant award. Reimbursement of funds is subject to NOAA's approval of due diligence documents; closing on a property prior to the award start date is at the applicant's risk. For land acquisitions, funds may not be used for:

- funding operations, maintenance, and management of the land beyond the period of performance (above those costs allowed for initial land stewardship);
- acquisition of lands, or interests in lands, that completely restrict access to specific persons (e.g., non-residents of a community);
- acquisition of lands, or interests in lands, to comply with mandatory or compensatory mitigation for recent, pending or future habitat losses resulting from the actions of agencies, organizations, companies, or individuals;
- enforcing fish, wildlife, or other regulations, either solely or primarily, except when necessary for the accomplishment of approved project purposes; or
- reimbursement of expenses that have been incurred prior to the start of a grant award, except those approved as pre-award costs.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit full applications electronically through www.Grants.gov. Users of Grants.gov 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. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

NOAA highly recommends that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov, as registration with SAM is required, as described in Section IV.C. After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt by Grants.gov, not NOAA; the second confirms that the submission is acceptable and timely; and the third validates that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing).

If all notifications are not received, applicants should follow up with the Grants.gov help desk to confirm NOAA receipt of the complete submission. Applicants should document communications with the Grants.gov help desk in the event technical issues arise. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications early in the event technical issues arise.

NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applicants should allow themselves sufficient time to submit their application to Grants.gov in advance of the deadline to ensure applications have been submitted successfully, as waivers of the submission deadline will not be granted. Late applications will not be accepted. If an applicant is unable to use the preferred submission method (Grants.gov) or is unsure about the success of their submission to Grants.gov, a signed paper copy application must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by the deadline under “Submission Dates and Times” in Section IV.D and sent to:

Grant Coordinator, Business Operations Division
ATTN: Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413
resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov

Mandatory requirements regarding signatures and the format of paper copy applications are described in Section IV.D. Paper applications submitted by the deadline must be received by NOAA within seven business days. While email applications will not be accepted, applicants should notify resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov that a paper application was submitted by the deadline and request confirmation when the application is received.

Grant Coordinator, Business Operations Division
ATTN: Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

LETTER OF INTENT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Letter of Intent (LOI) evaluation criteria in this program and weights for each criterion are below. Track One and Track Two LOIs will be evaluated separately. NOAA anticipates that highly ranked LOIs will satisfy most or all of the criteria listed in this section.

1. Program Priorities (60 Points). Questions relevant to this criterion include the extent the application addresses the program priorities listed in Section 1.B.
 - Risk Reduction (15 points) - For Track One LOIs, to what extent does the proposed effort prepare the region for implementation of future actions that will reduce risk to coastal communities, infrastructure, economies, and ecosystems from weather and climate impacts? For track Two LOIs, to what extent will the proposed effort reduce risk to coastal communities, infrastructure, economies, and ecosystems from weather and climate impacts?
 - Regional Coordination and Collaboration (15 points) - To what extent does the proposed effort promote regional coordination and collaboration through a shared vision for how to improve resilience within the specific geography or region? To what extent is the size and location of the specified region likely to facilitate implementation of resilience and adaptation actions that ensure benefits flow to coastal communities?
 - Equity and Inclusion (15 points) - To what extent does the proposed effort support development, identification, or implementation of equitable adaptation strategies and actions led by or with members of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities and/or Tribes? Does the proposed effort advance environmental justice and provide opportunity for disadvantaged communities?
 - Enduring Capacity (15 points) - To what extent does the proposed effort aim to build capacity for adaptation that can be sustained into the future beyond the period of award, including for Tribes and/or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented populations?
2. Technical Merit (10 points). Questions relevant to this criterion include: To what extent are the vision, strategies, activities, and outcomes of the proposed efforts clear? To what extent are the proposed activities appropriate for accomplishing the stated vision and outcomes?
3. Project Costs (10 points). Questions relevant to this criterion include: To what extent are the estimated costs realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame?
4. Outreach and Engagement (20 points). Questions relevant to this criterion include:

To what extent do the proposed effort include specific activities for involving or engaging a wide range of agencies and organizations, including marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, and Tribes? Does the LOI reflect connections with or intent to connect with NOAA's partnerships?

LOIs will undergo a technical review (with at least three reviewers), ranking, and selection process to determine eligibility to submit a full application. The LOI Evaluation Criteria will be scored as follows:

- 0 – Poor: LOI does not address Evaluation Criterion;
- 1 – Fair: LOI marginally addresses Evaluation Criterion;
- 2 – Good: LOI adequately addresses Evaluation Criterion; or
- 3 – Excellent: LOI exceptionally addresses Evaluation Criterion.

The Letter of Intent's average score is then calculated using the weights and ratings for each criterion, as follows:

(Rating for "Risk Reduction" × 0.15) +
 (Rating for "Regional Coordination and Collaboration" × 0.15) +
 (Rating for "Equity" × 0.15) +
 (Rating for "Enduring Capacity" × 0.15) +
 (Rating for "Technical Merit" × 0.20) +
 (Rating for "Project Costs" × 0.05) +
 (Rating for "Outreach and Engagement" × 0.15) +
 Sum of all review scores / # of reviewers = Total Score (Range: 0.00 - 3.00)

FULL APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Reviewers will assign scores to full applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria. Criteria and sub-criteria will be evaluated holistically up to the number of points specified.

1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability. These criteria are related to the program priorities.

Risk Reduction: This factor evaluates the extent to which the proposed approach, strategies, and actions reduce risk to coastal communities, infrastructure, economies, and ecosystems from weather and climate impacts.

For Track One (10 points), does the proposal:

1. Describe the risk from weather and climate impacts within the project area?
If not, does the proposal include activities to assess risk and vulnerability within the project area?
2. Articulate a regional resilience vision and propose development of strategies, approaches or plans to support implementation of future adaptation actions?
3. Describe specific needs or gaps within the region that will be addressed by the collaborative's activities? If not, does the proposal describe a process to identify them?
4. Describe how the benefits of a regional approach will flow to coastal communities?
5. Describe the impact the strategy will have when implemented and how the collaborative will pursue implementation?

For Track Two (15 points), does the proposal:

1. Articulate a vision, specific resilience and adaptation actions with co-benefits, and associated outcomes based on the needs, issues, or gaps within the region?
2. Describe a suite of complementary adaptation actions, grounded in existing plans or strategies, that are achievable within the proposed period of performance?
3. Provide a description of each proposed implementation action and specific plans for implementing each action (e.g., timeline, mechanism, etc.)?
4. Describe how the suite of proposed adaptation actions will measurably increase resilience of the region?

Regional Coordination and Collaboration. This factor evaluates the extent to which the applicant includes the appropriate entities for a specific geography in the collaborative team and proposes activities that are likely to advance specified goals.

For Track One (20 points), does the proposal:

1. Describe the geographic scope of the regional collaborative and how the size facilitates collaboration?
2. Include the necessary collaborators and partners to accomplish stated goals (including appropriate government entities) and how each of the collaborators are connected to the priorities?
3. Articulate steps and actions to create and sustain the collaborative team?
Include activities to incorporate indigenous knowledge, local and community knowledge and values related to climate adaptation within the region?

4. Describe the leadership, organizational, and administrative framework for the collaborative team, or propose activities that will result in an organizational and administrative framework?

For Track Two (10 points), does the proposal:

1. Describe the geographic scope of the suite of adaptation actions and how that size facilitates implementation?
2. Articulate a governance approach for the proposed suite of adaptation actions that ensure they complement each other and collectively contribute to regional adaptation objectives and actions that have been identified?
3. Demonstrate that it has enlisted the expertise and entities required to address the identified climate change threats holistically and collaboratively, including engagement and commitment from any relevant collaborators and/or partners?
4. Demonstrate integration and leveraging of federal, state, and local entities, as well as Tribes, tribal organizations, and non-governmental organizations?

Equity and Inclusion (15 points). This factor evaluates the extent to which the proposed activities are co-developed with Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities and support development and implementation of equitable adaptation strategies and actions.

For Track One (15 points), does the proposal:

1. Identify, or propose to identify as an action, those who are most vulnerable to weather and climate impacts within the geography of interest, including Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented populations, as well as disadvantaged communities?
2. Include both short-term and long-term activities that are led by or engage with, and provide resources to, Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities? This should include resources for these communities to lead projects or engage in the process (e.g., attend meetings, provide expertise, etc.).
3. Describe how those Tribes or marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities have co-developed or will be integrated into project activities? Does it clearly explain what inclusion looks like?
4. Describe activities to overcome known barriers to engagement of Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, or propose activities to identify barriers?

For Track Two (15 points), does the proposal:

1. Identify, or propose to identify as an action, those who are most vulnerable to weather and climate impacts within the geography of interest, including Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented populations, as well as disadvantaged communities?
2. Describe the outreach that was done with Tribes or marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities in developing and identifying the proposed adaptation actions? Or include plans for doing so (or continuing to do so) prior to and during implementation of these adaptation actions?
3. Identify the benefits that will accrue to Tribes or marginalized, underserved and underrepresented communities from the implementation of the proposed adaptation actions?
4. Identify the potential mitigation for any burdens that could be placed on these communities from the actions?
5. Describe activities, including staff time and dedicated funding, to ensure continued engagement of Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities and incorporation of those communities into decision making processes?

Enduring Capacity (10 points). This factor evaluates the extent to which the proposed activities will build enduring capacity for adaptation within specified regions, including Tribes or marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities.

For Track One (10 points), does the proposal:

1. Include activities to improve planners', decision makers' and coastal stakeholders' access to and capacity to apply data and information related to current and future environmental, economic, and social conditions and integrate information into sound, planning and decision making?
2. Include a plan to sustain regional collaboration beyond the period of performance or propose to develop a plan for long term, sustained collaboration?
3. Invest in capacity building of those involved in the collaborative team and relevant communities by providing training? Support activities that will ensure sharing the lessons learned with other regions and communities?

For Track Two (10 points), does the proposal:

1. Identify the workforce requirements, including numbers, that would need to be hired to implement identified adaptation actions, 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?

2. Identify opportunities to share the lessons learned during implementation more broadly and transfer knowledge within and outside the region?
3. Include a plan to sustain regional collaboration and adaptation actions beyond the period of performance or propose to develop a plan for long term, sustained collaboration?

2. Technical and Scientific Merit. This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives for the activities.

For Track One, does the proposal: (15 points)

1. Have a clearly defined, focused, and realistic vision? Include activities that are appropriate for accomplishing the stated vision and are achievable within the proposed time frame?
2. Incorporate current guidance, authoritative data and science, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work?
3. Reference scientific sources from federal and non-federal sources, and/or Indigenous Knowledge related to weather and climate risk?
4. Include activities for evaluating and reporting performance of the overall effort and specific adaptation actions?

For Track Two, does the proposal: (20 points)

1. Have a clearly defined, focused, and realistic vision? Include activities that are appropriate for accomplishing the stated vision and are achievable within the proposed time frame?
2. Completely describe the proposed adaptation actions, including a realistic timeline, key milestones and outcomes to be achieved, and the status of permitting and environmental compliance? Include sufficient detail about each of the adaptation actions to assess the merit of the planned activities?
3. Provide support for the feasibility of the methods, including whether the approach is technically sound and safe for the public? Does the proposal provide support for the sustainability of the approach?
4. Reference scientific sources from federal and non-federal sources, and/or Indigenous Knowledge related to weather and climate risk?
5. Include activities for evaluating and reporting performance of the overall effort and specific adaptation actions including the anticipated social and economic

benefits? Include plans to support longer-term monitoring beyond the period of performance?

3. Overall Qualifications of the Funding Applicants (15 points). These criteria assess whether the funding applicant and any sub-applicants possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

For Track One, does the proposal:

1. Include a lead entity with the capability and/or experience in successfully administering a federal award, or propose activities for the lead entity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully administer a federal award?
2. Clearly describe the roles of collaborators? Does the application include letters of collaboration that describe the scale and scope of involvement for the collaborators?
3. Identify a team of collaborators who have knowledge of and experience working in the specified geographic region? Does the team of collaborators have broad support for the proposed effort as reflected in letters of cooperation and/or letters of support?

For Track Two, does the proposal:

1. Involve a lead entity with the capability and/or experience in successfully administering a federal award and/or similar funding of a similar scope and scale? Include activities to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully administer a federal award?
2. Involve collaborators and/or partners with sufficient expertise and capacity to implement the proposed suite of adaptation actions?

4. Project Costs (10 points). These criteria evaluate the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

For Track One, does the proposal:

1. Include a budget request that is 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 regional collaborative and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed regional collaborative?
2. Describe how the proposed activities include strategic partnerships with collaborating institutions, agencies, foundations, community organizations, or private-sector partners? Do the proposed activities leverage resources from

other organizations or funding sources? Or describe efforts and associated challenges in identifying leveraging opportunities?

