Request for Proposals (RFP): SECOORA Data System Development, Operations, and Maintenance (2026-2031), Version 2

Issue Date: 2026-01-21
Revision Date: 2026-2-18
Submission Deadline: 2026-03-31
Period of Performance*: 2026-07-01 through 2031-06-30
**Subject to continued funding and annual performance-based contract renewal*

1.0 SECOORA Background and Scope

The Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA) is a regional non-profit organization based in Charleston, South Carolina, serving the coastal waters of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. As one of eleven regional associations partnered with NOAA's US Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), SECOORA operates a Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC) system that aggregates observations and models from SECOORA-funded assets, federal sources, and non-federal partners across the region. The system delivers data through web portals, Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), and federal operational systems, including NOAA's Telecommunications Gateway. Details of the current system architecture and capabilities are available in SECOORA's DMAC Plan at https://secoora.org/certification/.

1.1 Strategic Priorities for Data Management

SECOORA's next IOOS cooperative agreement period is tentatively July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2031, subject to the federal funding availability. SECOORA seeks a DMAC service provider to act as a strategic partner (expectations detailed below) while maintaining the current SECOORA Data System (SDS). The provider will aid SECOORA in advancing six strategic goals through technical expertise and collaborative planning. These goals reflect SECOORA's commitment to operational excellence, user-centered design, funding diversification, and technological innovation. SECOORA prioritizes management of SECOORA-funded observations and models, followed by strategic partner data systems, and regional data aggregation.

Priority 1: Quantify and Track SECOORA Data System Usage

Use quantitative and qualitative metrics of SECOORA data usage to understand and communicate SECOORA’s value to coastal communities. Implement analytics to track user interactions with SECOORA websites, data portals, and APIs. Monitor usage metrics for each dataset across all dissemination pathways. Use these insights to set development priorities and show SECOORA's value to current and potential funders.

Priority 2: Increase Efficiency and Operational Reliability of Backend Data System and Simplify the Frontend System

Improve system performance, reduce operational overhead, and enhance reliability across SECOORA's data infrastructure. Streamline data ingestion to enable efficient scaling for new data providers. Monitor data system usage and increase automation to reduce manual work. Improve the performance of the SECOORA Data Portal.

Prioritize development of SECOORA-funded observations and models over other regional or national datasets to simplify the website and Data Portal user interface and improve system performance.

Priority 3: Leverage National and Pan-Regional DMAC Efforts

As the Regional Association for the Southeastern US, SECOORA's priorities are to serve regional needs. However, pan-regional and national DMAC efforts provide us with an opportunity to leverage other DMAC development activities with shared goals. With judicious investment of time or resources into shared activities SECOORA benefits by sharing development costs, infusing innovation from other regions into the SDS, and enhancing strategic partnerships. Further, by contributing to these efforts SECOORA supports critical national priorities such as national or global metocean forecasting.

Priority 4: Integrate and Enable Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Capabilities

The field of AI/ML is rapidly evolving, and SECOORA wants to ensure our data is available for AI applications. Additionally, AI/ML has the potential to simplify and enhance the Portal User Experience. Over the next three to five years, SECOORA will:

- **Ensure SECOORA data is AI-ready**: Work with SECOORA to define and implement characteristics that make data suitable for AI/ML workflows, likely including standardized APIs, specific data formats, enhanced machine-readable metadata, and cloud-based storage using Analysis Ready Cloud Optimized (ARCO) approaches.
- **Plan to enhance the website and portal user experience:** AI can simplify the discovery, access, and use of SECOORA's vast data holdings.
- **Remain responsive to AI/ML opportunities**: Adapt system architecture and capabilities as AI/ML use cases emerge.

Priority 5: Branding and System Recognition

Support SECOORA's goal to be recognized as an exemplary ocean data management organization through consistent branding, professional system presentation, and documentation of capabilities that can be showcased to potential partners and funding agencies.

