

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

GULF SEA LEVEL VARIATION AND RISE

*The National
Academies of* | SCIENCES
ENGINEERING
MEDICINE

GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM





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1. AWARD INFORMATION AND KEY DATES

Award Duration: Funding will be awarded to support projects up to 36 months in length

Total Amount Available: Up to \$5 million

Estimated Number of Awards: To be determined. The budget request of any application should not exceed the total amount available and should be commensurate with the scope of the work proposed. Resources made available for any successful application will depend on its merits and budget proposed, including justification. The Gulf Research Program (GRP) reserves the right to select for negotiation all, some, one, or none of the applications received in response to this solicitation.

June 2, 2021: RFA preview released

June 17, 2021: Full RFA released and online Notice of Intent (NOI) submission opens

July 8, 2021: Webinar with federal collaborators at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Time. [Register Here.](#)

July 21, 2021: Notification of Intent (NOI) due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (required)

July 22, 2021: Online Full Proposal submission opens (only open to Applicants who submitted a NOI)

August 18, 2021: Full Proposals due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Award Selection and Notification: November-December 2021

Anticipated Funding Start Date: Early 2022

Online submission website: <https://gulfresearchprogram.smapply.io/>

2. ELIGIBILITY

These terms are defined as follows when referenced:

- **Applicant:** The organization under which an application is being submitted (i.e., applying organization).
- **Project Director:** The individual who will lead the proposed project. The Project Director is responsible for the direction and intellectual design of the project and has primary responsibility for project execution and the submission of all required reports to the Gulf Research Program (GRP). Project Directors usually initiate applications that are officially submitted by their employing organizations (the Applicant). When initiating an application, the Project Director is responsible for ensuring it meets all the requirements outlined by the GRP as well as any requirements set by the applying organization.
- **Key Personnel:** Individuals who share in the responsibility of the direction or intellectual design of the proposed project and/or contribute to the execution of the proposed project in a substantive, measurable way.
- **End-user:** For the purpose of this RFA, an end-user is defined as an entity that uses sea-level forecasts and projections to plan or implement hazard preparedness, environmental management, or other decision-making purposes.

Applications must adhere to the following to be eligible:

- U.S. organizations (excluding federal agencies) that have a valid federal tax ID number are eligible to apply.
- This funding opportunity is for distinct activities only. Proposed activities that are part of a broader, existing effort, program, or project may only be eligible if the application clearly demonstrates that the funding request is for distinct activities that would not otherwise occur.
- Activities currently under consideration for funding from other sources are not eligible. The status of “currently under consideration for funding from other sources” is intended to mean that full or final application materials have been submitted to another entity to request funding. Submission of a Letter of Intent or Pre-Proposal to another funding source does not constitute an activity being “currently under consideration for funding from other sources” if that submission is a step that precedes submission of full or final application materials in an application process.
- U.S. organizations may partner with international organizations; a U.S. organization must be the Applicant, but Applicants may include Key Personnel from and subawards to non-U.S. organizations. Legal restrictions may prohibit transactions, including subawards, between U.S. entities and entities within certain foreign countries.
- U.S. federal agencies are not eligible to receive GRP funding as Applicants or sub-awardees, although their employees may be non-funded collaborators. Any proposed collaboration with employees of a U.S. federal agency should not involve any transfer of GRP funding to the agency and must be in compliance with all applicable federal statutes and regulations. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if this requirement is met.
- Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) and University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs) can be named as sub-awardees, however, these Centers must have the authority to obtain funding for work outside of the relevant federal sponsor contract and not be proposing to do work that is otherwise being done under the federal sponsor contract.
- BP Exploration and Production, Inc. (BP), Transocean Deepwater, Inc. (Transocean), their affiliates, and employees are not eligible to receive grant funding or to participate in any grant.
- Activities involving advocacy or lobbying are not eligible.

Individuals named as Project Director or Key Personnel in an application must adhere to the following:

- An individual may be named as Project Director in only one application.
- An individual, including a Project Director, may be named as Key Personnel in any number of other applications.
- If an individual appears on multiple proposals, a clear description should be included to explain how the proposed work is complementary, not duplicate, of other proposed efforts and how the participant will budget his or her time.
- Should an individual appear on two or more proposals as Project Director, all proposals listing an individual as Project Director will be disqualified and eliminated from the review process. It is the responsibility of the Project Directors to confirm that each member of the entire team is within the eligibility guidelines.

3. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The GRP takes issues of equity and justice very seriously. We are committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in our work, and exercising these principles in our staffing, granting, board appointments, and fellowships. No person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under this program.

4. ABOUT THE GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM

The [GRP](#) is an independent, science-based program founded in 2013, as part of agreements under plea orders with companies involved in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster. The GRP seeks to enhance offshore energy safety and protect human health and the environment by catalyzing advances in science, practice, and capacity to generate long-term benefits for the Gulf of Mexico region and the Nation. It does this by conducting studies, sponsoring research and other activities. The GRP is a division of the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(NASEM\)](#)—a private, nonprofit organization that provide expert advice on some of the most pressing challenges facing the Nation and world on issues of science, engineering, and medicine.

5. CONTEXT, APPROACH, FOCUS AREAS, PROJECT GUIDELINES, AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Context

In 2018, the study committee that authored the NASEM report, [Understanding the Long-Term Evolution of the Coupled Natural-Human Coastal System: The Future of the U.S. Gulf Coast](#), concluded that the changes in sea level relative to the land (relative sea level) later this century and beyond will be a significant factor affecting Gulf Coast coastal ecosystems and communities. In turn, more reliable projections of relative sea level rise are needed for natural-resource management, including restoration activities, as well as for enhancing the resilience of Gulf communities. The committee specifically identified tracking and understanding the variations and future changes in the level of Gulf of Mexico waters – separate from the effects of subsidence and other causes of more localized vertical land motion (VLM) – as a fundamental research gap.

The non-VLM factors affecting sea level along Gulf Coast include changes in the volume of the global ocean due to the expansion of warming waters and the melting of glaciers and ice sheets; changes in the earth's gravitation, rotation, and deformation (GRD) caused by redistributions of land ice and water; and the dynamics of atmospheric and oceanic processes within the Gulf region such as the Loop Current System. A recent review, [Understanding the Contemporary Regional Sea-Level Change and Implications for the Future](#), discusses present understanding and uncertainties regarding the multiple factors affecting regional sea level change.

Future Gulf sea levels are primarily dependent on the pace of continued global warming, which in turn is dependent on greenhouse gas concentrations and emissions. Thus, studies on the prediction and variability of future Gulf sea level should incorporate projections such as those used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which will release their Sixth Assessment starting later this calendar year.

The intent of GRP's Gulf Sea Level Variation and Rise Grants is to refine current relative sea level rise forecasts and projections by advancing understanding of the non-subsidence/other VLM-related Gulf regional dynamics in the entire Gulf of Mexico basin (that is, including the U.S., Mexican, and Cuban coasts) and then incorporating existing knowledge of vertical land motion along the entire Gulf of Mexico basin.

Focus Areas

With this Request for Applications, the GRP invites proposals for research that

- Significantly advance understanding of the non-subsidence/other VLM regional components of sea level variation and rise, and then
- Incorporate this understanding into more reliable forecast models and century-scale projections of relative sea level rise along with available subsidence/other VLM data.

To this end, **project teams must significantly address and advance understanding of one or more of the following non-subsidence/other VLM-related focus areas:**

- The Gulf regional sea level change associated with steric variability and ocean dynamics, including the changes in the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation.
- The Gulf regional sea level change associated with inter- and intra-annual meteorological phenomena, exclusive of tropical storm surges.
- The Gulf regional signature of sea level on both short and long timescales caused by global redistributions of land ice and water.

Approach

Research teams must develop emissions-dependent probabilistic projections, comparable projections, forecasting tools, and other information products useful for planning or implementing hazard preparedness, environmental management, or other decision-making purposes. These products must include:

- **Probabilistic projections** of Gulf sea-level rise for the greenhouse gas emissions pathways used in the IPCC Sixth Assessment, at least 100 years into the future, that take into account GRD, steric variability, and ocean dynamics.
- **Comparable projections** of relative sea-level rise around the entire Gulf coast that include the best available sources of vertical land motion, including both those related to glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) and tectonics as well as sediment and aquifer-system compaction.
- **Forecast tools** to estimate the likelihood, duration, and amount of inter- and intra-annual variation in sea level, excluding tropical storm surges.

