# FY26 Brennan Matching Fund Q&A Summary

**Brennan Matching Fund Informational Webinar**
**FY2026 Federal Register Notice:**
**https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/06/18/2024-13387/notice-of-matching-fund-opportunity-for-ocean-and-coastal-mapping-and-request-for-partnership**

**Presentation Slides available here:**
**https://iocm.noaa.gov/documents/Brennan_Matching_Fund_Event_Slides_FY26.pdf**

**Summary:**
Meredith Westington, action NOAA Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping(IOCM) coordinator, opened the webinar to welcome participants and introduce speakers Christina Fandel, Chief of the Operations Branch at NOAA's Hydrographic Services Division, Michael Stephens, Contracts Team Lead of the Operations Branch, and other NOAA panelists. After a meeting logistics check-in, Meredith explained the context for, and intent of, the FY26 Brennan Matching Fund opportunity. She spoke about the large areas of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakeswaters subject to U.S. jurisdiction that are unmapped (48% as of January 2024) and the need to get these areas surveyed using an IOCM approach to "Map Once, Use Many Times." She talked about the following mandates driving Coast Survey to undertake the matching fund opportunity: the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration and Characterization Strategy, the Alaska Coastal Mapping Strategy, the Coast Survey Ocean Mapping Plan, and the Ocean Climate Action Plan. All of these documents are available at https://iocm.noaa.gov/about/strategic-plans.html. Meredith also discussed two key goals of the matching fund program:

1. Leverage non-Federal partner funds to increase hydrographic surveying and coastal mapping activities; and
2. Utilize our pre-qualified contract surveyors, in order to ensure that data collected meet multiple stakeholder uses and are accessible.

Christina then reviewed the details of the FY26 Brennan Matching Fund as described in the Federal Register Notice linked above. She underscored that non-federal entities submitting matching fund proposals should consider aligning with the policy driver goals that Coast Survey is responding to, such as "Map the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)," "Expand Alaska Coastal Data Collection to Deliver the Priority Geospatial Products Stakeholders Require," and "Map the full extent of waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction to modern standards." She covered:

- Tools that a proposal writer might use to identify areas for survey,
- Eligibility requirements,
- Coast Survey capabilities and hydrographic expertise,
- Products resulting from a surveying partnership with Coast Survey,
- Mapping contract vehicle execution, and
- Funding availability and project period,

Meredith continued by covering:

- Deadlines and dates (note ***October 11th 5PM*** deadline for proposals!),
- Submission page and content requirements, and
- Evaluation criteria.

Michael then reviewed current Brennan Matching Fund success stories including mapping projects submitted during the FY24 and FY25 matching fund application cycle. He summarized the project in FY24

where NOAA partnered with the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for a hydrographic survey in eastern Long Island Sound for a mapping scope covering siting transmission cables and protecting essential habitat in the sound, and in FY25 where NOAA is currently finalizing the memorandum of agreement with the City of Valdez, AK for a mapping scope covering the threat of earthquake/tsunami and unconsolidated sediments in Port Valdez.

Attendees were reminded that a proposal needs to show 30% matching funding commitments and the ability to transfer those funds to NOAA via Memorandum of Agreement by September 2025. Attendees were also encouraged to submit letters of interest, if they do not plan to apply this year but might consider applying in future years. Proposals must be submitted in PDF format via email to iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov by October 11th, 2024. For further information, please contact NOAA Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping, at iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov, Meredith Westington at meredith.westington@noaa.gov or Paul Turner at paul.turner@noaa.gov.

**Q&A:**

A question and answer period followed; please see below for what was discussed. In some cases, similar questions have been combined and organized for efficiency.

General questions:

1. *Will there be a one-pager outlining the program? Will the slides be available?*
   A summary of the talks, slides and a compilation of questions will be made available at iocm.noaa gov. You can find summaries and slides from previous matching fund cycles, and this cycle, at https://iocm.noaa.gov/planning/contracts-grants-agreements.html.

2. *Has there been any thought to integrating this program with PORTS?*
   NOAA Physical Oceanographic Real-Time Systems are partnerships between our sister program, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, and major ports to collect *in situ* observations in and around ports for safe navigation. We would consider any proposals that can make a linkage to PORTS that would improve or increase longer term efficacy of an existing PORTS with new mapping.