3. Have administrative costs been minimized to the greatest extent possible? This includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of effective direct/indirect costs across all categories in the proposed budget according to the type, size and duration of project and project objectives.

For Track Two, does the proposal:

1. Include a budget request that is 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 effort and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes?
2. Demonstrate that the proposed activities leverage resources, and to what extent, from other organizations or funding sources? Or describe efforts and associated challenges in identifying leveraging opportunities?
3. Demonstrate that the proposed approach is the most efficient way to meet project objectives? Have administrative costs been minimized to the greatest extent possible? This includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of effective direct/indirect costs across all categories in the proposed budget according to the type, size and duration of project and project objectives.

5. Outreach and Engagement (5 points). These criteria assess whether the proposal includes a strategy to engage stakeholders beyond the collaborative team in improving resilience of the region.

For Track One, does the proposal:

1. Reflect outreach to one or more of NOAA's partnerships (see Section II.C)?
2. Outline a strategy that will improve and sustain dialogue and information sharing with supporters and other stakeholders, particularly marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, and Tribes?

For Track Two, does the proposal:

1. Reflect outreach to one or more of NOAA's partnerships (see Section II.C)?
2. Outline a strategy that will improve and sustain dialogue and information sharing with stakeholders, particularly marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, and Tribes?

B. Review and Selection Process

LETTER OF INTENT REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

All LOIs received consistent with the deadline and procedures in Section IV. above will be evaluated by NOAA in accordance with the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for LOIs with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Each LOI will be reviewed by at least three objective reviewers, and a rank order will be established based on the scoring in Section IV. The goal of this review is to select the projects that are most strongly aligned with and most likely to advance the program priorities of the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge. Highly ranked LOIs will be invited to develop a full application. The number of LOIs invited to submit full proposals will be based on the rank order and available funding, and may take into account the Selection Factors in Section V.C. below. Proposals receiving lower scores that do not strongly align with program priorities will not be invited to submit full proposals.

Appropriate mechanisms will be established to avoid conflicts of interest. The Office for Coastal Management (OCM) will respond to each LOI by email informing the applicant and the PD as to whether they are invited to submit a proposal. OCM anticipates sending responses by October 11, 2023. If the applicant and the PD does not receive an email by October 12, 2023, they both must contact resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov and request the status of their LOI. The proposal submission deadline in this announcement will apply to everyone. The results of the LOI review will be released only to the applicant and the PD unless there are extenuating circumstances. Feedback on the LOI will be provided upon request. Applicants may not submit a full proposal unless they receive an invitation from NOAA to do so after submitting an LOI. Any proposal that is submitted without having received an invitation will not be reviewed.

FULL APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to assure that it is timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. NOAA is not required to screen applications before the submission deadline, to identify deficiencies that would cause the application to be rejected or receive a poor evaluation (for example, a missing component). However, if deficiencies are identified by NOAA or the applicant before the deadline, the applicant may correct any deficiencies by submitting a revised application.

Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by at least three independent peer reviewers during a merit-based review and ranking process. Appropriate mechanisms will be implemented to avoid potential conflicts of interest during the proposal

review process. Each reviewer will be asked to individually evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based primarily on information included in the application. Merit reviewer ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

Following the merit review, one or more panels may meet to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official regarding which of the top ranked proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities. The panel may be composed of federal employees and non-federal experts and may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications. The panel will be presented with the top-ranked applications, per the results of the merit review, merit review scores, and comments for each application.

The panel will rate all top-ranked proposals on the following scale:

- 3- Excellent--Application exceptionally addresses program priorities and was highly responsive to evaluation criteria;
- 2- Good--Application partially addresses program priorities and was strongly responsive to evaluation criteria; or
- 1- Fair--Application marginally addresses program priorities and was moderately responsive to evaluation criteria.

The final rating will be presented to the Selection Official and will be the primary consideration for deciding which applications will be recommended for funding. The Selecting Official, or their designee, may negotiate the funding level or other major aspects of the proposal, and based on the rank order and selection factors in Section V. C. below, the Selecting Official will make the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding and execute the award.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, may ask applicants to work together or combine proposals, may defer applications to the future, or may reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Proposals not initially selected for funding may be considered for funding subsequent to the initial review and selection if additional funds become available without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

Please note that not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate or only partial funding, based on the selection factors and the merit and/or panel

review written evaluations. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives and activities, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. This includes review of any proposed cost sharing, which is not required, and which may be removed or changed to leverage if more appropriate. This may result in submission of a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, specific NOAA cooperative involvement with activities of each project, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and Office for Coastal Management officials. Applicants should also note that modifications to proposals may be necessary due to NOAA's efforts to comply with NEPA and other legislation.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official, a senior official within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or their designee, shall recommend applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors:

- availability of funding;
- balance/distribution of funds:
 - a) by geographic area,
 - b) by type of institutions,
 - c) by type of partners,
 - d) by research areas, or
 - e) by project types;
- whether this project duplicates other efforts funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
- program priorities and policy factors set out in Sections I.A. and I.B.;
- an applicant's prior award performance;
- partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups (including the extent to which projects benefit Tribes, underserved, marginalized, underrepresented, environmental justice, and/or disadvantaged communities); and
- adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA GMD.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants with the highest ranked proposals will be notified in Spring 2024 that they have been recommended for funding. Applicants must undergo reviews by NOAA's Grants Management Division as described in Sections V.B. and VI.B.9., and successfully complete all NOAA/applicant negotiations including providing the information required for NOAA to comply with NEPA and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested prior to funding being awarded. The anticipated start date for cooperative agreement awards made under this competition is October 1, 2024, dependent on funding availability.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail that their application was not recommended for funding after the final selection package has been approved by the NOAA Grants Management Division, which is expected to be approximately June 2024. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for three years and then destroyed.

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 email that their application was recommended for funding and remains under consideration. The applicant should be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award notice and funding is not assured. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically.

The official notice of award is the Commerce Form 450 (CD-450), Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online, and must be accepted by the non-federal entity.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain specific award conditions as necessary, such as a limitation on the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements, which may lead to modification of the project's scope of work. These specific award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/cXC7A>.

2. Uniform Administrative Requirements. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at 2 C.F.R. § 200, implemented by the Department of Commerce at 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/cXCJQ>.

3. Terms and Conditions. The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online. A current version is available for review at https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. Also, NOAA will apply administrative terms, and a current version is at <https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2021/Mar/Administrative%20Standard%20Award%20Conditions%20for%20NOAA%20Financial%20Assistance%20Awards%2002.18.2021.pdf>. In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions, including those limiting the use of funds for compliance activities such as outstanding environmental compliance requirements, which will be applied on a case-by-case basis, requirements for physical signage attributing the project to its funding source, and requirements for submitting progress reports.

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA funding. 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://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations are also accessible under <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=30655823cf5f0dcb1c5ee59d01883b89&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title40/40chapterV.tpl>.

Applicants should review the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants at <https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>. This form addresses information requirements specific to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321- 4370. Under the description of program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). At a minimum, applicants should provide the proposed activity location, maps and graphics of the proposed location, if available (at a scale that clearly shows site location(s) relative to the surrounding area and nearby features), and whether there are pre-existing or ongoing uses at the location of the proposed activity. Applicants recommended for funding must complete questions 1 - 19 of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (accessible at: <https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>) prior to NOAA review and approval of the funding award.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA and other compliance requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the EA or EIS. 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. If NOAA cannot evaluate the environmental impacts of the award due to the nature of the application (e.g., the funding will support the selection, design and implementation of a project but cannot evaluate a project that has not yet been selected), NOAA may require the applicant to submit additional information to fulfill NEPA and other compliance requirements once that information becomes available. Funds cannot be expended until NEPA and other compliance requirements are fulfilled.

5. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Federal Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains

information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

6. Data Sharing Requirements. If the applicant intends to collect or create environmental data or information, and if the applicant receives funding under this competition, they will be required to make the data or information collected or created under the NOAA award discoverable by and accessible to the public in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Office for Coastal Management. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely used or open-standard format, and should be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.

For the purposes of this announcement, environmental data includes: 1) observations and measurements of physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties of the oceans, atmosphere, space, sun, and solid earth; 2) correlative data, such as socioeconomic data, related documentation, and metadata; 3) digital audio or video recordings of environmental phenomena (such as animal sounds or undersea video); 4) numerical model outputs, particularly if supporting a peer-reviewed publication; and 5) data collected in a lab or other controlled environment, such as measurements of animals and chemical processes.

Applications that involve the collection or creation of environmental data should include a general Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how the following requirements will be satisfied. A typical plan should include:

- 1) descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project (including geographic and temporary coverage, anticipated quantity, volume or size of data collected, and the collection and/or generation methods that will be used);
- 2) the tentative date by which data will be shared;
- 3) information on data quality assurance/quality control procedures, document and metadata requirements;
- 4) methods for providing data access, sharing and preservation; and
- 5) prior experience in making such data accessible. If the proposal is selected for

funding, the applicant will need to provide a data management plan that addresses all the listed plan elements in detail.

The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. Proposals are to describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

Responsible NOAA Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients:

Randy Warren
Data Manager
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
Randy.Warren@noaa.gov

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

NOAA reserves the right to halt activity under the award through enforcement procedures under 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.339-.343, Remedies for Non-compliance, if the recipient is not fulfilling the requirements of the project as outlined in the grant award. Non-compliance with a federally approved project may result in termination of the award as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.340.

8. Paperwork Reduction Act. This collection of information contains requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Forms SF- 424, SF- 424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers found at <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRASearch>. Form CD-511 and CD-512 are also required by the DOC. Applicants shall not submit form CD-512 with their application package; this form must remain on file with the applicant only. Form SF-LLL is required only if lobbying activities are being reported; otherwise, this form shall remain on file with the applicant only and not with the federal program office.

9. Review of Risk. The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.206. NOAA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be addressed in a timely fashion in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer.

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

11. **NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards.** NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding an applicant, Project Director (PD), co-PD, Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award. The recipient must report to the NOAA Grants Officer and Program Officer if the PI, co-PI, or other key personnel are placed on administrative leave relating to a harassment finding or investigation. NOAA may take unilateral action as necessary to protect the safety of all personnel on a project supported by financial assistance, to include suspending or terminating an award or requiring a recipient to replace or remove personnel. If the award involves the use of NOAA-operated facilities and/or vessels, the recipient must adhere to the following specific requirements:

- Financial assistance awards involving the use of NOAA operated-facilities: NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA-Operated Facilities (May 2018).
- Financial assistance awards involving the use of vessels: NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving the Use of a Vessel(s) under NOAA Contract, Order, Grant, or Cooperative Agreement (May 2018).

Direct links to the requirements for awards involving the use of NOAA operated-facilities and/or vessels may be found at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>. Note that these policies include required training.

12. **Required Use of American Iron, Steel, Manufactured Products, and Construction Materials.**

If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), Pub. L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American, Buy American (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52, and OMB M-22-11, recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (DOC) are hereby notified that none of the

funds provided under any award in this program may be used for a project for infrastructure unless:

- (1) all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States;
- (2) all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and
- (3) all construction materials are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

To help federal agencies and recipients meet BABA requirements, the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network™ provides a service to connect stakeholders, including recipients, to U.S. manufacturers that have relevant production capabilities and capacities to help fulfill current market and supply chain needs. Recipients considering a BABA nonavailability waiver are strongly encouraged to contact the NIST/MEP for assistance with supplier scouting services prior to seeking a BABA non-availability waiver. Further information on the NIST/MEP supplier scouting services is available at: <https://www.nist.gov/mep/supplier-scouting>.

Waivers: When necessary, recipients may apply for, and DOC may grant, a waiver from these requirements. DOC will notify the recipient for information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. When DOC has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which DOC determines that: a. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public

interest; b. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or c. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent. A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. DOC will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by the U.S. Made in America Office. There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america.

Definitions:

- “Construction materials” includes: an article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives—that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinyl chloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall.
- “Domestic content procurement preference” means: all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States.
- “Infrastructure” includes, at a minimum: the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy.
- “Project” means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. -- 1 Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIA, § 70917(c)(1).

Implementation of Domestic Sourcing Requirements: Prior to initiation of any construction that may arise in any award under this program, the Recipient will be required to inform the NOAA Grants Officer and the Federal Program Officer whether it is using iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials as described in the above policy

on Required Use of American Iron, Steel, Manufactured Products, and Construction Materials. In addition, the Recipient will be required to inform the NOAA Grants Officer and the Federal Program Officer whether those materials are produced or manufactured in the United States, or alternatively, it is requesting one or more waivers, as described in this announcement. The Recipient will be required to coordinate with NOAA regarding its compliance with this policy.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports consistent with 2 CFR 200.328 - .330 and DOC Standard Terms and Conditions electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. NOAA will provide instructions for submitting financial and progress reports upon request.