Importantly, it is expected that these models, projections and information products be useful for end-users, including at a minimum, relevant federal efforts (see below). Applicants are also encouraged to collaborate with other decision-makers, natural-resource managers, planners, and state and local entities.

Research teams will be expected to coordinate their efforts—and collaborate where appropriate—with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) [Sea Level Change Team](#), NOAA's [Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services](#) (CO-OPS), the GRP's [Understanding Gulf Ocean Systems](#) (UGOS) effort, and other Gulf Sea Level Variation and Rise grantees. The GRP will arrange at least one yearly in-person meeting and several other interactions to facilitate this coordination.

Related Information:

- The probabilistic projections should build on and refine those being developed by NOAA for U.S. National Climate Assessments.
- Probabilistic projections should also be done for each of the [Shared Socioeconomic Pathways scenarios](#) chosen for use in the IPCC Sixth Assessment and based on climate models coordinated by the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP6).
- The comparable projections of vertical land motion should take into account those used in NOAA's projections based on tide-gauge data.
- Research teams are encouraged to ask any questions to NOAA or NASA collaborators at the webinar on July 8, 2021. Questions may be submitted prior to this date at gulfgrants@nas.edu or during the webinar. The webinar will also be recorded and made available on the RFA website.
- For the application, applicants should describe how their efforts would align with the federal effort; however, as GRP is facilitating collaboration with federal partners, a detailed plan is not necessary at this stage.
- Additional Information about GRP's federal collaborators:
 - The National Ocean Service (NOS) Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services ([CO-OPS](#)) provides the National infrastructure, science, and technical expertise to collect and distribute observations and predictions of water levels to support maritime commerce and coastal resilience. This includes the management of the National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON), which provides foundational water level observations at over 200 locations throughout the U.S. to be used for sea level monitoring, predictions, and projections from daily to decadal timescales. CO-OPS is one of the federal leads to develop the gridded relative sea level scenarios included in the Fifth National Climate Assessment, and leads efforts within NOAA to monitor and predict changes in coastal flooding driven by relative sea level rise.
 - The NASA Sea Level Change Team ([N-SLCT](#)) is an interdisciplinary team of scientists with the goal of improving the understanding of regional relative sea-level change on a range of timescales. The formation of this team was driven by the recognition that sea-level change results from a diverse set of physical processes that interact and combine in potentially complicated ways across a range of timescales. The N-SLCT relies heavily on NASA satellite observations in addition to reanalysis and modeling efforts to advance the understanding of sea level change in the past, present, and future. The web portal at sealevel.nasa.gov was created to communicate the understanding that was obtained from these efforts and to provide an outlet for sharing data and guidance to the global public.

Project Guidelines

To be considered responsive to this Request for Applications, applications must:

- Clearly describe how the proposed project will advance understanding of non-subsidence/other VLM factors affecting the regional components of sea level variation and rise in the Gulf of Mexico basin.
- Clearly specify which focus area(s) the proposed project addresses and how the team plans to approach significantly advancing understanding of that focus area(s).
- Clearly describe the project team's approach to incorporating their focus area research with available subsidence/VLM-related data to develop forecasting tools, emissions-dependent projections, comparable projections, and other information products.
- Clearly articulate how the project results and/or outputs will be useful to intended end-users either now or in the future to advance related decision-making or management actions.
- Clearly describe how the proposed work will contribute to the efforts of
 - federal end-users, including NOAA and NASA, and
 - at least one non-federal/non-GRP (UGOS) end-user.
- Include some key personnel affiliated with research institutions in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico region.

Other Relevant Information

- The Gulf Research Program does not expect teams to undertake significant field research. Instead the Program expects teams to use data and information sources that already exist, including satellite and tide gauge data and models, and apply them to the Gulf Regional scale.
- It is expected that research teams will produce data and information projects that address both short-term (e.g., years to decades) and long-term (e.g., decades to century) relative sea level rise estimates.
- It is expected that research teams consider and communicate relevant uncertainties.
- Applications must not focus on storm surge; this topic is beyond the scope of this Request for Applications (RFA).
- Proposals must not include a significant focus on generating new data about vertical land motion and instead primarily rely on existing data and observations.
- The GRP reserves the right to reject without review proposals that are not relevant to this funding opportunity, that is, projects that do not clearly address one or more focus areas or the required approaches.
- The Gulf Research Program aims to fund several applicants whose projects are complementary to each other to accomplish the goals of the Gulf Sea Level Variation and Rise Grants; thus, the Gulf Research Program reserves the right to significantly negotiate project scope during contract negotiations to assure this complementarity.

