

## SECOORA 2026 IOOS Proposal Development

### Weighted Criteria for Evaluation of SECOORA Letters of Intent (LOIs)\*

The LOI must state succinct project goals and objectives that align with the overall goals and priorities in the 2026-2030 SECOORA [Regional Coastal Ocean Observing System Strategic Operational Plan](#), Administration priorities (e.g. Executive Orders regarding Restoring American's Maritime Dominance and Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness), and the request for LOIs. SECOORA staff will conduct the initial screening and noncompliant LOIs will be eliminated from further review.

Weighted review criteria for LOIs:

#### 1. **Technical and Scientific Merit: 30%**

To score a 5 on this criteria, the LOI must address these 5 key elements:

- The project will be beneficial to a broad spatial coverage of the SECOORA region (i.e. two or more states).
- The project demonstrates a credible scientific/technical approach to meet the objectives.
- Objectives are clearly written, methods are sound, and there is a clear work plan and timeline.
- The project team must be comprised of competent members with relevant education, scientific, and technical experience to complete the work described within the LOI.
- The project must have clear data management strategy that explains how the data or model will be shared with SECOORA.

Projects that do not address all the bullet points should not be awarded full points for the Technical and Scientific Merit criteria.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

5 points: Excellent – The scientific need and technical approach for the proposed effort are well articulated and includes clear objectives and milestones. The project will be beneficial to a broad spatial coverage of the SECOORA region (i.e. two or more states). The project team members are well qualified to complete the work. The data management plan articulates how the team will share data or models.

4 points: Very Good – The scientific need and technical approach for the proposed effort are well articulated and includes clear objectives and milestones. The project will be beneficial to a smaller spatial coverage of the SECOORA region (i.e. one state or a specific locale). The project team members are well qualified to complete the work. The data management plan articulates how the team will share data or models.

3 points: Good – The project team addresses at least 3 bullets within the review criteria but did not fully address all the criteria.

2 points: Fair – The scientific need for the proposed effort is articulated; however, the objectives and/or methods need clarification.

1 point: Poor – The proposal does not provide enough information to effectively determine the objectives, methods, and/or work plan and timeline. The proposal effort does not effectively address the data management plan requirements.

## **2. Innovation, Efficiency, and Effectiveness: 10%**

- Innovation is determined by the extent to which the project will improve, develop, or support new assets, models, or services.
- Efficiency and effectiveness are determined by the project team demonstrating that they have the infrastructure, expertise, and experience to cost-effectively deliver the data or model being proposed.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

5 points: Excellent – The proposed effort is innovative in its approach and will contribute to the overall SECOORA effort AND the proposed effort will build upon the infrastructure, expertise, and experience already in place; thereby creating economies of scale to deliver the new/improved proposed data, model or service (i.e. faster or cheaper than a startup operation).

4 points: Very Good – The proposed effort is innovative in its approach and will contribute to the overall SECOORA effort OR the proposed effort will build upon the infrastructure, expertise, and experience already in place; thereby creating economies of scale to deliver the proposed data, model or service (i.e. faster or cheaper than a startup operation).

3 points: Good – The proposed effort is innovative OR efficient, but more information is required to determine if the project team can complete the objectives outlined in the proposal.

2 points: Fair – Project team will need to make significant changes to address deficiencies.

1 point: Poor – The proposed effort is neither innovative nor efficient in its approach.

## **3. End User and Co-Sponsors Engagement: 30%**

The LOI and letters of support must demonstrate the degree to which end-users have been included in the development of the proposal and how the end-users will be engaged in project execution. Project teams should include partners that assure data delivery, services, or activities will meet the requirements of a significant number of users. LOIs and associated letters of support will be evaluated based on end-to-end involvement of targeted audiences and/or end users, from proposal development to active participation in the project, potentially as co-investigators on the proposal itself.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

5 points: Excellent – End users contribute direct funding or in-kind support to assure that the project achieves success. End users are key members of the project team and contribute to the design and implementation of the proposed effort as demonstrated by supporting documentation. There is a clear engagement strategy between the project team and the user group(s).

4 points: Very Good – The end users do NOT contribute funding or in-kind support to the project. End users are key members of the project team and contribute to the design and implementation of the proposed effort. There is a clear engagement strategy between the project team and the end user group(s).

3 points: Good – LOI and letter(s) of support describe how end users will benefit from the proposed effort being funded but end user is not a key member of the project team.

2 points: Fair – End user(s) listed in the LOI; letter(s) of support NOT included.

1 point: Poor – No end user listed in the LOI and no letters of support provided.

#### **4. Reasonableness of Budget: 15%**

LOI 5-year budget must clearly identify annual costs (direct and indirect costs) and include the institution's IDC rate. Costs must be commensurate with the work being performed.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

5 points: Excellent – Budget is reasonable for the work proposed and the project team is leveraging other funding sources (i.e. greater than 50% of the requested budget) to support the effort.

4 points: Very Good – Budget is reasonable for the work proposed and the project team is leveraging other funding sources (i.e. less than 50% of the requested budget) from other funding sources.

3 points: Satisfactory – Budget is reasonable for the work proposed but does not include other funding sources to support the work.

2 points: Fair – Budget is lacking some key elements which should be addressed.

1 point: Poor – Budget does not seem reasonable for the work being proposed.

#### **5. Sustainability Plan: 15%**

The project team has described the plan for sustaining the observations or models when SECOORA funding ends. This can be achieved through funding from other state or federal funding sources, SBIR funding, or leveraged funding from other sources.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

5 points: Excellent – The proposed effort describes how they will leverage SECOORA investments to sustain their project after the (5-year) grant period. The project team clearly shows they have evaluated funding and investment opportunities to maintain their observing, modeling, or related activities. This can assure SECOORA investments last beyond the grant period.

OR

5 points: Excellent – The proposed effort is a capital improvement or development project that will allow for improved data collection, data process, or data sharing that requires no

additional funding after the project period. The proposal clearly demonstrates how the improvement will allow for ongoing internal or external support.

3 points: Good – The project team has identified future funding opportunities to which they will apply to maintain their observing, modeling, or related activities; however, the sustainability plan is not well formed and exact details are not well documented.

1 point: Poor – Standalone project that did not sufficiently address the sustainability requirement or has no other potential for project funding other than SECOORA.

\* Assumes NOAA Notice Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will be similar to previous IOOS Regional Association NOFOs. We may have to ask for follow-up information after the NOFO is released.