3. *Will the awarded projects be announced publicly?*
   Yes, at minimum, the MOA's will be announced via the https://iocm.noaa.gov/ site. Some recent awards can also be found at these direct links to blog announcements.
   Ocean and coastal mapping matching fund opportunity
   https://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/updates/ocean-and-coastal-mapping-matching-fund-opportunity/
   NOAA Announces 2024 Brennan Matching Fund Selection and Webinar for 2025 Funding Opportunity
   https://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/updates/noaa-announces-2024-brennan-matching-fund-selection-and-webinar-for-2025-funding-opportunity/

4. *Is this opportunity being "advertised" broadly (e.g., posted on social media, etc)? Or is it relying exclusively on word-of-mouth and FRN traffic?*
   Blog posts, word of mouth, Federal Register, social media, mentions at symposiums and seminars. Please share the notice widely!

Resources:

*5. Is there a REST service url for ocean and coastal mapping areas of interest? Can you provide links to the planning tools available?*

There are sites and sources (also noted in the Federal Register notice) that can be used to help plan, including:

- The National Ocean Mapping, Exploring and Characterizing Strategy (NOMEC), the Alaska Coastal Mapping Strategy (ACMS) Implementation Plan, and the Office of Coast Survey Strategic Plan: https://iocm.noaa.gov/about/strategic-plans.html
- the Ocean Climate Action Plan (OCAP): https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Ocean-Climate-Action-Plan_Final.pdf
- the U.S. Bathymetry Gap Analysis:https://iocm.noaa.gov/seabed-2030-bathymetry.html
- the U.S. Interagency Elevation Inventory https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/united-states-interagency-elevation-inventory-usiei
- the U.S. Mapping Coordination site fedmap.seasketch.org
- OCS's Hydrographic Surveys Specifications and Deliverables publication https://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/publications/standards-and-requirements.html
- NGS's Shoreline Mapping Specifications and Deliverables:https://geodesy.noaa.gov/ContractingOpportunities/cmp-sow-v15.pdf
- the International Hydrographic Organization Standards for Hydrographic Surveys, Special Publication 44 https://iho.int/uploads/user/pubs/standards/s-44/S-44_Edition_6.1.0.pdf
- and NOAA's Equitable Climate Services Action Plan https://www.noaa.gov/

You are welcome to use other planning tools as well.

*6. How would an applicant assess the cost of a project? Are the costs estimated by area or would the costs be assessed on a project-by-project basis? Can NOAA provide guidance on general mapping cost estimates? Basically, how much does it cost to collect the various types of bathymetric data? Will there be a way to get unit cost estimates or an estimated total cost if we provide deliverable specs? This would be useful for planning purposes and understanding how much funding we need to provide to map a given area of interest.*

Please contact iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov for a cost estimation worksheet with rough estimates of cost per square mile for surveys in a particular region. This figure will not be exact, as actual cost will be negotiated by region, scale of project, and conditions to support operations.

Funding:

*7. What is the minimum dollar limit for a proposal? What is the maximum? Is NOAA providing a match of up to $1M or are they providing up to $300K for a $1M project?*

There is no minimum required for a proposal; all proposals welcome regardless of size. As stated in the Federal Register Notice, the maximum Federal commitment of matching funds is 70% toward a $1M project, however this does not preclude a partner from submitting a proposal with a contribution in excess of 30% toward a $1M or from proposing a total project cost that exceeds $1M. At NOAA's discretion, total project costs exceeding $1M may be considered.

*8. What are allowable match sources?*

Any funding that can legally be transferred to NOAA via Memorandum of Agreement. The match can be from multiple partners.

*9. Can NOAA receive a federal match for this opportunity? Can federal funds be used as the 30% match?*

If a federal agency would like to participate in a coalition with non-federal participants, it can. However, the 30% funding match will apply to the non-federal contribution because Coast

Survey and the National Geodetic Survey partners with federal agencies on its own. This pilot program is specifically focused on expanding the network of non-federal partners, so the lead point of contact and matching fund source should be a non-federal entity.

*10. Why is this funding opportunity targeted at non-federal entities?*

NOAA already has existing relationships with sister federal agencies to coordinate and collaborate on surveying and mapping efforts, so this effort seeks to widen the network of non-federal partners in ocean and coastal mapping .