A comprehensive final report is due 120 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public service announcements, workshop proceedings, etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by contractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 120 days of the end of the award. Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited". Journal publications must be made available to the public free of charge if the applicant has requested publication costs or when consistent with an award's approved data management plan. Additional data policies may arise prior to award pursuant to the federal-wide directive found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08-2022-OSTP-Public-Access-Memo.pdf>.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's GMD and are up to date. In their final progress report, applicants will be asked to:

- (a) clearly state the resulting overall impact of their project; and
- (b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAAs GMD and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard

Application for Payments (ASAP).”

If equipment or tangible personal property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory to the extent required by the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance set out at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.313. Recipients must inventory tangible property at least once every two years and at award closeout. As necessary, SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

Recipients must submit reports at least annually and at award closeout on the status of real property in which the federal government retains an interest, unless the federal interest in the real property extends 15 years or more. As necessary, SF-429 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

The program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to 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 ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients “Submit Additional Closeout Documents” as an award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with OMB requirements.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. § 6101, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued. 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. See 2 C.F.R. § 170 at http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact the OCM Grants Coordinator: resiliencechallenge@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Additional information on the NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, including the dates and times of informational webinars, can be found here:

<https://coast.noaa.gov/funding/ira/resilience-challenge/>

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur while carrying out an award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are “necessary and reasonable” specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, codified by the Department of Commerce at 1327.101. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g., subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance, and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.



DATE: July 21, 2023 **ITEM:** 4
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Joshua Metz, RGS Senior Advisor, District Manager
SUBJECT: Approve the Draft FY 22-23 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update and Performance Report and Authorize the District Manager to submit the Report to the Economic Development Administration

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: The purpose of this item is to consider approving the draft FY 22-23 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update and Performance Report for submission to the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve the attached draft FY 22-23 CEDS Update and Performance Report for submission to the EDA.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

This action is budgeted by EDA Planning Grant funds.

BACKGROUND:

The SMEDD is responsible for overseeing completion, monitoring implementation progress, and supporting on-going planning of the Sonoma-Mendocino CEDS. This core function of the District is intended to occur annually through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, whereby progress towards existing Goals are noted, opportunities to support improved implementation are identified, and new Goal-aligned projects are identified.

DISCUSSION:

The Annual CEDS Update and Performance Report must include the following major components:

- Adjustment to the Strategy
- Report on Economic Development Activities; Evaluation on Action Plan and Goals
- Schedule of Goals for the next year.

The draft FY 22-23 CEDS Update and Performance Report encapsulates critical component insights gained during FY 22-23. Submitting this report to the EDA will allow the SMEDD to meet its critical mission deadlines.



ALTERNATIVES:

- 1:** Approve the Draft FY 22-23 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update and Performance Report and Authorize the District Manager to submit the Report to the Economic Development Administration
- 2:** Consider, *modify*, and Approve the Draft FY 22-23 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update and Performance Report and Authorize the District Manager to submit the Report to the Economic Development Administration
- 3:** Other approach(s) may be developed after public comments and Board deliberations.
- 4:** Decline to act.

RECOMMENDATION for Alternative 1:

Move to:

- Approve the Draft FY 22-23 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update and Performance Report and Authorize the District Manager to submit the Report to the Economic Development Administration

ATTACHMENT:

Draft FY 22-23 Annual CEDS Update and Performance Report



2023 ANNUAL CEDS UPDATE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

INNOVATION

EQUITY

PEOPLE

RESILIENCE



2023 Annual CEDS Update and Performance Report

Contents

Adjustment to the Strategy.....	2
Report on Economic Development Activities.....	4
Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan and Goals.....	7
Schedule of Goals for the Next Year.....	13
Economic Resiliency.....	13

DRAFT

Adjustment to Strategy

Our vision is that by 2030, Sonoma-Mendocino will be home to a vibrant, resilient, inclusive, and diverse economy. The values driving this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are to increase prosperity for all by working to ensure that:

- Our economy will be more vibrant, prosperous, innovative, thriving, entrepreneurial, diverse, and resilient
- All communities are more equitable, collaborative, inclusive, community-oriented, open, and welcoming
- Our environment is more resilient, green, sustainable, and fire-safe

The Sonoma Mendocino region Economic Development District CEDS Strategy Committee broadly represents the economic interests of the region and the members are held in high regard in their respective fields. The strategy committee remains almost the same, however there are two people who are unfortunately unable to continue. Both Mike Nicholls and Rosanne Ibarra have vacated the committee. As we continue future updates, we will either recruit to fill their spot or conduct outreach in their respective fields, technology and healthcare.

First	Last	Organization/Affiliation	Industry	County
Patrick	McDonell	Legal Aid of Sonoma County & Los Cien	Youth and Latinx Community Leader, Workforce Housing	Sonoma
David	Smith Ferri	Dry Creek Rancheria	Tribes/Tourism	Sonoma
John	Bailey	University of California Hopland Research and Extension Center	Education	Mendocino
Ananda	Sweet	Santa Rosa Metro Chamber	Business	Sonoma
Lisa	Schaffner	NC Builders Exchange	Construction	Sonoma
Devon	Boer	Mendocino County Farm Bureau	Agriculture	Mendocino
Grant	Davis	Sonoma County Water Agency	Utility	Sonoma
Paul	Garza Jr.	Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District	Economic Development	Mendocino

Over the course of the next year the Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District professional team will continue to engage with our strategy committee and local stakeholders in the region. From recent events, such as the May 30 Ag-tech Innovation Brainstorming workshop, we have received feedback that local stakeholders are interested in the continuation and expansion of goal one in the CEDS, developing innovative and value added economic sectors. This call to action did not go unnoticed. In June, 2023, the district submitted a letter of interest to the International Economic Development Council to host an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow to implement CEDS goals 1 and 2 in mutual fashion. The primary objective of the Fellow will be to, “foster equitable economic prosperity through strengthening and developing efforts and partnerships among local tribes, nonprofits, governments, and businesses to embrace business growth, job creation, job training and education, research, and innovation around the blue (ocean related), green (land and agriculture related), and

creative/tourism economies”. Additionally, through our outreach we were able to gain feedback on expanding our goal in developing the green economy to include, “Support innovations in technologies to support a healthy, climate resilient agricultural sector”. Moving forward this expansion will be critical to our considerations for an Ag-tech innovation hub and diversifying north coast agriculture as a whole.

In addition to doubling down on the efforts around the green economy, the SMEDD professional team is engaging in a series of meetings with both the Sonoma and Mendocino County supervisor offices. From these meetings, the team has received feedback on additional projects, strategies, and SWOTs that fall in the purview of the CEDS goals and should be added to the appendix of the CEDS. These strategies include:

- 1) Supporting “gig workers” obtain and maintain full time employment through workforce development training.
- 2) Investing in harbor facilities, infrastructure, and ocean education and research. Establishing a Marina/Spud Point enterprise zone/cluster in Bodega Bay.
- 3) Working on creative solutions to expedite business permitting or allow for financial flexibility while entrepreneurs wait for approval (innovation zones)
- 4) Project: Tourism and Creative Sector – Building an amphitheater on the Guerneville plaza makes little sense. Adding a community park in Cazadero is not an economic development project.
- 5) Project: Develop infrastructure to support tourism economies: Access to bathrooms and trash pick up, for example.
- 6) Added Threat to SWOT: Competition for water with growing drought and climate change.
- 7) Added Opportunity to SWOT: strong apprenticeship programs primed for expansion.
- 8) Reexamine strength from SWOT: Access to schools, some remote areas of the county struggle with this.

Report on Economic Development Activities

The Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District (SMEDD) has conducted hours of outreach, resources, and drafting to update the new CEDS. In doing so, the team has interviewed and convened stakeholders to report on progress of existing projects and development of new projects/opportunities that directly align with the Sonoma Mendocino CEDS. Below are a list of relevant projects, a description, their CEDS relation/impact, and future involvement by the district.

In early January 2023, one of the first actions that the Sonoma Mendocino region Economic Development District undertook was a review of CEDS projects and prioritizing them according to the following criteria:

1. Project organization staff capacity
2. How detailed is the project’s budget? Does it exist?
3. What level of economic impact will the project provide?
4. Has the project been started? Does it have momentum?

Below are a list of the CEDS projects that were identified as promising from the above criteria:

- Project 9: Creative Sonoma (special projects)
- Project 8: Cotati Maker Incubator
- Project 12: Ensure Communications Redundancy
- Project 13: North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium
- Project 19: Extension of SMART to Healdsburg and beyond
- Project 33: Environmental Resilience Upskilling for Green Building
- Project 34: Regional Talent Pipeline initiative

- Project 29: Region Wide Child Care Initiative
- Project 35: Dry Creek Rancheria Small Business Park
- Project 51: Dry Creek Rancheria Wetland Mitigation Bank
- Project 3: Noyo Center Ocean Science Center
- Project 5: Hopland Research Center Facilities & Infrastructure Project
- Project 13: North Bay-North Coast Broadband Consortium
- Project 23: Permitting Predictability & Process
- Project 40: On-Farm Groundwater Recharge Multi-Benefit Demonstration Project
- Project 43: Improve Redwood Valley Calpella Fire District facilities
- Project 52: Coyote Valley Riverbank Restoration/Stabilization
- Project 3: Noyo Harbor Marina Redevelopment
- Project 12: Point Arena Visitor Center
- Project 38: Coyote Valley Emergency Fire Egress (Road) & Emergency Preparedness

This exercise has outlined a method of project tracking that the team can utilize moving forward. As we continue to monitor economic development activity related to the SMEDD CEDS, we anticipate that understanding the momentum and feasibility of each project will be critical.

In addition to the CEDS being updated, the SMEDD professional team have worked directly with and assisted in implementation activities related to the 2022 CEDS. The most notable of these activities include:

1. Broadband Implementation;
2. Revolving Loan Fund;
3. Climate Smart AgTech Innovation Hub workshop;
4. Supporting momentum on Blue Economy innovations at Fort Bragg;
5. Santa Rosa Junior College Construction Training Center ground-breaking; and
6. Exploring biomass hydrogen feasibility along the 101 corridor.

These activities directly relate to strategies in the 2022 CEDS including- but not limited to- Inclusive Economic Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Human Capital.

Broadband Implementation:

In the fall of 2022 the Counties of Sonoma and Mendocino, in partnership with Golden State Connect Authority, applied for and received \$499,554 & \$500,000 grants, respectively, from [the California Public Utilities Commission's Local Agency Technical Assistance grant program](#). The funding is planned to provide a refined high-level broadband network design for unincorporated areas with little or no internet service and low-level, construction-ready design for priority areas. The high level engineering design derived from this work will be leveraged to acquire additional engineering and infrastructure deployment funds. The scope of work for this grant program is anticipated to be completed within 18 months of the grant award (June 2024).

Revolving Loan Fund:

The Economic Development and Financing Corporation (EDFC) is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that offers loans to start-ups and local businesses that are unable to qualify for a conventional loan. Over the course of the past year, there were seven applications for loans for the Sonoma Revolving Loan Fund and two approved loans for a total \$450,237. One of the loans was to a business in Sonoma that sources fresh produce from Mexico then distributes across the U.S. for consumers. The other is for a startup billiards business in Windsor.

Climate Smart AgTech Innovation Hub Workshop:

In late May, The Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District hosted an Ag-Tech Innovation Hub Brainstorming workshop. Engagement from regional stakeholders was robust and diverse including participation from both counties' acting Ag commissioner, county supervisors, state representative offices, venture capitalists, tribes, and industry innovators. The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Support stakeholders to understand the vision of an AgTech Innovation Hub and how it can support Mendocino and Sonoma economic development;
2. Discuss opportunities and challenges related to these sectors and how the Hub can support local and/or regional Mendocino and Sonoma growth and sustainability;
3. Identify key stakeholder groups and individuals who want and need to be involved in the development of a Hub;
4. Identify level of buy-in amongst stakeholders for SMEDD to move towards an application for a Feasibility Study.

Results of this diverse engagement and robust feedback including feedback on how to focus efforts in the district's CEDS goals surrounding supporting the Green/Blue economies, economic resiliency, and supporting people. The next step for this development, and momentum on its CEDS involvement, is to seek funding for a feasibility study; which will outline its benefits and potential threats to the regional economy.

Santa Rosa Junior College Construction Center:

In January of 2020, The Sonoma County Economic Development Board, in collaboration with SMEDD and the Santa Rosa Junior College, was awarded a \$7.12 million award from the EDA to construct and develop a construction training center at the Santa Rosa Junior College's Petaluma Campus. Due to delays from the COVID-19 pandemic and increased costs of construction materials, development on the project was halted. In September of 2022, the Sonoma County EDB was able to secure another \$4 million dollars for the project as well as another \$350,000 in donations from the Bank of America and Mendocino sawmills and biomass companies. With the funding secured, the project broke ground in early May of 2023. The new date of completion is anticipated to be May of 2024. The completion of this project will allow for a regional workforce pipeline of skilled workers in the construction trades. Additionally, one of the corps curriculums of this program is to develop a workforce specialized in fire safe landscape and vegetation. Ultimately adding to both economic and disaster resiliency. The project is a key cornerstone of the CEDS goals: supporting people and resiliency planning, as it directly relates to workforce development and economic diversity/recovery from climate change and disasters.