Priority 6: Support Funding Diversification and Business Development

Position SECOORA as a top data manager and decision support tool developer for ocean issues. Provide technical systems that will enable the creation of high-quality data products that appeal to multiple funders. Collaborate with SECOORA leadership to spot and pursue funding aligned with SECOORA's data work. The provider need **not** build commercial data products but must enable SECOORA and partners to do so.

Strategic Partnership Expectations:

SECOORA expects the provider to function as more than a contracted service provider performing prescribed duties. The provider will augment SECOORA's strategic planning efforts

by providing technical expertise in information management systems and oceanographic data management. Over the initial one-year contract period and subsequent annual extensions, this partnership will help guide SECOORA's work plan, inform strategic decisions, and position SECOORA as an exemplar in data management.

Strategic partners must go beyond technical execution to:

- Provide technical leadership and strategic advice on emerging technologies and industry best practices
- Identify proactive improvements to system architecture and workflows
- Present options and trade-offs for strategic decisions affecting data infrastructure

The provider must participate in:

- Annual strategic planning sessions with SECOORA leadership
- Multi-year roadmap development for DMAC capabilities
- Business development discussions when technical expertise is needed

2.0 Technical and Operational Responsibilities

This section outlines comprehensive technical and operational responsibilities. Services are organized by functional area. The provider shall describe their methodology for addressing these responsibilities, including proposed timelines, resource allocation, and prioritization strategies aligned with the strategic objectives outlined in Section 1.1.

2.1 Data System Operations and Maintenance

2.1.1 Core Data Management

The provider shall manage SECOORA data assets with the following tiers:

Tier 1 (SECOORA-Funded Data)*: Observations and models fully or partially funded by SECOORA, including but not limited to:*

- *Coastal buoy networks (meteorological and oceanographic sensors)*
- *Autonomous underwater glider deployments*
- *Water level observations*
- *Numerical circulation model outputs*
- *Harmful algal bloom (HAB) observations*
- *Surface elevation tables (SETs)*
- *Web camera imagery*
- *Passive acoustic data (e.g., soundscape monitoring)*

- *High-frequency radar (HFR) surface current observations*

***Tier 2 (Strategic Partners)**: Observations and models collected by SECOORA strategic partners. Examples include:*

- *Water Level*
- *Pan-regional web camera data system*
- *Passive acoustics monitoring system*
- *Animal telemetry data through collaboration with FACT (Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation Trust) and the Ocean Tracking Network*

***Tier 3 (Regional Aggregation)**: Observations and models within SECOORA's geographic footprint that provide value through regional aggregation and convenient access for SECOORA users*

Sprint planning for core data management activities must prioritize SECOORA-funded observations and models (Tier 1) to improve system reliability, enable new features, and optimize performance.

For all managed data assets, these services shall be provided:

1. Data Ingestion and Quality Control

- Implement automated data ingestion pipelines from diverse sources (real-time sensors, model outputs, delayed-mode observations)
- Apply quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) procedures following IOOS and SECOORA standards (https://ioos.noaa.gov/project/qartod/).
- Maintain data provenance throughout all processing steps
- Document quality control procedures for RCOS certification requirements

2. Data Storage and Management

- Maintain secure, redundant storage for all SECOORA data assets
- Implement appropriate data retention policies aligned with NOAA requirements
- Ensure efficient data retrieval across historical and real-time datasets
- Manage cloud storage infrastructure with cost optimization strategies
- Prepare data for Analysis Ready Cloud Optimized (ARCO) formats where appropriate

3. Metadata Management

- Create and maintain comprehensive metadata following IOOS DMAC standards (International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 19115, NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) templates)
- Ensure machine-readable metadata is available for all datasets

- Implement automated metadata updates as datasets are refreshed

4. Data Dissemination

- Maintain multiple data access pathways including web portals, APIs (ERDDAP, OPeNDAP, Web Mapping Service (WMS)), data downloads, and integration with national systems (e.g. NOAA NWS National Data Buoy Center, NWS/HADS, IOOS Glider Data Assembly Center, and the High Frequency Radar DAC)
- Track usage metrics for each dissemination pathway and individual dataset
- Ensure consistent SECOORA branding across all public-facing interfaces
- Optimize data delivery for performance and user experience