*11. Once funds are secured and NOAA matches at the 70%, is there a ballpark or rule of thumb as to what percentage of the full dollar amount is retained by NOAA for overhead services and what percentage is budgeted to fund the contractor?*

Coast Survey will not use any portion of the partner match for overhead; nor will NOAA's Remote Sensing Division if contracted through the Shoreline Mapping Services contract vehicle. In addition to matching partner funds, NOAA will also offer hydrographic surveying and shoreline mapping expertise and provide comprehensive project management to include contract issuance and oversight, data processing and quality assurance as well as data archival of high resolution products at NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

*12. Are there opportunities to reduce the cost of a project if it were to expand out pre-existing planned operations? How would an applicant coordinate a project with NOAA to optimize collections based on geography?*

Yes, expanding on a planned hydrographic survey or shoreline mapping task order is an option. Please use the following links to access future NOAA Hydrographic Survey or Shoreline Mapping plans:

Planned Hydrographic Survey Operations:
https://gis.charttools.noaa.gov/arcgis/rest/services/Hydrographic_Services/Planned_Survey_Areas/MapServer

Planned Shoreline Mapping Operations:
https://www.seasketch.org/#projecthomepage/5272840f6ec5f42d210016e4

*13. Could partners provide survey coverage as the match?*

No, the match needs to be transferable funds to NOAA for use on contract task orders.

*14. On the 30% match, can a portion of the 30% be counted through money going into yearly monitoring programs or does it have to all be cash?*

It has to be transferable to NOAA to meet the 30% match. In-kind contributions do not count toward the match.

*15. Because of the need for platform mobilization, is there a minimum area or minimum match request? At my academic institution we have a relatively limited budget for mapping coastal areas this year (about $30k), and while we'd love to be able to double our funds/mapped area, it seems like it wouldn't be worth NOAA's time and resources.*

There is no minimum area or funding amount to submit a proposal. Please submit so that we have a better idea of mapping requirements out there among external stakeholders.

*16. Could you speak to which US territories are eligible for this funding? And is the 30% match requirement the same for tribal and territory entities?*

All are eligible. Yes, the match is the same.

Contracting:

*17. Is it required that NOAA perform the surveys or is it possible that a state acquisition platform (or other) that meets NOAA hydrographic standards could perform the survey? Would projects have to utilize NOAA vessels/contractor vessels or can we provide our own platforms & equipment?*

All selected projects would use NOAA's contract vehicle and task orders to its pre-qualified contractors. The Brennan Matching Funds come from an appropriation specific to contract surveys; therefore, the funds must be executed on task orders via Coast Survey's Hydrographic Services contract vehicle or the National Geodetic Survey's Shoreline Mapping Support Services contract vehicle and the surveys performed by one of the pre-qualified contractors.

*18. Hypothetically, if a private sector firm (who happened to also be a current NOAA hydro survey contractor) were to propose a task that NOAA accepted for potential execution, would that contractor be guaranteed to perform on the task order or would it potentially be awarded to any of the current IDIQ hydro survey contractors?*

Coast Survey will follow its usual process to assign task orders to the most highly qualified vendor. Therefore, Coast Survey cannot guarantee that a particular contractor will receive a particular task order.

*19. Will all mapping be performed by NOAA contractors or can participants with survey expertise participate in the mapping process? Could an academic institution or another private sector company with mapping capabilities be considered to join the contractors already existing under NOAA funding to augment their mapping capabilities and/or perform specialized mapping - e.g.,spectroscopy?*

Recipients of funding under this FRN program are limited to the seven contracting firms currently on the NOAA Hydrographic Surveying Services contract. A private sector company with mapping capabilities may coordinate with one of the seven contracting firms currently on NOAA's Hydrographic Services contract to be incorporated as a subcontractor at the task order level. This coordination would occur between the contracting firm on NOAA's current Hydrographic Surveying Services contract and the private sector company with mapping experience. The contracting firm currently on NOAA's Hydrographic Surveying Services contract may then request additional subcontractor(s) be included at the task order level. Final approval for the inclusion of additional subcontractors is made by the Contract Officer. Partner collaborations will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

*20. Based on the proposal decision timeline, what is the anticipated timeline to issue Task Orders to the contractors for work in 2026?*

Coast Survey will follow its standard process for issuing task orders for FY2026 work, and anticipates issuing them in the next field season in 2026. In FY26, once funding is available and project requirements are clearly defined, contract award is typically made within 3-4 months.

*21. Is there a way for a commercial project to participate if they are collecting data using their own means?*

No, not for this particular funding opportunity. This relies on our geospatial contract vehicles established with matching funds.

*22. Is the list of the pre-selected survey contractors available? Do they include uncrewed assets?*

Yes, we can share a link with you. Some do include uncrewed platforms. The survey dictates the tools needed to approach the job!