Blue Economy

The Blue Economy initiatives in Fort Bragg and Coastal Mendocino County stem from community-engaged planning and development activities centered in the City of Fort Bragg and the Noyo Harbor. Resulting from the 2022 City of Fort Bragg - Former Mill Site Economic Diversification Feasibility Study, a number of key strategic plans and activation has occurred in the past year including: implementation of the Blue Economy Symposium and Learning Festival in Spring 2022; \$1M CA Department of Water Resources grant award to the City of Fort Bragg for a Wave Powered Desalination Demonstration Project; \$825k EDA grant to Noyo Ocean Science Center for its marine science and visitors center preliminary design and engineering; and the \$3.2 M Noyo Harbor Revitalization CERF-Pilot Grant Award. Sonoma County is also pursuing infrastructure revitalization funds at Bodega Bay, as well as increasing collaboration with UC Davis Marine Laboratory and coastal tribes on kelp forest, abalone and sea otter restoration efforts. The SMEDD team is engaged with on-going coordination around the Blue Economy initiatives exploring cross-jurisdictional funding and project opportunities.

Biomass Hydrogen

The potential to convert forest biomass into hydrogen fuel has increased in recent years due to technological innovation around treatment, processing, and fuel utilization. Simultaneously, interest has grown within the resource management, conservation and wildland fire management communities about the potential for utilizing biomass hydrogen technologies and market dynamics to positively impact watershed health and fire risk reduction. Consistent with CEDS goals 1, 2 & 4, the SMEDD Board is supporting pursuit of a feasibility study focused on the potential of catalyzing a biomass hydrogen supply chain along the Highway 101 corridor linking northern California to the Bay Area. The scope of this feasibility study is in development and funding opportunities are being explored.

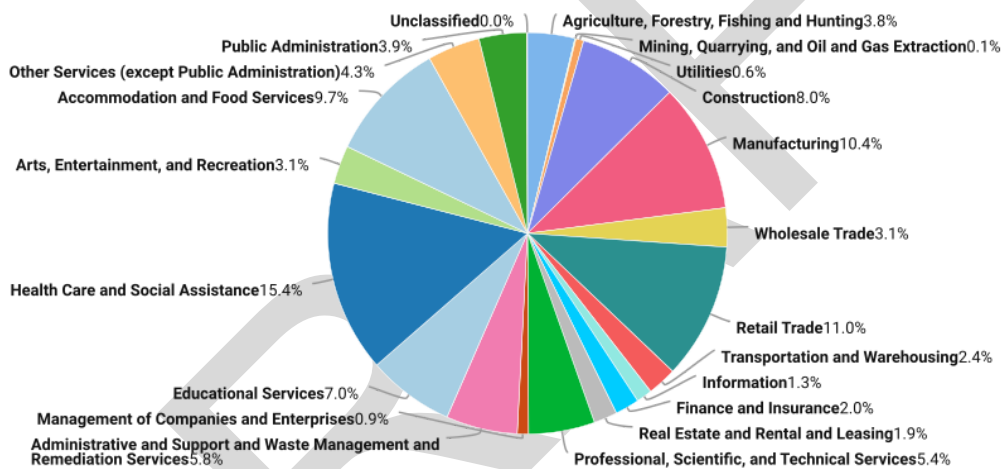
Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan and Goals.

Below is an econometric driven summary of progress on goals listed in the 2022 CEDS. The population in Sonoma and Mendocino counties was 583,911 per American Community Survey data for 2016-2020. The region has a civilian labor force of 307,121 with a participation rate of 63.9%. Of individuals 25 to 64 in Sonoma and Mendocino counties, 32.3% have a bachelor’s degree or higher which compares with 34.3% in the nation. The median household income in Sonoma and Mendocino counties is \$81,081 and the median house value is \$602,012.¹

Goal 1: Develop Innovative and Value-Added Economic Sectors

The largest sector in the Sonoma Mendocino region is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 40,349 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (28,692 workers) and Manufacturing (27,120). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (LQ = 2.91), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (1.59), and Construction (1.35).

Total Workers for Sonoma Mendocino by Industry



Source: JobsEQ®, Data as of 2022Q4

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2022Q3 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q4.

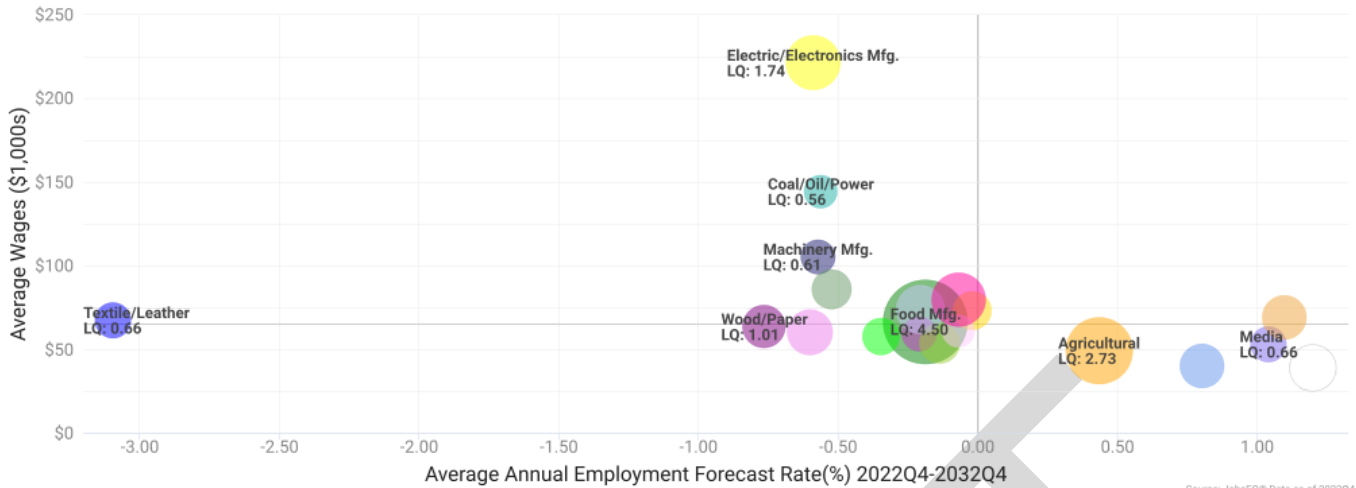
Sectors in the Sonoma Mendocino region with the highest average wages per worker are Utilities (\$133,216), Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$128,489), and Finance and Insurance (\$108,726). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 1 year are Accommodation and Food Services (+3,484 jobs), Educational Services (+1,397), and Health Care and Social Assistance (+1,320).

Over the next 1 year, employment in the Sonoma Mendocino region is projected to expand by 352 jobs. However, combining the two counties into one region is misleading for this metric. When separating the two counties, it is estimated that total jobs in Mendocino County will contract by 119 in the next three years without intervention. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a +1.1% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+444 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (+271), and Other Services (except Public Administration) (+54).

The industry cluster in the Sonoma Mendocino region with the highest relative concentration is Food Mfg. with a location quotient of 4.50. A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. This cluster employs 13,998 workers in the region with an average wage of \$66,583. Employment in the Food Mfg. cluster is projected to contract in the region about 0.2% per year over the next ten years.

¹ Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq> Page 102 of 126

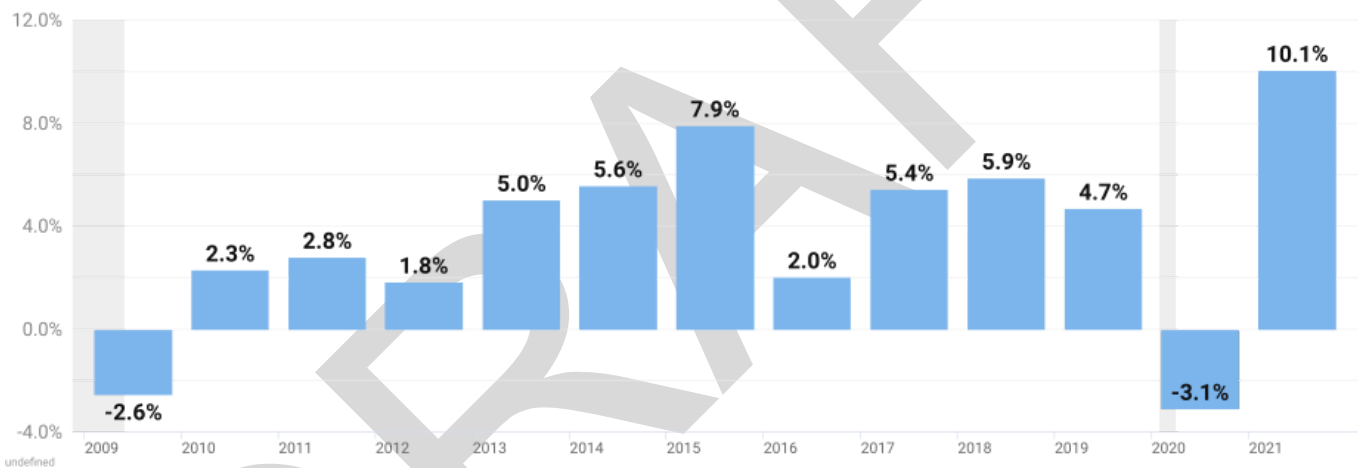
Industry Clusters for Sonoma Mendocino as of 2022Q4



Location quotient and average wage data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, imputed where necessary, and updated through 2022Q3 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q4. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns. Source: JobsEQ® Data as of 2022Q4

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total value of goods and services produced by a region. In 2021, nominal GDP in the Sonoma Mendocino region expanded 10.1%. This follows a contraction of 3.1% in 2020. As of 2021, total GDP in the Sonoma Mendocino region was \$35,519,305,000.

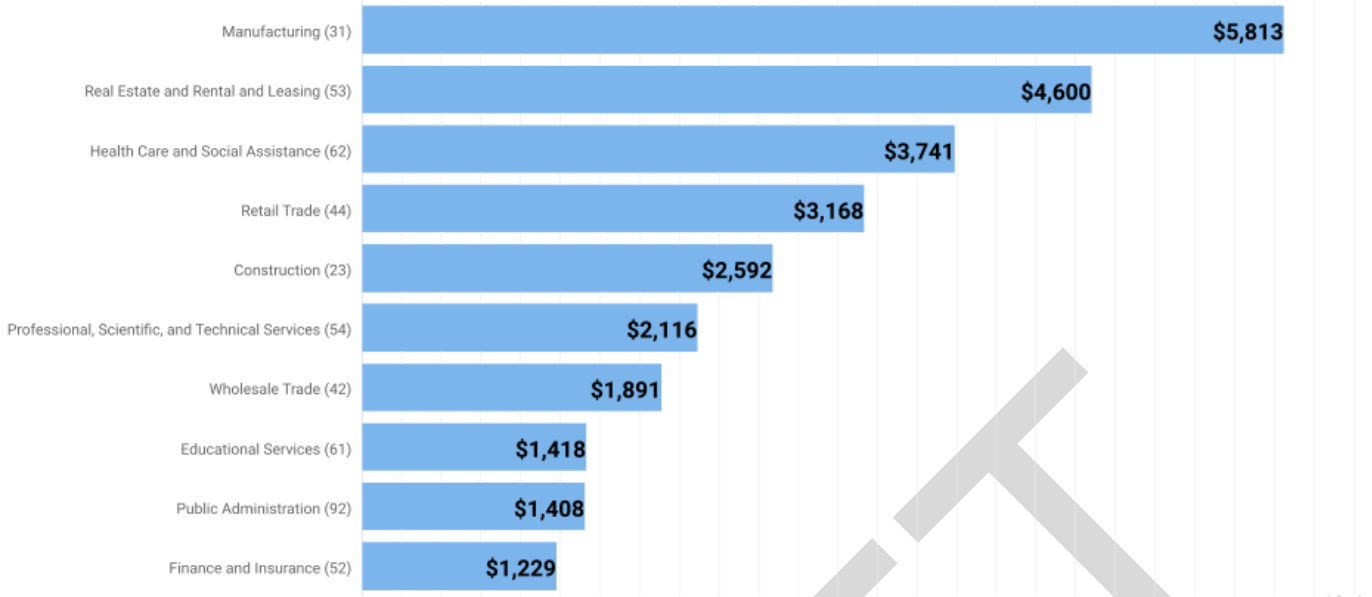
1 year % Change in GDP



Gross Domestic Product data are provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, imputed by Chmura where necessary, updated through 2021.