5. Data Archival

- Submit regular archive packages to NCEI following SECOORA's archival agreement
- Monitor archive submission status and resolve any issues with NCEI ingestion
- Maintain temporary archives if NCEI processing is delayed
- Implement cold storage strategies for long-term data preservation
- Document archival procedures for RCOS certification

2.1.2 Infrastructure and Technical Environment

Proposers should describe:

- Cloud infrastructure strategy (AWS, Azure, GCP, hybrid approaches)
- Containerization and orchestration approaches (Docker, Kubernetes, etc.)
- Infrastructure as code practices
- Development, staging, and production environment management
- Security architecture and data protection measures
- Disaster recovery and geographic distribution strategy
- Cost optimization strategies for cloud services

2.1.3 Scaling and Automation

The provider must develop methods to efficiently scale operations as new data sources are added:

- **Onboarding Efficiency**: Design data ingestion pipelines that allow new data providers to be added with minimal overhead and cost
- **Automated Workflows**: Increase automation of data processing, quality control, metadata generation, and dissemination to reduce manual operations
- **Monitoring Automation**: Implement automated system health monitoring with intelligent alerting to minimize staff intervention
- **Documentation**: Create clear documentation enabling SECOORA staff or data providers to understand data workflows and troubleshoot common issues

2.2 Website Hosting, Maintenance, and Enhancement

SECOORA maintains several public websites, which will be managed and developed by the DMAC provider. The primary websites are the main SECOORA site (secoora.org) and the Data Catalog and Portal (portal.secoora.org).

2.2.1 Main SECOORA Website

The provider shall maintain technical infrastructure for SECOORA's website (secoora.org), while the content for the website will be provided by SECOORA communications staff.

In Scope (Provider Responsibilities):

- Cloud hosting infrastructure and services
- Content Management System (CMS) maintenance and updates
- User account management and authentication
- Website performance monitoring and optimization
- Traffic analytics and monthly reporting
- Security patches and vulnerability management
- Backup and disaster recovery for the website
- Technical troubleshooting and support

Out of Scope (SECOORA Responsibilities):

- Content creation and editorial management
- Communications strategy and messaging
- Design decisions and branding (except technical implementation)

The provider must coordinate with the SECOORA communications team to ensure the website's technical infrastructure supports content management needs.

2.2.2 Data Portal and Catalog

SECOORA publishes a Data Catalog and Portal providing comprehensive search, visualization, and download capabilities for all data assets in the SDS. The DMAC provider must maintain and enhance, or replace the primary SECOORA data portal (portal.secoora.org) to provide:

- Comprehensive overview of all SECOORA data assets, prioritizing SECOORA-funded and high-priority observations and models
- Simple, accurate, and fast, search and discovery capabilities across all datasets
- Interactive maps and visualizations that perform well on desktop and mobile devices
- Links to specialized portals and external resources developed by other SECOORA partners
- Consistent SECOORA branding and user experience

2.2.3 Product or Project Specific Portals

Coordinate with external developers creating specialized data products and portals while maintaining:

- Consistent SECOORA branding
- Usage tracking and analytics for all portals
- Links from the central website and/or portal to specialized applications
- Technical standards enabling integration of externally developed tools

Develop an "extension mechanism" that enables SECOORA-funded teams or external partners to create bespoke portals using SECOORA data while maintaining brand consistency and tracking usage.

2.3 System Monitoring and Performance

Performance Targets:

The provider must meet the following minimum performance targets:

- **System uptime**: 95% minimum for website and data portal
- **Incident initial response acknowledging the issue**: Within 2 hours during business hours; within 12 hours outside business hours during the work week. By Monday morning on weekends.

