

Coast Survey Matching Fund Pilot Program Webinar

Federal Register Notice:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/12/2021-00385/notice-of-matching-fund-opportunity-for-hydrographic-surveys-and-request-for-partnership-proposals>

Presentation Slides available here:

Summary:

Ashley Chappell, NOAA Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping Coordinator, opened the webinar to welcome participants and introduce speakers Rick Brennan, Rear Admiral (Select) for NOAA's Office of Coast Survey, and Corey Allen, Acting Deputy Chief, Coast Survey's Hydrographic Surveys Division. After a meeting logistics check-in, RDML (Select) Brennan explained the context for, and intent of, the matching fund pilot program. He spoke about the large areas of unmapped waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction -- ocean, coastal and Great Lakes -- and the need to get these areas surveyed using an Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IOCM) approach to "Map Once, Use Many Times." He talked about the new policies driving Coast Survey to undertake the matching fund opportunity: the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration and Characterization Strategy, the Alaska Coastal Mapping Strategy, and the Coast Survey Ocean Mapping Plan. All of these documents are available at <https://iocm.noaa.gov/about/strategic-plans.html>. RDML (Select) Brennan also discussed the goals of the matching fund pilot program: to grow NOAA's mapping partnerships with non-federal entities, to receive and match funds to acquire more ocean and coastal hydrographic survey data for mutual benefit, and to increase the amount of data available to the public for multipurpose use. He noted that increasing hydrographic survey data will help improve: safe navigation, coastal community resilience, integrated ocean and coastal mapping, coastal and ocean science, NOAA's strategies for the Blue Economy and many other activities.

Corey Allen then reviewed the details of the matching fund pilot program as described in the Federal Register Notice linked above. He 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." He 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,
- Deadlines and dates (note February 26th 5PM deadline for proposals!),
- Funding availability and project period,
- Submission page and content requirements, and
- Evaluation criteria.

Attendees were reminded that a proposal needs to show 50% matching funding commitments and the ability to transfer those funds to NOAA via Memorandum of Agreement by October 31, 2021. Attendees were also encouraged to submit letters of interest to gauge interest in this matching fund pilot program by eligible, non-Federal entities that 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 February 26, 2021. For further information, please contact Ashley Chappell, NOAA Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping Coordinator, 240-429-0293 or ashley.chappell@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.

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.

2. *Is there a REST service url for Coast Survey 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 U.S. Interagency Elevation Inventory (<https://coast.noaa.gov/inventory/>)
- the Bathymetric Gap Analysis (available at <http://seasket.ch/ygoJkRjmYn> and https://www.google.com/url?q=https://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id%3D4d7d925fc96d47d9ace970dd5040df0a&sa=D&ust=1612273444206000&usg=AOvVaw3KRITtOaLxUkGzGWI_f1gh)
- Nominal Coast Survey plans for 2020-2023 (<http://seasket.ch/ygxZPRPCcD> or https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgis.charttools.noaa.gov%2Farcgis%2Frest%2Fservices%2FHydrographic_Services%2FPlanned_Survey_Areas%2FMapServer&source=sd).

You are welcome to use other planning tools as well.

3. *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 \$500K 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, Coast Survey's maximum commitment of matching funds is \$1M, however this does not preclude a partner from submitting a proposal with a contribution in excess of \$1M, nor does it preclude Coast Survey from adding additional contract funds to a project that addresses a high priority.

4. *How would an applicant assess the cost of a project? Does Coast Survey have cost 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 have Coast Survey 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.

In general, costs will vary between \$10-30k per square nautical mile. Costs vary depending on water depth (shallower water takes greater effort to survey via ship based sonar than deeper water), location of project and mobilization of assets. If needed, please contact iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov for a rough estimate of cost per square nautical mile for surveys in a particular region; this figure will not be exact, as actual cost will be negotiated by region and scale of project.

5. *Do you have guidance on cost per square mile for topobathy shoreline lidar acquisition, similar to the USGS Broad Agency Announcement guidance that was available for estimating terrestrial lidar proposals?*

A rough estimate that includes topobathy lidar, orthoimagery, and tidally referenced shoreline is \$1.5K-5K per square mile. Not all areas have conditions to support topobathy lidar data acquisition due to limited water clarity and/or dark colored benthic habitat that limits the return strength of the laser. In these areas we often collect tide coordinated stereo imagery to derive shorelines and those costs range in \$500 - \$2000 a square mile. If needed, please contact iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov for a rough estimate 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.