Of the sectors in the Sonoma Mendocino region, Manufacturing contributed the largest portion of GDP in 2021, \$5,813,233,000. The next-largest contributions came from Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (\$4,600,138,000); Health Care and Social Assistance (\$3,741,221,000); and Retail Trade (\$3,167,932,000).

GDP (in \$ millions)
Sonoma Mendocino, 2021

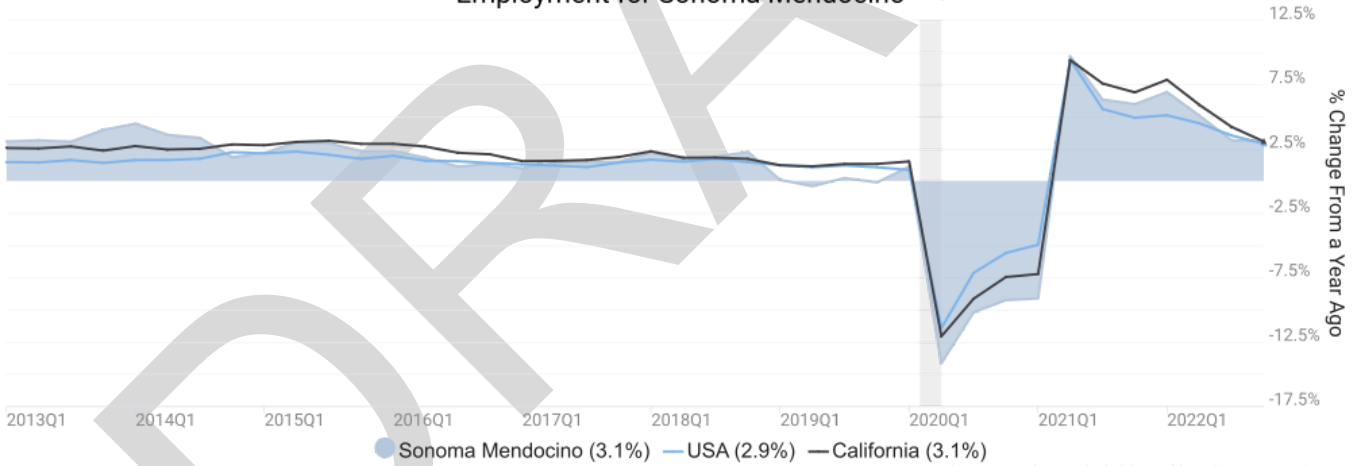


Gross Domestic Product data are provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, imputed by Chmura where necessary, updated through 2021.

Goal 2: Increase Equitable Community-Wide Prosperity

As of 2022Q4, total employment for the Sonoma Mendocino region was 261,643 (based on a four-quarter moving average). Over the year ending 2022Q4, employment increased 3.1% in the region.

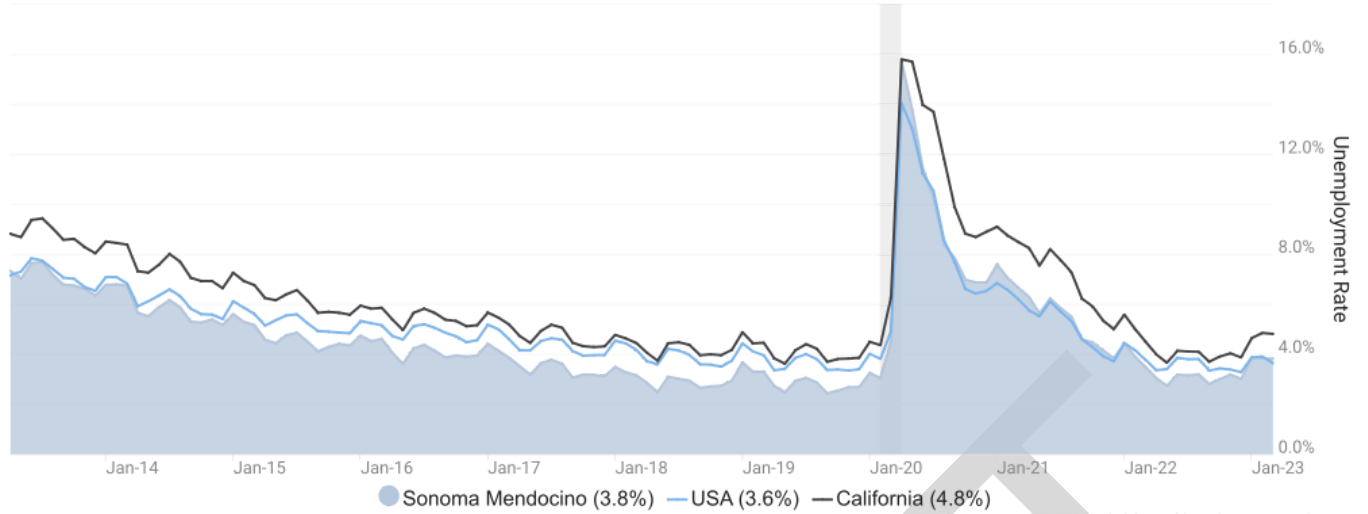
Employment for Sonoma Mendocino



Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2022Q3 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q4. Source: JobsEQ8. Data as of 2022Q4. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

The unemployment rate for the Sonoma Mendocino region was 3.8% as of March 2023. The regional unemployment rate was higher than the national rate of 3.6%. One year earlier, in March 2022, the unemployment rate in the Sonoma Mendocino region was 3.5%.

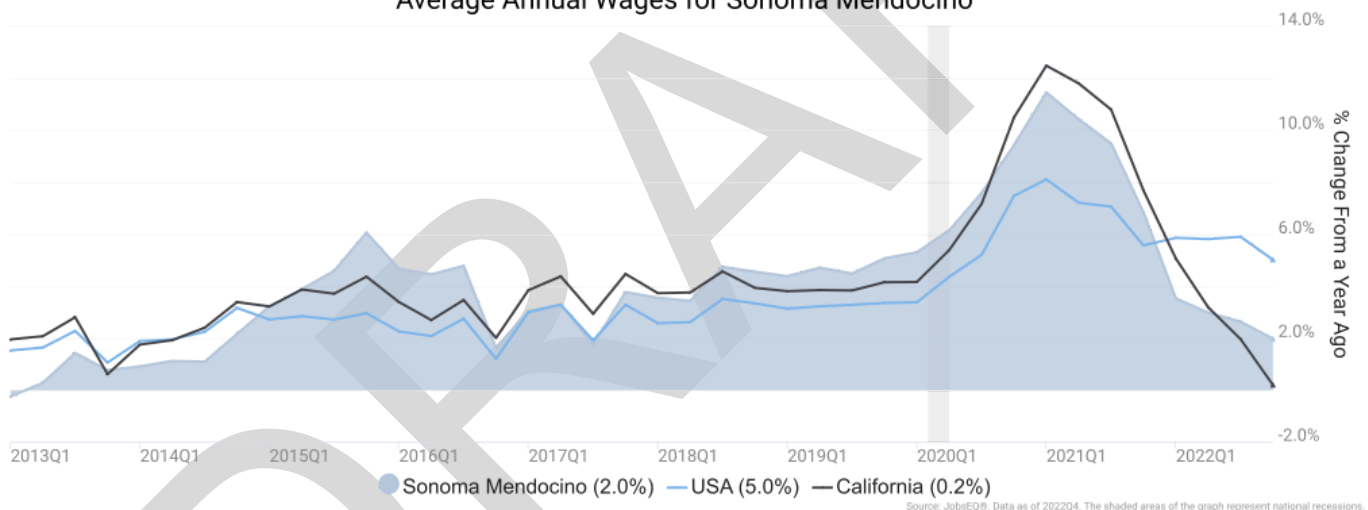
Unemployment Rate for Sonoma Mendocino



Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through March 2023. Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of Mar 2023. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

The average worker in the Sonoma Mendocino region earned annual wages of \$65,269 as of 2022Q4. Average annual wages per worker increased 2.0% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$68,838 in the nation as of 2022Q4.

Average Annual Wages for Sonoma Mendocino

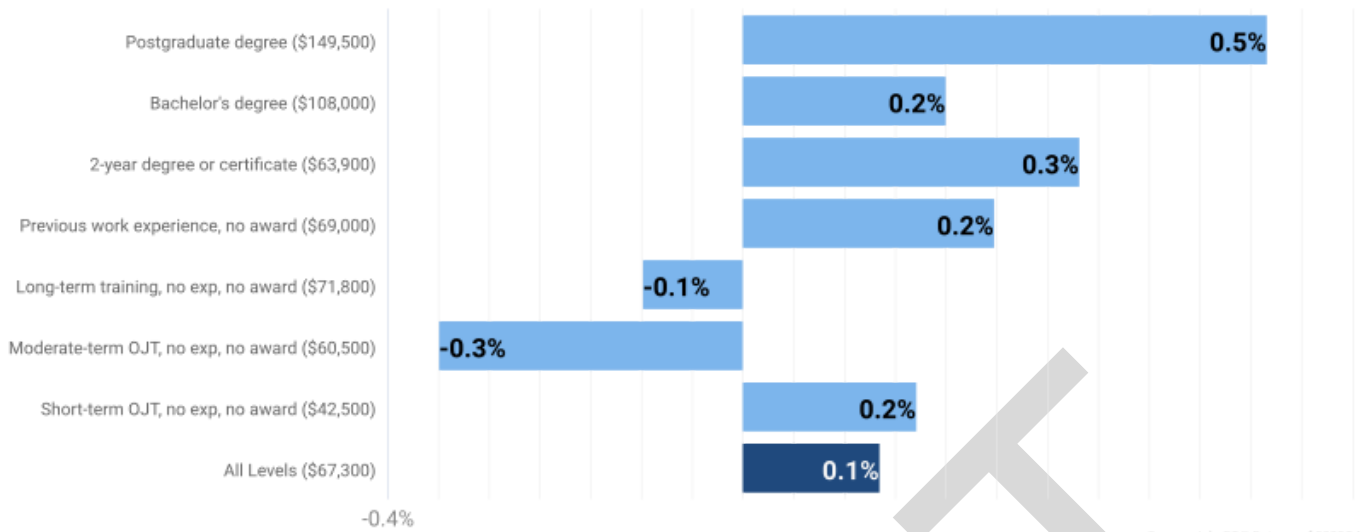


Annual average wages per worker data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2022Q3 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q4.

Goal 3: Support People

Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the Sonoma Mendocino region is projected to grow 0.1% over the next ten years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow 0.5% per year, those requiring a bachelor's degree are forecast to grow 0.2% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to grow 0.3% per year.

Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Training Required



Employment by occupation data are estimates as of 2022Q4. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns

	Sonoma Mendocino Region	Sonoma Mendocino Region
Population (ACS)	—	583,911
Male	48.9%	285,764
Female	51.1%	298,147
Median Age ²	—	42.5
Under 18 Years	19.9%	116,193
18 to 24 Years	8.0%	46,577
25 to 34 Years	12.7%	73,893
35 to 44 Years	12.4%	72,607
45 to 54 Years	12.6%	73,422
55 to 64 Years	14.5%	84,524
65 to 74 Years	12.3%	71,867
75 Years and Over	7.7%	44,828
Race: White	73.6%	429,909
Race: Black or African American	1.5%	8,690
Race: American Indian and Alaska Native	1.4%	8,230
Race: Asian	3.9%	22,979
Race: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.3%	1,751
Race: Some Other Race	12.1%	70,835
Race: Two or More Races	7.1%	41,517
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	26.8%	156,378
Population (Pop Estimates) ⁴	—	575,880
Population Annual Average Growth ⁴	0.1%	341
People per Square Mile	—	114.3
Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 16 years and over)	63.9%	307,121
Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 25-54)	83.3%	182,627
Armed Forces Labor Force	0.2%	1,062
Veterans, Age 18-64	3.3%	11,439
Veterans Labor Force Participation Rate and Size, Age 18-64	78.1%	8,938
Median Household Income ²	—	\$81,081

Per Capita Income	—	\$42,024
Mean Commute Time (minutes)	—	25.0
Commute via Public Transportation	1.4%	3,993
No High School Diploma	12.2%	37,109
High School Graduate	20.3%	61,748
Some College, No Degree	25.9%	78,820
Associate's Degree	9.4%	28,468
Bachelor's Degree	21.5%	65,336
Postgraduate Degree	10.8%	32,965
Total Housing Units	—	247,372
Median House Value (of owner-occupied units) ²	—	\$602,012
Homeowner Vacancy	0.8%	1,044
Rental Vacancy	2.8%	2,515
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (% of Occupied Units)	38.8%	86,666
Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available (% of Occupied Units)	5.2%	11,505
Poverty Level (of all people)	9.9%	57,015
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	6.6%	14,830
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.4%	8,186
Disconnected Youth ³	2.1%	578
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)	33.0%	36,323
Uninsured	6.5%	37,809
With a Disability, Age 18-64	9.9%	34,561
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size	48.7%	16,825
Foreign Born	15.9%	93,097
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	10.5%	58,481

Source: JobsEQ®

1. American Community Survey 2016-2020, unless noted otherwise
2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.
3. Disconnected Youth are 16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.
4. Census Population Estimate for 2020, annual average growth rate since 2010.