Hydrographic Surveys Contract Vehicle: https://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/data/hydrographic-surveys-contract-vehicle.html
Coastal Geospatial Services Contract Vehicle: https://coast.noaa.gov/idiq/geospatial.html
Shoreline Mapping Services Contract Vehicle: https://www.ngs.noaa.gov/ContractingOpportunities/

23. *Would IOOS and/or USACE be appropriate funding partners?*
Federal entities cannot be a primary partner, but they can be a secondary partner.

Mapping details:

24. *What is the shallow water survey limit? Can the intertidal be included in proposals?*
The intertidal can be included in proposals. The depth limit for vessel-based sonar technologies is about 8 feet. Topobathymetric lidar may be another option to cover the intertidal area, from shoreline to approximately 20 feet or more, depending on water clarity.

25. *Are estuaries considered under this funding? How far inland would the area of interest be?*
We do work in riverine environments with topobathymetric lidar generally up to 2 miles inland, with adjustments further inland based on project requirements. Hydrographic based assets are typically limited to 6 feet or deeper but there are non-vessel based opportunities that could be an option for anything shallower.

26. *Is there a preference for funding mapping projects in deep water vs. shallow waters (or is anywhere in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) potentially competitive?*
There is no preference. Both shallow and deep water proposals are welcomed and in line with our goal of mapping all of the US EEZ. We encourage proposals for all US waters, including our territorial waters outside of the EEZ.

27. *Is preference given to those areas that are considered "unmapped"? Do the areas proposed for mapping have to be adjacent/near areas NOAA has currently contracted to map?*
Not necessarily. The definition of "mapped" is quite generous and not inclusive of all user needs. There are many good reasons to map over areas that may be classified as "mapped." No, proposals do not have to be near other planned areas.

28. *Will this be limited to a single survey or can a proposal have a periodicity, say conduct the survey every two years?*
At this time, Coast Survey and the National Geodetic Survey will select proposals for individual projects; outyear plans will not be considered.

29. *Are there a certain number of projects you hope to select per region?*
There is no set number of projects per region.

30. *Would there be interest in mapping shoreline changes in areas where shorelines are continuously eroding?*
In general, yes, this is of interest to NOAA. All proposals will be considered.

31. *You mentioned sediment sampling on the products slide, would this include core samples? And what about sub-bottom profiling?*
Coast Survey regularly collects surface grab samples during survey operations to determine the sediment type in current and/or potential anchorage areas and in areas of geologic interest,

however core samples are not collected. In highly special circumstances, core samples could be included in a task order, however this will be highly dependent on the nature of what samples are requested (e.g. depth, method of collection, etc.) HSD's contractors are highly capable to collect sub-bottom data, and this can be included in proposals.

*32. You mentioned multibeam, sidescan, and bathymetric lidar. Is there a preference or one platform that would be ranked higher?*

No, there is no preferred platform.

*33. Does this opportunity cover navigational channels for ports?*

Yes! It could. Anything in waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction is a possibility. As a reminder USACE is the federal authority tasked with surveying federal navigational channels, and in general NOAA does not re-survey over recent USACE surveys.

*34. Is this only for underwater surveys or will shoreline mapping be considered as well?*

Shoreline and nearshore mapping will also be considered.

*35. How long after surveys are complete will that data be available on charts?*

The data is available to the public roughly 6 months after NOAA receives the data. It varies by region as well.

*36. Is this funding only available for surveying work, or can be also granted to ancillary projects, for example positioning and sea level measuring?*

Right now it is for mapping data acquisition.

*37. Do you support funding for coastline mapping of plant species and lot size? I am interested in the study of coastal resiliency and collecting data after storms to see what coastal plant species provide the best protection for the shore.*

We are mapping the coast/shoreline zones for charting activities typically with topobathymetric lidar, high resolution, aerial imagery and satellites, but we do collect other types of remotely sensed data such as hyperspectral imagery, thermal imagery, radar, and more. There are many ways this data and contract vehicle can be leveraged for additional applications.

*38. Is it okay to couple multiple technology types in a single project proposal (ie, lidar + sonar)?*

Yes, proposals are not limited to a single type of data collection. .

*39. Are surveys that cover areas with underwater cultural heritage sites (UCH) (potentially non-public data) acceptable?*

Yes, you may submit proposals for UCH sites. We work with historic preservation officers for sensitivity in data sharing.