The provider must implement comprehensive monitoring covering:

- **System Health Monitoring**
    - Real-time monitoring of all system components (servers, databases, web services, APIs)
    - Automated alerting for system anomalies or failures
    - Performance dashboards visible to SECOORA staff showing system health metrics
- **Data Flow Monitoring**
    - Track data flow from ingestion through dissemination for all sources
    - Alert when expected data streams are delayed or interrupted
    - Monitor data quality indicators
    - Coordinate with data providers when issues are detected
- **User Analytics and Engagement Tracking**
    - Implement comprehensive analytics for all SECOORA digital assets:
        - Website traffic (secoora.org)
        - Portal usage (portal.secoora.org and specialized portals)
        - API usage across all endpoints
        - Download statistics for datasets
    - Generate regular reports showing:

        - User demographics and geographic distribution
        - Popular datasets and access methods
        - Usage trends over time
        - User behavior patterns
    - Provide tools for SECOORA staff to query and visualize user analytics
    - Identify opportunities to improve user experience based on observed usage patterns

2.4 Compliance, System Documentation, and RCOS Certification

2.4.1 Federal and NOAA Requirements

The provider must ensure the SECOORA Data System complies with:

- **Coordinated Ocean Observations and Research Act of 2020 (COORA Act)**
    - Ensure open data access for all authorized user communities
    - Promote data sharing between Federal and non-Federal sources
    - Provide easy access to ocean and coastal data supporting public welfare
    - Maintain timely data integration and dissemination
- **NOAA Administrative Orders (NAO)**
    - **NAO 201-118 (Software Governance)**: Implement software versioning, licensing, and stewardship requirements for NOAA-funded software systems
    - **NAO 212-15B (Data Management)**: Follow data lifecycle requirements for NOAA-funded data collection and stewardship
- **IOOS Standards and Requirements**
    - **IOOS DMAC Data Standards**: Implement high-level functional requirements for DMAC operations
    - **Regional Coastal Observing System (RCOS) Certification Requirements**: Support SECOORA's RCOS certification process with required documentation and demonstrations

2.4.1.1 Open Source Software Development Strategy

Increasingly, Federal funding organizations are requiring Open-Source software approaches for taxpayer-funded development (see NAO 201-118). Proposers shall describe their approach to Open Source Software in support of the SDS:

- Contributing to and leveraging open-source projects in the ocean observing community
- Ensuring SECOORA-developed software can benefit national or regional systems
- Adopting software developed for national systems when appropriate
- Participating in IOOS DMAC technical working groups and code repositories
- Minimizing or eliminating proprietary non-open software
- Version control and release management

2.4.2 DMAC Plan Maintenance

The provider must maintain an up-to-date DMAC plan following IOOS DMAC requirements. The plan must:

- Document current system architecture and capabilities
- Describe data management workflows and quality control procedures
- Outline roles, responsibilities, and management structure
- Include metadata management and data dissemination strategies
- Be published on the SECOORA website
- Be updated at least annually or when significant system changes occur

2.4.3 Documentation and Knowledge Management

The provider must maintain comprehensive documentation published on either the SECOORA.org website or the SECOORA GitHub repository (Exceptions can be made for documentation that would incur a security risk if public):

- **System Documentation**
  - Architecture diagrams and technical specifications
  - Data flow documentation for all datasets
  - API documentation for all public interfaces
  - Deployment diagrams/descriptions showing how the cyberinfrastructure is deployed across on premise and cloud environments
  - Disaster recovery procedures
- **Process Documentation**
  - Standard operating procedures for routine tasks
  - Quality control procedures for different data types
  - Change management processes
  - Incident response procedures
- **User Documentation**
  - Data user guides explaining how to access and use SECOORA data
  - API usage examples and tutorials
  - FAQ and troubleshooting guides
  - Video tutorials where appropriate
- **Compliance Documentation**
  - Regional Coastal Observing System (RCOS) certification materials
  - DMAC plan updates
  - Annual reports

2.5 Communications and Stakeholder Management

2.5.1 SECOORA Staff Collaboration

The provider must maintain regular communication with SECOORA staff:

- **Bi-Weekly virtual meetings** to discuss ongoing work, address questions, and coordinate priorities (weekly meetings if required)
- **Quarterly virtual meetings** to review progress, plan upcoming work, and build relationships (one quarterly meeting may be combined with the SECOORA annual meeting)
- **Responsive communication** for time-sensitive issues or questions. When an outage is detected, the provider will alert SECOORA within 24 business hours with a plan of action
- **Transparent project status reporting** using agreed-upon tools and formats

2.5.2 User Engagement Support

The provider is an extension of SECOORA's outreach and user engagement function and shall:

- Document user requirements and feedback gathered through system interactions
- Exchange user requirement information with the SECOORA communications team
- Coordinate with SECOORA communications staff on user-facing announcements (system updates, new features, scheduled maintenance)
- Provide technical support to users when appropriate, coordinating with SECOORA staff for policy or mission-related questions

2.5.3 National and Regional Coordination

Represent SECOORA at relevant meetings and working groups:

- Annual IOOS DMAC meeting (3 days, typically Silver Spring, MD)
- IOOS technical working groups and community calls
- Regional association coordination meetings
- Partner meetings related to integrated systems (water level, passive acoustics, etc.)

3.0 Contract Structure, Budget, Annual Review Process

This engagement is structured as a contract, subject to:

- SECOORA's continued IOOS funding
- Annual performance-based contract renewal
- Annual budget negotiations based on available funding and performance

Budget Planning:

SECOORA anticipates annual DMAC contracts in the range of $250,000 to $300,000. SECOORA recognizes that the full scope of work described in this RFP likely exceeds this

budget level. Therefore, proposers must demonstrate strategic thinking by prioritizing work that best addresses SECOORA's strategic priorities while maintaining and transitioning current capabilities. The total budget must cover both ongoing operations and maintenance and new development activities. Balancing these competing priorities is the primary purpose of the Agile planning approach and represents one of the core strategic challenges for the DMAC provider.

Proposers must provide a proposal package (detailed below) that:

1. **Clearly prioritizes work within budget constraints**: Describe which elements of the scope will be addressed within the available budget range. Your prioritization should reflect both SECOORA's stated strategic goals and your assessment of technical dependencies, risks, and the optimal implementation sequence. Explain your rationale for the prioritization you propose.

2. **Identifies three tiers of service delivery:**

    - **Core Services (Must-Haves)**: Essential operations and maintenance required to keep the current system running, complete the 90-day transition, and meet federal compliance requirements.
    - **Enhanced Services (Should-Haves)**: Services that advance SECOORA's strategic priorities, particularly user analytics implementation, system performance improvements, and national system integration.
    - **Aspirational Capabilities (Nice-to-Haves)**: Advanced features and comprehensive system modernization that would require funding above $300k. Clearly identify the additional funding needed for these capabilities.

3. **Identifies phase-in approach for enhanced services**: If certain strategic priorities cannot be fully addressed in Year 1 due to budget, describe how you would phase them in over the five-year contract period as funding becomes available.

Annual Review and Planning Process:

The provider and SECOORA will conduct formal performance reviews annually, assessing:

- Achievement of agreed-upon milestones and deliverables
- Operational performance against established metrics
- Identification of priorities for the upcoming year
- Budget and resource planning for continued work

SECOORA expects ongoing and routine engagement with the vendor during the period of performance adopting Agile principles for planning, prioritizing, and monitoring the work. The following practices are core practices expected from the vendor:

- Sprint planning and execution (typical sprint duration, planning process)

- Epic definition and prioritization for larger initiatives (no less than quarterly)
- Backlog management and grooming
- User story development and acceptance criteria
- Retrospectives and continuous improvement

3.1 Deliverables and Reporting

The provider shall deliver:

- **Monthly progress reports** summarizing completed work, ongoing efforts, consolidated user feedback gathered through the portal, and upcoming plans
- **Annual reports** suitable for inclusion in SECOORA's IOOS reporting requirements, summarizing completed work, ongoing efforts, and upcoming plans
- **Sprint artifacts,** including sprint goals, completed user stories, and retrospective notes (shared with SECOORA)
- **Ad hoc deliverables** as defined in sprint planning (code releases, documentation updates, new features, etc.)