Sonoma Mendocino Region, 2022Q4¹

NAICS	Industry	Current			1-Year History		1-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	40,349	\$68,989	1.08	1,320	3.4%	4,609	1,918	2,247	444	1.1%
44	Retail Trade	28,692	\$46,228	1.09	-210	-0.7%	3,813	1,744	2,302	-232	-0.8%
31	Manufacturing	27,120	\$95,917	1.28	1,210	4.7%	2,836	1,092	1,856	-112	-0.4%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	25,451	\$32,970	1.14	3,484	15.9%	4,728	2,017	2,440	271	1.1%
23	Construction	21,030	\$73,737	1.35	387	1.9%	2,011	738	1,317	-43	-0.2%
61	Educational Services	18,301	\$57,843	0.88	1,397	8.3%	1,745	856	946	-56	-0.3%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	15,115	\$52,832	0.89	877	6.2%	1,816	743	1,087	-14	-0.1%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	14,033	\$84,976	0.73	-131	-0.9%	1,287	465	796	26	0.2%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	11,128	\$42,719	0.99	833	8.1%	1,399	566	780	54	0.5%
92	Public Administration	10,086	\$85,384	0.84	158	1.6%	948	414	587	-53	-0.5%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	10,042	\$49,189	2.91	333	3.4%	1,318	563	718	37	0.4%

42	Wholesale Trade	8,206	\$79,616	0.83	-147	-1.8%	885	337	574	-25	-0.3%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8,077	\$42,660	1.59	1,009	14.3%	1,234	504	696	34	0.4%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	6,220	\$65,446	0.48	-17	-0.3%	756	303	443	10	0.2%
52	Finance and Insurance	5,115	\$108,726	0.49	-20	-0.4%	473	182	298	-7	-0.1%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	4,936	\$68,567	1.06	360	7.9%	490	229	282	-21	-0.4%
51	Information	3,339	\$77,275	0.62	189	6.0%	330	116	210	4	0.1%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,400	\$128,489	0.60	101	4.4%	222	84	143	-4	-0.2%
22	Utilities	1,699	\$133,216	1.29	56	3.4%	155	59	104	-8	-0.5%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	181	\$79,480	0.20	-10	-5.3%	19	6	13	0	0.0%
99	Unclassified	121	\$49,526	0.23	121	n/a	14	6	8	0	0.1%
Total - All Industries		261,643	\$65,269	1.00	11,300	4.5%	30,530	12,614	17,563	352	0.1%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

Data as of 2022Q4

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. All data based upon a four-quarter moving average

Exits and transfers are approximate estimates based upon occupation separation rates.

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2022Q3 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q4. Forecast employment growth uses national projections adapted for regional growth patterns.

Schedule of Goals for the Next Year

Economic Resiliency

The Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District's 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy has detailed economic resiliency strategies outlined in the Goals and Objectives section of the document. Activities that the district has been involved in that compliment resiliency include economic diversification through the Ag-tech innovation program, exploration of economic impact studies around key water infrastructure decisions, developing green energy solutions including hydrogen reuse, continued expansion of key communications/broadband infrastructure, and development of workforce specialized in fire safe landscaping and design.

The Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District continues to take resiliency into account for decisions on where resources are spent. In April 2023, the team met with the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management, which works hand in hand with Mendocino County, to discuss opportunities for collaboration and between the two entities. The result of the meeting was collaboration that will be leveraged for future programs and regional events related to economic development.

Green energy and reducing emissions has been a significant focus for both Sonoma and Mendocino County. Both Counties' goals and actions align directly with the district's comprehensive economic development strategy. In January of 2023 the County of Sonoma announced the purchase of ten fully electric buses that will significantly reduce the emissions of the county's public transit fleet. (Insert Mendocino County Green Energy Project)

As we reconvene the strategy committee in 2023 and plan for outreach/updates to the CEDS, we have preliminarily received feedback from community members, leaders, and stakeholders that there is increasing interest in building out resiliency from the lens of "green and blue" projects. In the shadow of one of the worst droughts in California's history, the region is more ready than ever to build a more resilient and diverse economy shaped to take on the future.



DATE: July 21, 2023 **ITEM:** 5
TO: Board of Directors
.FROM: Joshua Metz, RGS Senior Advisor, District Manager
SUBJECT: Receive the FY 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process Status Report and Provide Direction As Needed

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: The purpose of this item is to receive the current draft of a FY 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update Process status report, discuss, and provide direction as needed.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive a FY 23-24 Annual CEDS Update process status report and provide direction as needed.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

Moving ahead with the FY 23-24 CEDS Update process was approved at the June meeting and will impact the CEDS EDA Planning Grant budget.

BACKGROUND:

The SMEDD is responsible for overseeing completion, monitoring implementation progress, and supporting on-going planning of the Sonoma-Mendocino CEDS. This core function of the District is intended to occur annually through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, whereby progress towards existing Goals are noted, opportunities to support improved implementation are identified, and new Goal-aligned projects are identified. The proposed Annual CEDS Update Process is presented to set a framework for how to conduct the update in FY 23-24.

DISCUSSION:

The Annual CEDS Update and Performance Report must include the following major components:

- Adjustments to the Strategy
- Report on Economic Development Activities
- Evaluation of the Action Plan and Goals
- Schedule of Goals for the next year

Up until now, this process has been conducted by the SMEDD in an ad hoc manner. The approved FY 23-24 CEDS Update Process provides a comprehensive framework to conduct community outreach and

engagement over the coming FY 23-24 timeframe, yielding a complete annual update in time to meet the required deadlines. As with any planning document, this Annual CEDS Update Process is a prospective framework that may be subject to change as circumstances evolve.

The SMEDD team developed a webform to facilitate consolidated, consistent, and simple project updates. The team will distribute the form as it reaches out to project proponents with workshop information.

As described in the CEDS Annual Update Plan, four virtual workshops will be organized around SMEDD's four CEDS goals. The team has outlined the workshop content and is working to determine which stakeholders to include beyond project proponents.

Prior to reaching out to relevant stakeholders on the workshops and project update form, the team will meet and request input from the CEDS Strategy Committee. The team is targeting early August for a meeting prior to the workshops in September 2023, November 2023, January 2024, and February 2024.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1:** Receive the FY 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process Status Report and Provide Direction As Needed
- 2:** Consider, *modify*, and Receive the FY 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process Status Report and Provide Direction As Needed
- 3:** Other approach(s) may be developed after public comments and Board deliberations.
- 4:** Decline to act.

RECOMMENDATION for Alternative 1:

Move to:

- Receive the FY 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process Status Report and Provide Direction As Needed

ATTACHMENT:

Annual Outreach Update Plan



ANNUAL CEDS UPDATE PROCESS

THE PROJECT

Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District's primary objectives are to:

- support economic resilience in the region
- become more responsive and nimble in the face of an uncertain future

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the primary planning tool to accomplish these objectives. While SMEDD's most recent CEDS was adopted in 2022, it is a *living document* that requires ongoing engagement. This document outlines how SMEDD intends to keep moving CEDS objectives and projects forward with an annual update process that includes extensive stakeholder engagement.

THE APPROACH

Conduct outreach by holding workshops for each of the four CEDS goals:

INNOVATION EQUITY PEOPLE RESILIENCE

THE DELIVERABLES

- Updated contact lists
- Workshop invitations
- Presentation decks
- Presentation recordings for web, social, and beyond
- Meeting notes
- Outreach notes (non-workshop attendees)
- Draft plan
- Final plan



ANNUAL CEDS UPDATE PROCESS

THE PROCESS

THE TIMELINE

- 1** Determine project team
 - Staffing
 - Sonoma EDB
 - West BDC
 - SMEDD BOD involvement
- 2** Confirm project approach
 - Configuration - by goal
 - Timeline
- 3** Project team kickoff meeting
- 4** Update contacts
 - Project proponents
 - CEDS Strategy Committee
- 5** Logistics
 - Preparation
 - Facilitation
 - Follow-up
- 6** Draft plan
 - Updated regional economic overview
 - Context summary
 - Workshop overviews
 - Updated contact list

PLANNING

July - August

WORKSHOPS

- 1 September
- 2 November
- 3 January
- 4 February

REPORT

April **Draft**
May **Final**

7 Final report



ANNUAL CEDS UPDATE PROCESS

WORKSHOPS

OBJECTIVES

- Get efficient project status updates
- Connect project sponsors
- Be a forum for discussion
- Identify regional trends and issues
- Provide for a meaningful annual update

PREPARATION

- Poll for availability
- Determine venue (remote, recorded)
- Send invitations (raffle prize, nudge)
- Prepare for meetings
 - Presentation/facilitation
 - Poll questions for Zoom
 - Sending out "homework"

FORMAT

- 90 minutes on Zoom
- Reports out from project sponsors
- Facilitated discussion
- Highlight next steps



DATE: July 21, 2023 **ITEM:** 6

TO: Board of Directors

.FROM: Joshua Metz, RGS Senior Advisor, District Manager

SUBJECT: Discuss and Consider Approving the SMEDD Team to Research and Develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study, Scope to be Provided to the Board for Consideration at a Future SMEDD Board Meeting

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: The purpose of this item is to consider authorizing the SMEDD Team to research and develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study. If this research is approved, then a proposed draft scope would be provided to the Board for its consideration at a future SMEDD Board Meeting.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Discuss and Consider Approving the SMEDD Team to Research and Develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study and provide the draft scope to the Board for consideration at a future SMEDD Board Meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

This action would impact the Cares Act Supplemental Grant budget by approving SMEDD team research and coordination activities focused on defining a scope of work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study.

BACKGROUND:

All background is from the Federal Government's Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technologies Office and has not been independently analyzed or fact-checked by the SMEDD:

“Biomass gasification is a mature technology pathway that uses a controlled process involving heat, steam, and oxygen to convert biomass to hydrogen and other products, without combustion. Because growing biomass removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, the net carbon emissions of this method can be low, especially if coupled with carbon capture, utilization, and storage in the long term. Gasification plants for biofuels are being built and operated, and can provide best practices and lessons learned for hydrogen production. The U.S. Department of Energy anticipates that biomass gasification could be deployed in the near-term timeframe.

What Is Biomass?

Biomass, a renewable organic resource, includes agriculture crop residues (such as corn stover or wheat straw), forest residues, special crops grown specifically for energy use (such as switchgrass or willow trees), organic municipal solid waste, and animal wastes. This renewable resource can be used to produce hydrogen, along with other byproducts, by gasification.

How Does Biomass Gasification Work?

Gasification is a process that converts organic or fossil-based carbonaceous materials at high temperatures ($>700^{\circ}\text{C}$), without combustion, with a controlled amount of oxygen and/or steam into carbon monoxide, hydrogen, and carbon dioxide. The carbon monoxide then reacts with water to form carbon dioxide and more hydrogen via a water-gas shift reaction. Adsorbers or special membranes can separate the hydrogen from this gas stream.

Pyrolysis is the gasification of biomass in the absence of oxygen. In general, biomass does not gasify as easily as coal, and it produces other hydrocarbon compounds in the gas mixture exiting the gasifier; this is especially true when no oxygen is used. As a result, typically an extra step must be taken to reform these hydrocarbons with a catalyst to yield a clean syngas mixture of hydrogen, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide. Then, just as in the gasification process for hydrogen production, a shift reaction step (with steam) converts the carbon monoxide to carbon dioxide. The hydrogen produced is then separated and purified.

Why Is This Pathway Being Considered?

Biomass is an abundant domestic resource.

In the United States, there is more biomass available than is required for food and animal feed needs. A recent report projects that with anticipated improvements in agricultural practices and plant breeding, up to 1 billion dry tons of biomass could be available for energy use annually. For more information, see U.S. Billion-Ton Update: Biomass Supply for a Bioenergy and Bioproducts Industry.

Biomass "recycles" carbon dioxide.

Plants consume carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as part of their natural growth process as they make biomass, off-setting the carbon dioxide released from producing hydrogen through biomass gasification and resulting in low net greenhouse gas emissions.

Research Focuses on Overcoming Challenges

Key challenges to hydrogen production via biomass gasification involve reducing costs associated with capital equipment and biomass feedstocks.

As biomass gasification is a mature technology, feedstock costs and lessons learned from commercial demonstrations will determine its potential as a viable pathway for cost-competitive hydrogen production."