6. APPLICATION MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

Applications for this funding opportunity have two stages with different required components: 1) a Notice of Intent (NOI) and 2) a Full Proposal. Project directors are advised to review the application preparation and submission instructions carefully and submit any questions to gulfgrants@nas.edu well in advance of the submission deadlines. Although the Gulf Research Program strives to respond to applicants' questions within two business days, the response time depends on the volume of questions received and the complexity of the question asked. The Gulf Research Program does not guarantee that applicants' questions will be answered before submission deadlines. Applicants are advised to submit applications well in advance of the submission deadlines as a precaution against unanticipated delays. Please plan ahead.

Please be advised that the Gulf Research Program expects applicants to have reviewed the Grant Agreement (see "Grant Terms and Conditions") prior to submitting an application to ensure that the applicant is aware of the applicable terms under which the grant is offered. It is the policy of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to entertain potential modifications to the Grant Agreement only under the most exceptional circumstances. Rather, successful applicants are strongly encouraged to sign the Grant Agreement as presented.

7. NOTICE OF INTENT

A Notice of Intent (NOI) is required for this funding opportunity and must be submitted via the [online application system](#) by July 21, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. ET. NOIs submitted by other means (including mail, fax, or e-mail) will not be considered. The NOI application materials must be submitted in English; other languages will not be considered.

The purpose of submitting a Notice of Intent is to inform GRP of the number of applicants and to assist with the recruitment of peer reviewers. Notices of Intent will not be used for the assessment of relevance or scientific merit and specific feedback will not be given. The Applicant may update and revise project information and Key Personal in the Full Proposal, except for the Applicant.

The NOI must include the following elements:

- Required [Eligibility Form](#)
- Required [Contact Information Form](#) that includes:
 - I. Required Information:
 - Applicant
 - Project Director ORCID—Open Researcher and Contributor ID
 - Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR)
 - Grant Administrator (if different from AOR)
 - II. Optional Information:
 - Suggestions for reviewers: The suggestions may be considered for the peer review of Full Proposals, but the selection of reviewers is the responsibility of the GRP.
 - How did you hear about this funding opportunity?
 - Demographic Information

- Required [Letter of Intent Form](#) that includes:
 - I. Project Personnel:
 - Project Director
 - Key Personnel
 - Involvement of Project Director or Key Personnel in other applications
 - II. Project Details:
 - **Project Title** (maximum 15 words)
 - **Project Acronym** (if applicable)
 - **Project Key Words** (maximum 5 key words)
 - **Project Summary** (up to 1,000 words) including:
 - Basic project background/context
 - General project plan and main goals/objectives
 - Anticipated outputs and outcomes

8. FULL PROPOSAL

Proposals must be submitted via the [online application system](#) by **August 18, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. ET**. Proposals submitted by other means (including mail, fax, or e-mail) will not be considered. Proposal application materials submitted in any language other than English will not be considered. The online form for submission of a full proposal will be available on July 22, 2021 to applicants who have submitted a NOI. Conformance of proposals to instructions provided is required and will be strictly enforced. The GRP may reject, without review, any applications with required attachments that are missing requested information or that are not consistent with the instructions outlined. The GRP may also reject inclusion of any optional attachments in the review process if the attachments are not consistent with the instructions outlined.

The information provided in the NOI is non-binding. At the full proposal stage, you have the opportunity to change or update project information. You may not change the applicant (i.e., applying organization).