6. *What are allowable match sources?*

Any funding that can legally be transferred to NOAA via Memorandum of Agreement.

7. *Can NOAA receive a federal match for this opportunity? Can federal funds be used as the 50% match?*

If a federal agency would like to participate in a coalition with non-federal participants, it can. However, the 50% funding match will apply to the non-federal contribution, because Coast Survey can partner with a federal agency on its own. This pilot program is specifically focused on Coast Survey expanding its network of non-federal partners, so the lead point of contact and matching fund source should be a non-federal entity. Coast Survey would decide separately whether fund transfers with another federal agency would occur, but this would be separate from the matching fund component.

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

Coast Survey wants to widen its network of non-federal partners in ocean and coastal mapping. NOAA already has existing relationships with sister federal agencies to coordinate and collaborate on surveying and mapping efforts.

9. *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 contractors. The Coast Survey 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 and the surveys performed by one of Coast Survey's hydrographic survey and services contractors.

10. *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.
11. *Once funds are secured and NOAA matches at the 50%, 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 in the first year of this pilot program; nor will NOAA's Remote Sensing Division if contracted through the Shoreline Mapping Services contract vehicle.
12. *Is Lake Champlain included in the Matching Fund coverage area?*
Yes. NOAA has a nautical chart of Lake Champlain. A proposal for work in Lake Champlain would be considered for matching funds.
13. *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 will select proposals for individual projects; outyear plans will not be considered.
14. *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.
15. *Are state CZM funds permissible as matching funds? What about other federal grant money?*
Coast Survey will not accept CZM funds as matching funds for this pilot program. It may be possible for Coast Survey to accept other federal grant money as matching funds for this pilot program, but that determination will need to be made on a case-by-case basis.
16. *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 Coast Survey to optimize collections based on geography?*
Yes, expanding on a planned hydrographic survey task order is an option. Please use the following links to access future Coast Survey plans: <http://seasket.ch/ygxZPRPCcD> or https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgis.charttools.noaa.gov%2Farcgis%2Frest%2Fservices%2FHydrographic_Services%2FPlanned_Survey_Areas%2FMapServer&source=sd.
17. *Do the areas proposed for mapping have to be adjacent/near areas NOAA has currently contracted to map?*
No, they do not.
18. *Could partners provide survey coverage as the match?*

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

19. *On the 50% match, can a portion of the 50% 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 50% match. In-kind contributions do not count toward the match.

20. *Are there a certain number of projects you hope to select per region? If so, how many in the Great Lakes?*

There is no set number of projects per region.

21. *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.

22. *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. Therefore, Coast Survey cannot guarantee that a particular contractor will receive a particular task order.

23. *You mentioned sediment sampling on the products slide, would this include core samples? And what about sub-bottom profiling?*

These types of samples are not typically specified in Coast Survey surveying contracts, however Coast Survey has the flexibility to include them. With the addition of the Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol in the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration and Characterization Strategy, sub-bottom profiling in particular is a parameter that Coast Survey would be interested in gaining more expertise in managing.

24. *Will the awarded projects be announced publicly?*

Yes, at minimum via the iocm.noaa.gov site.

25. *Is this opportunity being "advertised" at all (posted on Facebook, etc)? Or is it relying exclusively on word-of-mouth and FRN traffic?*

Blog posts, word of mouth, Federal Register, mentions at symposiums and seminars. Please share the notice widely!

26. *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.

27. *Will all mapping be performed by NOAA contractors or can participants with survey expertise participate in the mapping process? Could an academic institution with mapping capabilities be*

considered to join the 7 contractors already existing under NOAA funding to perform specialized mapping - ie spectroscopy?

Recipients of funding under this FRN program are limited to the seven contracting firms currently on the NOAA Hydrographic Surveying Services contract. Partner collaborations will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

28. Based on the proposal decision timeline, what is the anticipated timeline to issue Task Orders to the contractors for work in 2022?

Coast Survey will follow its standard process for issuing task orders for FY2022 work, and anticipates issuing them either in late fall 2021 or the next field season in 2022.

29. When considering past partnerships, the problem has been the expense of NOAA's contract vehicle. The match is certainly an enticement, but may only be making it "a wash." Is there any other incentive?

This matching fund pilot program relies on Coast Survey's funds for contracting and authority to receive funds from external partners. Other incentives are confidence in Coast Survey's expertise and resulting quality products that will meet partner requirements and be available to the public.

30. 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.

31. Does this cover navigational channels for ports?

Yes! It could. Anything in waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction is a possibility.

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

Shoreline and nearshore mapping will also be considered.