DISCUSSION:

There is regional, statewide, and national interest in the potential of biomass to hydrogen processes to contribute another carbon neutral energy resource. Adding an economically feasible, local biomass to hydrogen facility could contribute progress on all four of the District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy goals:

Goal 1: Develop Innovative and Value-Added Economic Sectors

Goal 2: Increase Equitable Community-Wide Prosperity

Goal 3: Support People

Goal 4: Plan for & Implement Resilience

Locally, forest products companies are currently managing a large volume of secondary biomass material from timber harvest, which requires burning fossil fuels (diesel) to transport from the processing facilities (lumber mills) to secondary users. Recent industry and third-party studies indicate treatment of this secondary biomass on-site by converting the biomass to hydrogen fuel may be economically feasible. What is not yet known is what demand there may be now and in the near future to provide an economically meaningful off-take market. The SMEDD could contribute value to this process by developing and sourcing funding for a feasibility study that explores the current and projected near-term market demand for hydrogen fuel and other related aspects of a biomass-to-hydrogen economy.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1:** Discuss and Consider Approving the SMEDD Team to Research and Develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study, Scope to be Provided to the Board for Consideration at a Future SMEDD Board Meeting.
- 2:** Consider, *modify*, and approve the SMEDD Team to Research and Develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study, Scope to be Provided to the Board for Consideration at a Future SMEDD Board Meeting.
- 3:** Other approach(s) may be developed after public comments and Board deliberations.
- 4:** Decline to act.

RECOMMENDATION for Alternative 1:

Move to:

- Discuss and Consider Approving the SMEDD Team to Research and Develop a Scope of Work for a Biomass-to-Hydrogen Feasibility Study, Scope to be Provided to the Board for Consideration at a Future SMEDD Board Meeting

ATTACHMENT:

Draft Feasibility Study Scope - North Coast Hydrogen Highway

Links to General Information websites hosted by the State and Federal governments:

<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/fbp>

<https://www.energy.gov/eere/fuelcells/hydrogen-production-biomass-gasification>



DRAFT Feasibility Study Scope North Coast Hydrogen Highway

DRAFT 6/26/23

Overview:

- Key components of the Hydrogen Highway vision: Developing a multi-node network of forest biomass to hydrogen facilities with multiple energy off-taking options, along the Highway 101 corridor from Eureka to Port of Oakland and/or Port of Stockton.
- Optimization criteria: Transportation cost and complexity of forest-to-processing facility, post-processing energy utilization, minimal environmental impact, jobs access, and local revenue generation.
- Focus on advanced solid-state biomass to hydrogen technology, and energy off-take solutions yielding multiple revenue streams (micro-grids, truck-stops of the future)
- Consideration of other relevant aspects.

Opportunities:

- Abundance of feedstock available on public and private timber lands.
- Highway 101 connects harbors (Humboldt, Oakland, Stockton) with good roads, making it an ideal transportation route.
- Existing initiatives and organizations (e.g. NCRP program, CalPoly Humboldt, RCRC-Golden State Resources, Green Diamond Resources) focusing on forest biomass to hydrogen.
- Availability of old/under-utilized former mill-sites near roads for transportation and refueling purposes.
- Addressing wildland fire risk in the face of climate change.
- Regional economic planning process (Community Economic Resilience Fund) targeting under-served communities.
- Strong interest from multiple public and private entities (Federal, State, local agencies; educational institutions; biomass and hydrogen industry; tribes; rural communities)
- Desire to create new employment opportunities for rural communities (job creation).

Challenges:

- Status of forest biomass to hydrogen technology: Assessing the maturity and feasibility of the technology for large-scale implementation.
- Economic feasibility of forest treatment and transportation to processing sites.
- Capital expenditure required to establish multiple biomass to hydrogen facilities.
- Establishing a sustainable revenue model for various energy utilization alternatives.
- Potential regulatory and compliance issues related to environmental impacts.
- Risks associated with market adoption and scalability of the proposed hydrogen highway
- Other unknown issues.



AGENDA
Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District
Board of Directors Meeting - Friday, July 21, 2023, at 1:00 pm PST

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT

UPDATES

- EDA Supplemental Grant Work Plan Status Update
 - Blue Economy- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
- EDA Supplemental Grant extension was granted to June 30, 2024
- AgTech Innovation Hub Brainstorming Workshop Report Out (Attached)
- Estimated EDA Planning and Supplemental Grant Funds Remaining

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Blue Economy - NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
 - Letter of Intent Deadline: August 21, 2023
 - Full application due: February 13, 2024
- Community Resilience Centers Program, California Strategic Growth Council
 - Intent to Apply Survey Deadline: September 5, 2023
- Climate Resilience Accelerator Program
 - Deadline: September 10, 2023
 - Program of \$60 million to create a climate resilience accelerator program and support small businesses through Investing in America agenda

AgTech Innovation Hub Brainstorming Workshop Report Out

Workshop Date: May 30, 2023, 10am - 2pm

Location: Hopland Research & Extension Center

Convener: Joshua Metz, District Manager

Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District (SMEDD)

[Meeting Invite & Overview](#)

Participants

- Andrew Smith, Sonoma County Ag Commissioner
- Bradley Johnson, Sonoma County Economic Development Board
- Christy Smith, Mendocino College
- Elise Weiland, Sonoma County BOS
- Elizabeth Murphy, Marin Sonoma Impact Ventures
- Emily Winfield, North Coast Soil Hub
- Ethan Brown, Sonoma County Economic Development Board
- Glenn McGourty, Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
- John Bailey, Hopland Research & Extension Center
- John Haschak, Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
- Lauren Cartwright, Sonoma County Economic Development Board
- Lon Hatamiya, Hatamiya Group
- Lorenzo Rota, Volare Aerial
- Mary Anne Petrillo, West Business Center
- Nathan Dorn, Farm-NG
- Noelle Cremers, The Wine Institute
- Paul Garza, SMEDD Board Member
- Robin Bartholow, Sonoma County Farm Bureau
- Severino Gomes, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of Stewarts Point Rancheria
- Will Tesconi, State Representative Jim Wood

Meeting Objectives

1. Support stakeholders to understand the vision of an AgTech Innovation Hub and how it can support Mendocino and Sonoma economic development
2. Discuss opportunities and challenges related to these sectors and how the Hub can support local and/or regional Mendocino and Sonoma growth and sustainability
3. Identify key stakeholder groups and individuals who want and need to be involved in the development of a Hub
4. Identify level of buy-in amongst stakeholders for SMEDD to move towards an application for a Feasibility Study

Meeting Highlights

1. Josh Metz, Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District (SMEDD) District Manager, introduced the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which was developed by the District in collaboration with regional community members and stakeholders, and approved by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 2022. Multiple CEDS goals and District Board and stakeholder interest led to the vision of an AgTech Innovation Hub and the day's activities. Josh described the vision of the AgTech Innovation Hub and outlined the next step of a Feasibility Study.
2. Lon Hatamiya shared information with the group about The VINE, the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources' (UC ANR) program for innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture, food, and natural resources, and how The VINE can be supportive of the efforts to develop an AgTech Innovation Hub in the Sonoma/Mendocino region.

3. After small group discussions, participants shared ideas about the opportunities that the Hub could offer the region, potential projects, programs, and physical assets that already exist that the Hub could collaborate with and/or build off of, and challenges and concerns that would need to be addressed before a Hub could be truly successful in serving the needs of the region.
 - a. **Opportunities included things like:** providing a physical location for the Hub that could act as a maker's space, demonstration site, and incubator farm and kitchen; a place for shared testing, research, and job training; a supporting resource for farmers, innovators, and entrepreneurs that could help with information regarding legal advice, permitting and regulatory requirements, funding opportunities, research, and other "intellectual capacity" needs; helping to identify the key problems that need solving so that innovators and entrepreneurs can work together to address the most pressing challenges; a virtual and physical convening space for farmers, innovators, and entrepreneurs to share their stories, showcase their successes, and network together.
 - b. **Programs, projects, and physical assets to be collaborated with included things like:** UC programs, such as UC ANR's The VINE and the UC Cooperative Extension Rural Innovation Hub; USDA programs such as REAP and Rural Development; Sonoma State University and Mendocino College; local farms, such as Shone Farms and Farm of the Future (Sonoma County Winegrape Growers); associations, such as the Wine Grape Growers Association and CA Cannabis Industry Association; Resource Conservation Districts of Sonoma and Mendocino; Small Business Development Association and Women's Business Centers; and many more.
 - c. **Challenges and concerns included things like:** ensuring that small and medium sized farms are included in the process and that their needs are integrated into the Hub; making sure new tech is actually economically viable; encouraging job growth and being careful not to take more jobs away with new tech; seeking support with messaging and clearly articulating what the Hub is and who it's meant to serve; and more.
4. The group discussed possible funding sources for the Hub, which included things like federal, state and local government, foundations, public-private partnerships, local businesses, community college workforce development programs, and more.
5. The group was polled about their support for SMEDD to move forward with a Feasibility Study. The overwhelming majority was in support, and some suggested that due to the number of opportunities identified and the potential projects coming out of this, possibly more than one Feasibility Study is in order. A couple participants raised questions about the need for a Feasibility Study and a Hub, as opposed to funneling those resources towards collaboration between existing programs and increasing capacities within these. There was also a question about "who benefits"; and encouraged the group to consider how small and medium farms can be supported with an effort like this.
6. The convening was closed after gathering input on next steps, which included a desire to have SMEDD share the meeting report and slides, and host a follow-up webinar to continue the conversation and include more stakeholders.

Welcome Remarks

Mary Anne Petrillo, SMEDD Board Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed participants to this exciting opportunity to brainstorm about the possibility of an AgTech Innovation Hub in the region. Josh Metz then reviewed the objectives for the day and invited a round of introductions from participants.

- The Goal is to connect the opportunities unique to the Sonoma and Mendocino region with the initiatives emerging across the state to yield family-supporting wage jobs, services, and technologies.
- Objectives:
 - Share the concept of an AgTech Innovation Hub
 - Highlight alignment with statewide initiatives and the unique Sonoma Mendocino value proposition
 - Discuss opportunities & challenges
 - Answer questions, establish coalition of interested stakeholders
 - Align on next steps towards a Feasibility Study

- SMEDD is aiming to submit a grant application to fund an in-depth formalization of a Feasibility Study

Presentations on Concept of AgTech Innovation Hub

Josh Metz and Lon Hatamiya presented on the concept of the AgTech Innovation Hub and the ways that UC ANR's The VINE can be a resource to this effort.

[Click here for a link to the presentation slides.](#)

Josh Metz, SMEDD, CEDS, & AgTech Innovation Hub

- The Counties of Mendocino and Sonoma established a special district, known as SMEDD, in 2015 to serve the regional economic development interests of Sonoma and Mendocino counties, and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated this District as the bi-county recipient of grant funds to further the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- SMEDD is charged with supporting progress on CEDS projects and providing other economic development support services
- SMEDD contracted with Regional Government Services (RGS) to provide Administrative and Professional services in furtherance of its mission
- CEDS goals
 - Goal 1: [Develop Innovative and Value-Added Economic Sectors](#)
 - Goal 2: [Increase Equitable Community-Wide Prosperity](#)
 - Goal 3: [Support People](#)
 - Goal 4: [Plan for & Implement Resilience](#)
- The AgTech Innovation Hub is envisioned to be both a physical and virtual place for convening, connecting, and facilitating tech innovation for climate-smart agriculture and natural resources
- The Hub will ideally yield locally valuable, scalable, exportable products and services, new venture formation, and jobs growth
- The intention is for cross-sector engagement
- Key Terms
 - **Agriculture** spans food, fiber, forest products, and other commodities being grown, produced, and processed in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties.
 - **AgTech** is any innovation used across the value chain, including growing, processing, distributing, and eventually delivery to the end market, to improve efficiency, profitability and/or sustainability. It includes hardware and software, business models, new technologies, and new applications.
- If a Hub would add value, the next step is to conduct a Feasibility Study; this brainstorming session informs SMEDD's efforts and hopefully builds a community of interest that can be called on as the Feasibility Study progresses.

Lon Hatamiya, The VINE

- UC System is a land grant innovation powerhouse
- UC Cooperative Extension, Research and Extension Center System, Agriculture Experiment Station, 13 statewide programs and institutes
- Innovation encompasses: Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences; Computer Science & Engineering; and Health and Nutrition Sciences
- Additional threats/challenges identified:
 - 1,000 year drought to due to climate change
 - Water shortages and wildfire cause massive loss
 - Farmland is shrinking and expensive
 - Small farms are nearly impossible to start and profit from
 - Ag and Food labor workforce is shrinking
 - Increase of major agricultural pests and diseases
 - Soils are depleted and less productive
- Technology needs public investment
 - New solutions in artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, robotics, genomics, biotech
 - Disconnects between CA's food valleys and Silicon Valley and coastal tech centers

- Top-tier agricultural universities struggle with agri-food tech transfer
- Small farmers, food producers, and farmworkers are left out
- Testing and validating tech in the market is critical but hard
- CA food-producing regions have nascent agrifood tech initiatives
- Need a statewide “engine” that connects CA’s food-producing regions to drive regional innovation economies where food grows
- The VINE’s Target Technologies: Ag & Food Robotics and Automation; Dairy Technologies; Controlled Environment Agriculture; Food Processing Software, Sensors, Systems; Bioproducts and Materials; Digital Agriculture Software, Sensors, Systems; AI & Digital Infrastructure
- Purpose: cooling center; grange; community meeting; learning symposium
- Key Takeaways
 - Future of CA agrifood leadership is tech and know-how
 - Public-private and US-global collaboration is critical
 - UC ANR VINE is focused on industry-led priorities and needs for innovation

Small Group Reflections Report Outs

After the presentations, participants were invited to break into small groups to:

- *Discuss the primary opportunities for an Ag Innovation Hub in Mendocino & Sonoma counties*
- *Identify any existing projects, programs, and physical assets that this Hub could be partnering with, as well as the gaps that this Hub could help to fill*
- *Share the primary concerns or challenges each person foresees with the Hub*

The following are the highlights from these small groups and the large group discussion that emerged.