The Full Proposal must include the following elements:

- I. Project Personnel:
 1. Project Director
 2. ORCID (Open Research and Contributor ID)
 3. Key Personnel
 4. Involvement of Project Director or Key Personnel in other applications
- II. Project Details:
 1. **Project Title** (maximum 15 words). The title should clearly represent the project and help articulate the importance and goals of the project to a non-technical reader. Titles are a primary referent for projects. The titles of awarded projects will be announced publicly and should not sacrifice clarity for novelty.
 2. **Project Acronym** (if available)

3. **Project Key Words** (maximum 5 words).
4. **Project Summary** (maximum 300 words). The project summary should be an overview of the proposed project written in the third person, informative to other persons working in the same or related fields, and, to the extent possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. It should include:
 - The problem, context, and what the project aims to achieve;
 - The general approach to address the problem;
 - How the project results and/or outputs will advance understanding of the regional components of sea level variation and rise; and
 - How the project team will incorporate this understanding into more reliable forecast models and century-scale projections of relative sea level rise relevant to specific end-users.
5. **Project Description** (maximum 5,000 words). Provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and a plan for implementation. It should address the following:
 - **The Problem/Background:** The context for the research question, issue, and/or gap to be addressed and the current state of knowledge on the issue.
 - **Goal and Objectives:** The overall goal of the project and its specific SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-oriented) objectives.
 - **Project approach, methodology, and implementation:** Details about the proposed activities to be undertaken and methods, tools, and analyses that will be employed to carry out the project, along with an explanation of how these are appropriate for accomplishing the specific aims of the project.
 - **A clear description/plan for implementation** that demonstrates the feasibility of the activities to be undertaken, including explanations of the feasibility of access to specific data sets, people, or settings required to successfully implement the project and the mechanism to assess success.
 - **Anticipated Outputs and Outcomes**, including details of projections, forecasting tools, and other information products as well as their benefit to specific end-users.
 - **A description of each Key Personnel's role**, including the Project Director.
6. **Outputs and End-Users** (maximum 500 words). Describe how the research addresses end-user needs and how end-users will use the outputs of the project.
7. **References Cited**
8. **Timeline** (template). A timeline, as a Gantt chart, showing key project activities or events, including tasks, milestones, outputs, or deliverables is required. The timeline will be used by reviewers to assess project feasibility. For funded projects, the timeline allows Project Directors to track progress and allows GRP staff to monitor the project schedule. Project activities or events listed in the timeline should serve as unambiguous indicators and measures of progress. The timeline should include sufficient key activities or events so that the portrayed, overall progress of the project can be reasonably tracked over distinct time periods. The timeline Gantt charts should be uploaded as a PDF as a separate document.

9. **Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources** (maximum 500 words). This section of the proposal will be used to assess the adequacy of the resources available to perform the proposed project. Include an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and its collaborators will provide to the project, should it be funded. The description should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantifiable financial information. Although these resources are not considered cost sharing, the GRP expects that the resources identified in the Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources section will be provided, or made available, should the proposal be funded.
10. **Data Management Plan** (maximum 1,500 words). Applications should include an extensive data management component that meets the requirements of the [GRP's data management policy](#). All observational and modeled data shall be made available with minimal delay to be negotiated with the GRP for each dataset, through submission at least to the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative Information and Data Cooperative (GRIIDC, [link](#)) and national archives for use by intermediate and end-users.
11. **Research Involving Human Subjects** (if applicable)

III. Project Budget:

1. **Total budget requested**
2. **Budget justification** (maximum 2,000 words). View a [sample budget justification](#).
3. **Budget Form** (template). Complete this form to provide information on the proposed budget. Budget requests should be developed commensurate with the support needed to achieve the project goals.
4. **Sub-award to FFRDCs or UARCs** (if applicable). The FFRDC(s) and/or UARC(s) named as sub-awardees in the Full Proposal must have the authority to obtain funding for work outside of the relevant federal sponsor contract and not be proposing to do work it is otherwise being done under the federal sponsor contact.

IV. Resumes:

A resume is required for the Project Director and every individual identified as Key Personnel. Resumes may not exceed two pages per person. See [resume specifications](#) for additional guidance. All resumes should be combined into a single PDF document before uploading as a separate document. Resumes for Individuals not named as a Project Director or Key Personnel in the "Project Personnel" section should not be included. It is the responsibility of the Project Director to ensure that the Key Personnel listed in the "Project Personnel" section are correct and match the resumes submitted.