3.1.1 Deliverables in Year 1

Year 1 Focus and Phasing:

Year 1 priorities depend on whether the selected provider is the incumbent:

For Incumbent Provider:

- Quarterly epic planning sessions establish development priorities
- Begin development using SECOORA's prepared backlog of tasks and results of quarterly planning
- Prioritize user tracking implementation following a phased approach: planning → minimum viable product (MVP) → iterative refinement over multiple years

For New Provider:

- Year 1 focuses on system transition and operational stabilization
- Transition work becomes the primary focus of epic and sprint planning, including knowledge transfer, code migration, and data transfer
- Data migration occurs incrementally alongside knowledge transfer
- Priority 1 development begins in Year 2 after demonstrating operational competency
- By Day 365: Full operational capability demonstrated, baseline performance metrics established, Year 2 priorities defined

All Providers:

1. System Transition and Knowledge Transfer (Target: 90 days for new providers)

Develop and execute a plan to assume responsibility for SECOORA Data System operations. Describe how you will:

- Conduct knowledge transfer from outgoing provider or SECOORA staff
- Transfer code repositories and development environments
- Migrate data incrementally while maintaining system operations
- Complete documentation review and gap analysis
- Perform system architecture assessment
- Maintain continuity of service during transition
- Identify technical debt and modernization opportunities
- Establish baseline performance metrics

2. Ongoing Deliverables:

- Monthly progress reports
- Quarterly epic planning meetings with SECOORA
- Sprint artifacts (goals, completed user stories, retrospectives)
- Annual performance report suitable for SECOORA's IOOS reporting

4.0 Proposal Submission and Review Process

Any eligible state agency, university, research institution, NGO, or private industry is encouraged to submit applications. All RFPs must be submitted via egrants.secoora.org. If you are not a registered egrants user, you must complete the registration process to upload a Proposal. This is a two-part verification registration system (phone and email confirmations are required). Once you have registered, please complete the required fields and upload your Proposal and supporting documents. Proposals are due no later than 5:00 PM ET 2026-03-31

For any questions related to this solicitation, please contact Jennifer Dorton, SECOORA Deputy Director, via email (jdorton@secoora.org).

The complete proposal package must include the following:

Technical Proposal (not including the Title/Cover page, cannot exceed 12 pages, with one-inch margins and 12-point text in PDF format) must include:

1. **Title/Cover Page**: Includes name of applicant organization and principal/co-investigators, contact information, and Year 1 requested funds. The Title/Cover page does not count towards the 12 page limit.

2. **Strategic Partnership**: How will you function as a strategic partner, not just a service provider? Describe your philosophy, past examples, and proposed engagement model with SECOORA leadership.
3. **Technical and Operational Responsibilities**: Describe your approach for addressing the responsibilities described in the “Technical and Operational Responsibilities” section. Describe your approach to tiering based on the cost criteria in the “Contract Structure, Budget, Annual Review Process” section. Describe the technical infrastructure, tools, and practices you will employ to deliver reliable, scalable, and maintainable services.
4. **Phased Implementation**: Propose your approach to Year 1 operational focus, followed by implementation of user tracking capabilities, and subsequent strategic priority development. If you are not an incumbent, describe your 90-day transition strategy, including knowledge transfer, code migration, data transfer, system assessment, and continuity of service maintenance.

Required Appendices, which do not count towards the 12-page limit:

1. **Team and Qualifications**: Identify and provide CVs of key personnel, describe relevant experience, and demonstrate both technical excellence and strategic partnership capabilities. Describe the management structure, responsibilities of key personnel, and technical experience. Include: Project/Technical Lead (expected % Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)), Data Engineers (number and % FTE), Web Developers (number and % FTE), DevOps/Infrastructure specialists (number and % FTE), and total team FTE commitment.