- **What are the primary opportunities for a Hub like this in Mendocino & Sonoma counties?**
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Access to talent
 - Legal Support
 - Funding Support
 - “Intellectual Capital Hub”
 - Location for Problems and Solution Sourcing + Funding
 - Biomass Innovation Center
 - Distribution Center
 - Aquaculture Center (to bolster failing marine life)
 - Livelihood Development for Youth (well-paying, meaningful jobs)
 - Public/Private Partnerships to allow farmers access to land to innovate on
 - Food security benefit (food hub)
 - Information Access
 - Consulting services
 - Accounting of what is out there
 - Inventory of projects and products that are unique to this region
 - Navigating permitting and regulatory requirements
 - De-mystifying the process
 - Support with navigating the system
 - Biomass/fire resiliency
 - Hydrogen highway (biomass)
 - Wood manufacturing center (forest restoration)
 - Opportunities to promote utilization of excess fuel to improve soil health
 - Stain resistant manufactured homes
 - Business resources: One stop shop for small farms (record keeping, working with federal ag agencies, accounting, etc), labor supply, and succession planning
 - Library of background data by domain (like/with Western Growers)
 - Desalination to support with water challenges
 - Startup Accelerator
 - Policy, Innovation, and Think Tank

- Producing Food Indoors: utilizing pliable stock of buildings
 - Promote use of excess food to improve soil health
 - Demonstrate collective research and success stories
 - Incubator farm and incubator kitchen
 - Support for farmers to “tell their stories”
 - Physical spaces to collaborate and test out innovations
 - Physical spaces need to be designed and outfitted to allow and facilitate collaboration: internet access, etc.; should be Resilience Hubs if possible
 - Maker Space - tie in industrial arts / solution space (e.g., shade structure for cows, etc!)
 - Crop protection material: promoting research and innovation for new materials
 - A place to develop and share nature-based solutions, crop protection materials, and sustainable pest management approaches
 - Support forest economy and restoration economy... connected to local economy, job security - needs to connect to construction, biobased products, local use of forest-thinning products
 - Expanding ag literacy (focused on neighbors)
 - Supporting multi-stakeholder collaboration: not talking enough, how to provide access to land, supporting public private partnerships
 - Policy innovation
 - Direct-to-market support
 - Land access support (connecting new farmers with land, etc.)
 - Regional grant writing
 - “Multi-node network” connected by virtual Hub - Organized activities that support connecting the dots
 - Connecting universities and advanced innovation and those implementing the tech
 - Try out new technologies; the Hub can take on that risk, so that the risk is not on the private entities
- Based on all of the ideas generated for the opportunities for the Hub, it was suggested that there is potential for multiple projects and multiple feasibility studies.
 - **Are there any projects, programs, or physical assets out there that this Hub could be partnering with and/or building off of? What are the gaps that this Hub could help to fill?**
 - Existing education centers
 - Public/private partnerships for innovation and food supply
 - Cannabis association
 - Community Alliance of Family Farms (CAFF) - www.caff.org
 - FEED Sonoma + Mendocino Lake Food Hub
 - ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture = National Center for Appropriate Technology’s Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas’ Sustainable Agriculture program (NCAT; ATTRA) - <https://attra.ncat.org/>
 - Local planning agencies
 - Coastal Conservancy Climate-solutions hub (in place of the former Sonoma Developmental Center)
 - Water agencies and water districts in the Mendocino and Sonoma region
 - Aquifer recharge
 - Bank cooperatives
 - Western Growers
 - CAL FIRE
 - USDA Forest Service
 - Resource Conservation Districts (Sonoma and Mendocino)
 - Startup Mendocino
 - Environmental Community + Producers
 - UCANR: The VINE
 - UC Extension - Rural Innovation Hub (Western US region)
 - Cooperative agreement with the USDA - all around rural ag tech and economic development
 - Sonoma County Forestry Working Group
 - CLFA: California Licensed Forester Association
 - Sonoma County Ag & Open Space District
 - Pepperwood Preserve
 - Sonoma State
 - UC Bodega Bay Marine Lab

- Local business leaders - Jackson Family Wines, for example
- Cal Poly Humboldt
- Mendocino College
- Jackson State Demonstration Forest
- Sonoma State University
 - Wine Business Institute
 - Business & Economic Development
 - student - led incubator farm (not sure this still exists)
- School of adaptive agriculture
- Granges
- GreenWave.org
- Schmidt Family Foundation - <https://tsffoundation.org/>
- Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC)
- Supporting continuing ed/professional ed for advisors so that they know about new opportunities
 - Collaborate with Small Business Development Center and Women's Business Centers
 - Provide scripts
- Blue Economy
 - Desalination, fish market, and entrepreneurship for marine sciences Hub for research (Noyo Ocean Collective, Mendocino College, Fort Bragg, Noyo, UC Bodega Marine Labs)
- Incubator Farm in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties
 - Supports new farmers in training while also providing food for food Hub/food security/etc.
- Water Districts - Sonoma County Water Agency, Mendocino - new data driven water recharge
- Existing Incubators
 - ALBA - Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association - www.albafarmers.org
 - CLBL - Center for Land-Based Learning - www.landbasedlearning.org
- USDA Rural Development - <https://www.rd.usda.gov/ca>
- USDA-NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service - www.nrcs.usda.gov
- USDA REAP - Rural energy - grants are available for private - solar panels, etc. low interest loans, etc.
- Labor innovation
 - Workers Comp groups (Zenith, Western Growers)
- PG&E has a large land area - Biomass and resilience
- Sonoma Clean Power + other power consolidators
- Shone Farm
- Land Trusts (e.g. MACT - large portions of land, does a lot of work providing land access)
- Farm of the Future (Sonoma County Winegrape Growers <https://sonomawinegrape.org/>)
- Wine Growers Association
- Mendocino County Supervisor John Haschak

● **What are the primary concerns or challenges you foresee with the Hub? What are potential solutions to address those challenges?**

- Grant funding takes too long - need support
- Telling our story... where to hear about what small/medium farmers are up to
- Access to broadband can help so much - really an issue not to have access in rural areas
- Messaging - clearly articulate what the Hub is and how it can support (maybe Gabe at UCANR can help?)
- Agencies being able to collaborate; the way that they are structured can really make it challenging
- Ag Tech services should be available and accepted by small and medium sized farmers, who don't always have economies of scale
- Increasing size, increasing consolidation of ownership, increasing cost of living, increasing disconnect between ecology and economy
- Everything is always expensive
- Don't displace workers that are already here
- Tension between environmental movement and agricultural movement - support understanding and discussion between those groups
- Economics: make sure new tech is actually economically viable
- Labor supply issues: help to solve labor shortage without displacing existing local labor force
- Wages in Mendocino County are not equal to the cost of living
- How to bridge coastal/blue economy and inland ag/land management?

- Concern with private partnerships and having a place where tech can reside
 - Need a concentrated focus/theme
 - Can't be too disparate
 - Need to focus on a unique opportunity
- Not always in need of new tech; sometimes need to re-learn and revamp practices
- Who do we expect to benefit and what model of ag/land management do we want to support
- Concern about scale and unintended consequences
- Outstanding Questions
 - What is Climate Smart for this region? Must include water, energy... What else?
- **Important guidance gleaned from this session:** We want to make sure we're solving problems that are actually there, and that we are representing and serving all stakeholders.

Funding

The group shared ideas for possible funding pathways and opportunities. Some of these overlap with the ideas for existing programs and partnerships to be explored (see above).

- Federal funding
 - USDA Rural Development
 - USDA LFPP (Local Food Promotion Program) <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp>
 - USDA & California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) around urban ag - urban ag is defined very broadly, and much of Sonoma and Mendocino could be eligible <https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/grants/>
 - EDA program is generally oriented towards disaster recovery, and can leverage that given winter flooding, and has funds for feasibility studies
- State funding
 - Governor's Office of Planning and Research: CERF Grants - Community Economic Resilience Fund Program
 - CAL FIRE - woody biomass innovation grants/Forest health initiatives
 - Accelerate California - from the State - State has "I-Hubs" - redone their program and have put out a new grant for new Hubs to apply - do need to be partnered with a four year college or university - UC could be a great partner (Note: Humboldt is applying) <https://calosba.ca.gov/funding-grants-incentives/ihub2/>
- Local governments
- Workforce Development Funding - many grant opportunities, including through the U.S. Department of Labor, which channels many grants through the CA Employment Development Department (EDD); they are commonly granted to public agencies, including Community Colleges, Counties, and Cities
- Numerous Sonoma and Mendocino Community Foundations
 - Schmidt Family Foundation - <https://tsffoundation.org/> "Feedstocks of the future initiative"
 - Community Foundation Sonoma County - <https://www.sonomacf.org/>
 - Sonoma County Vintners Foundation - <https://sonomawine.com/sonoma-county-vintners-foundation/>
 - Community Foundation of Mendocino County - <https://communityfound.org/>
 - North Coast Resource Partnership - <https://northcoastresourcepartnership.org/>
- Private Businesses

Moving Ahead: Participant Questions and Considerations for Next Steps

Participants were asked if they supported SMEDD moving forward with a Feasibility Study. Most of the participants were in favor of this next step, while a couple participants wanted to ensure that additional stakeholder perspectives were included, and that more work was done to clarify who the Hub would serve and how best to ensure those needs were met. Some concerns were raised about scalability, cost to small and medium farmers, ensuring a connection to market/revenue development. There was also a question about whether or not another Hub is the answer, as opposed to efforts to build collaboration amongst and uplift what is already happening in the region.

- Need a deep dive with the industry to figure out what the needs are -
 - What's it worth to you? For example, pruning grapes is 43% of labor costs, how can we reduce those costs?
 - Challenge of managing biomass effectively

- Will blue economy/aquaculture + ag be seen as connected? Might need to be part of the story; can be an organic process.
- Potentially 3 or 4 types of feasibility studies; potentially need a focus on industry buy-in this fall with some more fleshed out ideas:
 - Brick and mortar Hub
 - Challenge funding model (e.g. FarmBot Challenge)
 - Virtual Hub to start, and then build out over time
- **Must** have private partnerships
- Finding a home for tech to survive
- Must have a connection to the market/revenue development - **If its too disparate, will lose focus and lose appeal** for commercial entities - NOTE: that would have to be done with feasibility funding - has to be attractive to non-government dollars
- Is tech the answer to the problems we have listed? **Who do we expect to benefit?** What model of ag gets supported with the solutions that will most likely be identified through this Hub? Should make sure small and medium farms are considered and uplifted in this process.
 - NOTE: may be less about new *tech* and more about *innovation*
- Concern about tech being appropriate to the scale; hard for tech solutions and economic development solutions to benefit all - if tech is larger, more expensive; this can lead to replicating other problems
- A Hub is awesome... is a Feasibility Study actually what's needed? Perhaps it's more about building up the capacity of existing entities in the region and working towards connecting these existing efforts. Is it adding a feasibility component to one of these other efforts (e.g., CERF, cooperative partnerships)
- Would want to see us setting up for future funding opportunities as well

Next steps

As SMEDD orients to a possible Feasibility Study, and follow up from today's brainstorming session, the group helped to identify some of the possible next steps.

- Report out from today's session (with presentation slides)
- Outreach ideas
 - Ask for County Supervisors to share information and the summary
 - Send out info on North Coast Resource Partnership webinar - <https://northcoastresourcepartnership.org/> or the CALENDAR page with links to various webinars - <https://northcoastresourcepartnership.org/calendar/>
 - Explore the Board of Supervisors' mailing lists for getting information out
 - Ask participants to share updates through newsletters and websites
- Reminder to check out the FarmBot Challenge <https://farmbot.ai/>
- Host a webinar to continue the conversations started at the brainstorming session
- Identify additional stakeholders we didn't hear from during today's conversation: industry stakeholders, small and medium farmers, Resource Conservation Districts, etc.
- Clarify the primary audience of the Hub: think about whether the problems identified will be best solved by new technology or more resources, connections, etc.
- Explore shifting the Feasibility Study to supporting an existing effort with increased capacity (as opposed to a new concept)