V. [Current and Pending Support Form](#):

Complete this form to provide information on support from projects or activities currently underway and pending support for future projects or activities of the Project Director and all Key Personnel named in the "Project Personnel" section. All current or pending support from whatever source (e.g., federal, state, local or foreign government agencies, public or private foundations, industrial or other commercial organizations) must be listed for every member of the project team. The project proposed in this application and all other projects or activities requiring a portion of time of the Project Director or Key Personnel must be included, even if an individual receives no salary support from the projects or activities. If an individual does not have any other current or pending support or is unable to document that information for whatever reason, this must be indicated within the section of the form for that individual. The total award amount for the entire award period covered (including indirect costs) must be shown as well as the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the project, regardless of source of support. It is the responsibility of the Project Director to ensure that the Key Personnel listed in the "Project Personnel" section are correct and match those listed in the Current and Pending Support Form.

VI. [Collaborators and Other Affiliations Form](#):

The purpose of this form is to help us eliminate potential conflicts of interest during our reviewer recruitment. Complete this form to provide information on the following for the Project Director and all Key Personnel named in the “Project Personnel” section:

- All persons (including their current organizational affiliations) who are currently or who have been collaborators (i.e. an individual with whom you work closely to co-design or conduct a project) or co-authors with the individual on a project, book, article, report, abstract, or paper during the 48 months preceding the submission of the application.
- The individual’s own graduate and postdoctoral advisor(s) and their current organizational affiliations.
- All persons (including their current organizational affiliations) with whom the individual has had an association as a graduate or postdoctoral advisor.

If an individual does not have any collaborators or other affiliations pertaining to the above situations, that must be indicated within the section of the form for that individual. It is the responsibility of the Project Director to ensure that the Key Personnel listed in the “Project Personnel” section are correct and match those listed in the Collaborators and Other Affiliations Form.

VII. Optional attachments:

1. **Equations and visual elements:** The text box for the “Project Description” does not support equations or visual elements (e.g., figures, tables, images, maps). Applicants may upload a single PDF document with 1) a one-page list of equations and 2) up to five visual elements, each on one page, *to support the information included in the project description*. Visual elements must be labeled sequentially (e.g., Figure 1, Table 1). The total number of pages of visual elements in the PDF may not exceed five pages. Only equations and visual elements can be included in this attachment and only information that is directly relevant to the equations or visual elements included (e.g., figure legends) is acceptable. Attempts to use this attachment to provide any information beyond this stated purpose may result in removal of the attachment from the review process.
2. **Letters of commitment:** Applicants may upload a PDF with letters of commitment from collaborators or organizations/individuals anticipated *to inform or participate in the project in a substantial way*. Each letter of commitment should be brief and no longer than one page. Letters of commitment must not include itemized budgets or other information that is required in other sections of the application. All letters of support should be combined into a single PDF before uploading as an attachment. **For this funding opportunity, Letters of Commitment specifically from NOAA (CO-OPS) and/or NASA (N-SLCT) collaborators are discouraged because these programs have already committed to collaborate with all successful grantees.**

9. PROPOSAL PEER REVIEW AND SELECTION

All complete applications will be provided to external reviewers who will constitute a review panel for evaluation that is based on the Merit Review Criteria. The review panel will discuss the merit of each application and score the applications. The GRP will make reasonable efforts to develop a review panel in which external reviewers are not affiliated with institutions that submitted applications. Any external reviewer with any conflict(s) of interest will be recused from reviewing or participating in any discussion of any application(s) with which s/he has a conflict of interest. Program staff will examine the applications and prepare a grant-funding plan taking into consideration the review panel’s ranking of the applications, summaries from the panel discussion, the program’s funding availability, and the program’s portfolio, objectives, and goals. The final decision for funding of projects will be made by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

All review processes will be governed by the GRP's [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policies](#).

Full Proposal Merit Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated using three broad review criteria. The points associated with each criterion provide guidance for proposers and peer reviewers on priority areas for this RFA; the points are illustrative and not intended to be all encompassing. Reviewers may raise additional issues that are not covered by the bullets under each criterion.