2. **Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**: Include a 2-page COOP that specifies the proposer's approach to identifying and addressing errors, failures, and other adverse conditions in the SDS. These anomalies should include failures in the IT infrastructure and outages in the data flow from observational systems ingested by the SDS. The description should include mechanisms for error detection, status communication to the SECOORA team, and response times for addressing outages. Include a suggested communications plan to inform SECOORA staff of progress toward re-establishing services. SECOORA expects 95% uptime for the website and data portal.

3. **Agile Project Management Approach**: Include a 1-page description of the proposer's experience and approach to Agile software management and Agile prioritization methods. Describe your proposed approach to working with SECOORA over the project period of performance.

Cost Proposal: Year 1 cost proposal (not to exceed 4 pages, with one-inch margins and 12-point text in PDF format). The cost proposal shall address the following cost categories and provide a basis of estimate for each:

1. Labor categories, labor rates, and approximate labor hours for the technical services outlined in this request. Also include fringe benefits rates and calculations

2. Detailed equipment costs (e.g., servers, hardware) for items over $10,000
3. Supplies
4. Services (e.g., Cloud computing, software)
5. Estimated domestic travel costs, including:
    a. DMAC team member attendance at the 2-day SECOORA annual meeting
    b. Two other regional meetings annually (e.g., FACT meetings, data workshops) - these meetings will occur in NC, SC, GA, or FL
    c. The annual IOOS DMAC 3-day meeting, typically held in Silver Spring, MD
6. Other costs required to complete DMAC services that are requested in this RFP
7. Indirect rates applied. Also include a copy of the respondents' federally approved indirect cost rate agreement, if available
8. Provide an estimate of costs for years 2-5, including hardware maintenance/replacement costs, cloud services, and identify personnel escalation rates applied

4.1 Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

This is an open and competitive process. SECOORA reserves the right to reject any and all responses received as a result of this process. Any contracts that result from this Request for Proposals (RFP) are subject to SECOORA's continued IOOS funding and the DMAC contractor's annual performance-based contract renewal. Upon receiving proposals, SECOORA will evaluate the proposals as follows.

1. SECOORA will convene a review panel of 3-5 participants. The panel may include SECOORA staff, a SECOORA member with relevant expertise, and other subject matter experts.
2. Solicitation for proposals will be distributed via SECOORA's email list and made available on the SECOORA website. Responses must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET, 2026-03-31
3. The review panel will evaluate the responses to the RFP and recommend up to three respondents for follow-up interviews
4. At the conclusion of the interviews, SECOORA will identify its first choice and negotiate a contract for DMAC services

All evaluation criteria for proposal review have been consolidated here for clarity and concision. The review panel will assess each proposal using the following five criteria:

1. **Strategic Partnership Capability (10%)**: Ability to act as a strategic partner, including experience with organizational strategic planning, thought leadership in oceanographic data management, and effective communication with diverse stakeholders.

2. **Technical Qualifications (30%)**: Demonstrated technical excellence in coastal and ocean data management, programming expertise, familiarity with IOOS DMAC and NOAA standards, and experience integrating diverse datasets into web-based services.

Proposed approach for infusing innovation into the SECOORA Data System (e.g., AI/ML).

3. **Operational Approach and Transition Plan (30%)**: Strength and feasibility of the 90-day transition plan, project management methodology, operational continuity, and a clear plan for knowledge transfer, code migration, and data transfer.

4. **Team Experience and Capacity (10%)**: Qualifications, structure, and availability of key personnel, including relevant experience in technical delivery, strategic engagement, and successful delivery of similar projects.

5. **Cost estimate (20%)**: The year one budget is clear, realistic, and labeled according to the tiering approach identified in the “Contract Structure, Budget, Annual Review Process” section. The budget management approach is clearly described and aligns with the prioritization approach outlined in the Agile Project Management appendix. The approach should support the expectation that all stages of planning will result in a realistic and well-understood budget managed by SECOORA and the DMAC provider.