Relevance (40%)

- Does the proposal appropriately and clearly address at least one focus area?
- How effectively might the proposed project contribute advancing understanding of the non-sub-sidence/other VLM factors affecting the regional components of sea level rise in the Gulf of Mexico basin?
- Does the proposal clearly articulate an effective and appropriate approach to developing forecasting tools, emissions-dependent projections, comparable projections, and other information products?
 - Does this approach include projections for emissions pathways as articulated by the IPCC Sixth Assessment?
 - Does this approach include forecasts of inter- and intra-annual variation of sea-level in the Gulf of Mexico?
- Does the proposal articulate how the work of the project team will contribute to the efforts of
 - Federal end-users, including NASA and NOAA?
 - At least one non-federal/non-GRP (UGOS) end user?
- Does the proposal clearly address how the proposed project results and/or outputs will be useful to intended end-users either now or in the future for planning or implementing hazard preparedness, environmental management, or other decision-making purposes?
- Does the project team include key personnel from research institutions in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico region?

Technical and Scientific Merit (40%)

- Is there evidence that the proposed project team understands the current state of knowledge of the issue(s) to be addressed?
- Does the proposed project demonstrate a scientifically and/or technically valid and appropriate overall approach, strategy, methodology, and analyses to accomplish the specific aims of the project?
- Is the implementation plan of proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale?
- Is the timeline of the proposed work reasonable and feasible?
- Is the budget commensurate with the proposed work?

- Does the proposal include a data management plan that is appropriate for the scope of work?

Project Personnel and Organizational Support (20%)

- Relative to the stage of career, how well qualified are the Project Director and Key Personnel to conduct the proposed activities?
- Are the disciplines and perspectives represented by the personnel and institutions appropriate for the scope of the project?
- Does the application demonstrate that the project personnel would have adequate resources (for example, institutional support, equipment, and/or other physical resources) to conduct the proposed project?

10. DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY

The GRP's [Data Management Policy](#) applies to this RFA. To facilitate sharing of data and information products, all applications submitted to the GRP must include a data management plan and follow FAIR guiding principles (FAIR stands for "Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable." To learn more about FAIR guiding principles refer to NASEM report ["Open Science by Design: Realizing a Vision for 21st Century Research"](#)). Information products may include documents (i.e. reports, workshop summaries, etc.), multi-media curricula for education and training (i.e. video and/or online tutorials, manuals and handbooks, etc.), and other media and communication platforms. Even in the unlikely case in which no data or any other information products will be produced, a plan must be submitted that states "No data or information products are expected to be produced from this project." The GRP's [Data Management Policy](#) and [Data Management web page](#) provides information on what must be included in the data management plan submitted as part of an application.

11. RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All projects involving human subjects must be submitted to an institutional review board (IRB) for review and either receive IRB approval or be granted exemption from human subjects' regulations before an award can be made. Proposers should file their application with their local IRB at the same time the application is submitted to the GRP so that any approval procedure determined as necessary will not delay the award process. An application may be submitted to the GRP prior to receiving IRB approval or being granted exemption; however, if the application is selected for funding, the award will be made conditional upon IRB granting approval or exemption from human subjects' regulations within 60 days of the notice of conditional award. If a proposed project involving human subjects is granted exemption from human subjects' regulations [see [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)](#)], the Applicant must provide documentation that an IRB (or the appropriate authority other than the Project Director or Key Personnel) has declared the project exempt from the human subjects regulations. Documentation should include the specific category justifying the exemption. Organizations without internal access to an IRB must seek approval or exemption from an independent review board or other appropriate authority.

12. MAKING THE GRANT AWARD

Selection Notice:

Following completion of evaluation of all applications received, the Project Director identified on an application will be notified via email that (1) the application has been selected for funding pending content, contract, or other negotiations, or (2) the application has not been selected. For selected applications, the GRP reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to, indirect cost information or other budget information. GRP also

reserves the right to negotiate project scope. Awardees are free to accept or reject the grant agreement as offered.

Award Notice:

The GRP transmits award notices to organizations via e-mail. The award is not finalized, and the NASEM is not obligated to provide any funding until a signed copy of the award agreement has been received by the Academies.

Grant Periods:

Upon receipt of the award notice, the awardee should note the effective date and the expiration date. Effective date is the date specified in the grant notice on or after which expenditures may be charged to the grant. Charging expenditures to the grant prior to the effective date is strictly prohibited. Expiration date is the date specified in the award notice after which expenditures may not be charged against the award except to satisfy obligations to pay allowable project costs committed on or before that date.

Once an award is made, the effective date cannot be changed. The expiration date may be changed via approval of a request for a no-cost extension. If approved, the GRP will issue an amendment to the award.

If additional time beyond the performance period and the established expiration date is required to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the funds already made available, the awardee may apply for a one-time no-cost extension of up to six months. A formal request must be submitted to the GRP at least 45 days prior to the expiration date of the award. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate of the unobligated funds remaining and a plan for their use. This one-time extension will not be approved solely for the purpose of using the unliquidated balances. For more information please visit [grantee FAQ](#).

13. POST-AWARD MANAGEMENT

Reporting Requirements:

After an award is conferred, the awardee shall provide a semi-annual financial report to the GRP to report on expenditures to date under the award. The awardee shall provide an annual written report to the GRP to report on activities being carried out under the award, including but not limited to project accomplishments to date and expenditures. No later than sixty (60) days after the expiration of the award, the awardee shall provide in writing a final report that addresses the original objectives of the project as identified in the application, describe any changes in objectives that were approved by the GRP, describe the final project accomplishments, and include a final project accounting of all award funds.

Collaboration:

Applicants are expected to engage with the GRP, federal end-users, and other Gulf Sea Level Variation and Rise grantees. This will minimally include working with the GRP Program Officer(s) and other staff, participation in at least one in-person meeting annually as well as other teleconferences. The travel expenses for the annual meeting will be reimbursed by the GRP. Project Directors must actively participate in cross-project collaboration and collaboration with federal end-users. The GRP will be substantially involved by coordinating partners and teams to accomplish the work. Failure to participate in collaborative activities may result in withheld payments.

Data Management:

Implementation of the data management plan must follow FAIR guiding principles and will be monitored through the annual and final report process. Annual project reports required for all multi-year awards must include an account of ongoing data management and the accessibility (e.g., sharing) of research information products (e.g., digital object identifiers [DOIs] or accession numbers for digital information; citations of relevant publications, conference proceedings, and conference presentations; and other types of dissemination). In addition, the report must articulate any current or foreseeable changes to

the original plan. Continued funding for subsequent years of multi-year projects will be contingent upon acceptable performance, which includes adherence to the data management plan.

Final project reports, which are required for all awards, must describe the implementation of the data management plan. They must clearly describe any changes from the original plan. At a minimum, the final report should include descriptions of the following:

- Data, datasets, and information products produced during the award period.
- Metadata (that describe the project and that describe the data and other information products) produced during the award period.
- Data, other information products, and associated metadata that will be maintained or curated after the award expires.
- Dissemination activities (e.g., publication of results and data, presentation of results and data).
- The curation facility or facilities (e.g., digital repository) where project data and other information products have been deposited or are being curated for long-term management and accessibility.
- Verification that the data and other information products are, or at least will be, widely discoverable and accessible (e.g., DOIs for data and other information products).
- In addition to evaluating the final report descriptions, the GRP may review any digital products curated in digital repositories or otherwise curated to ensure that they are properly preserved, documented, and accessible.

Scientific Integrity:

A fundamental purpose of the GRP is to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and the application of the science to address challenges relevant to the Program's mission. All activities of the GRP will be conducted to meet the highest standards of scientific integrity. All grantees have a responsibility to use the funds as specified in the application to advance the project goals and objectives. To continue the emphasis on scientific integrity throughout the award period, the GRP will ask all researchers, trainees, and fellows to comply with professional standards as defined by the NASEM report [On Being A Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research](#).

Grant Terms and Conditions:

The GRP expects Applicants to review the Grant Agreement prior to submitting an application to ensure that the Applicant is aware of the applicable terms under which the grant is offered. It is the policy of National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to entertain potential modifications to the Grant Agreement only under the most exceptional circumstances. Rather, successful Applicants are strongly encouraged to sign the Grant Agreement as presented.

Sample Grant Agreements for:

- [Public Institutions](#)
- [Private Institutions](#)

14. FAQs

Please keep checking the [RFA website](#). We will be adding FAQs based on the questions we receive prior to mid-August.