

Coastal Zone Management Programs and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System: Guidance for the Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding

I. Purpose of Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding

These funds will support a research reserve or coastal zone management program's ability to plan for and implement habitat restoration and conservation projects proposed through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). State programs may also use this funding to support planning efforts for habitat and conservation planning projects proposed through other infrastructure funding sources. Please see the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Guidebook](#) for a list.

II. Available Funding Amounts

Each coastal zone management program may apply for up to \$150,000 annually, for a maximum of \$450,000 over a 3-year cooperative agreement. Each research reserve may apply for up to \$100,000 annually, for a maximum of \$300,000 over a 3-year cooperative agreement.

Programs are not required to provide a non-federal match, but formal match or informal leverage opportunities are encouraged. This funding cannot be used to match other federal funds, except for those (few) programs with statutes that specifically authorize other federal funding to be used as match.

III. Allowable Uses

Staffing. Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding may be used for program staffing focused on planning, coordinating, and developing habitat-focused infrastructure projects, including performance metrics, for potential IIJA-funded projects. This could include a partial or full-time staff position, a contract position, and fellowship and internship positions.

Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding may only be used proportionate to the amount of time the staff positions spend directly working on IIJA-supported habitat restoration and conservation projects. IIJA competitive funding can also support staff time for IIJA-funded projects, so please review that funding opportunity for the specifics of how staff support should be addressed in those project proposals.

Staff positions may be partially funded with Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding and partially funded through other sources such as state funding, research reserve operations, or coastal zone management base funding. Programs must be able to accurately track the percentage of staff time funded through Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding separately from other funding sources, and report on results and accomplishments proportionately to the Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding used for that position.

Similarly, coastal zone management and research reserve programs (or several reserves in one state) may want to pool resources and co-fund a position. Each program would need to individually apply to NOAA for their share of funding, and that funding could be allocated to a shared position. As noted above, programs must be able to accurately track the percentage of staff time funded through the Infrastructure Capacity - Building Funding program, and report on results and accomplishments proportionately.

In addition to staffing, the following represents acceptable planning activities for this funding:

- Pre- and post-habitat restoration site monitoring.
- Pre- and post-monitoring of conservation projects acquired (or planned to be acquired) IJJA funding.
- Development or updating state or regional land conservation or habitat restoration plans.
- Development of state or regional performance measures or project site selection and evaluation criteria.
- Development or refinement of best management practices, particularly related to incorporating climate change into project design.
- Costs to coordinate project development with partners. This could include the costs associated with planning workshops, travel to proposed project sites, and participant support costs for partners, especially to support the engagement of partners from underserved communities or organizations with expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Training for staff or key partners on topics such as project management, grant-writing, land conservation best practices, habitat restoration, or restoration monitoring techniques.
- Detailed planning, engineering, and design work that refines and finalizes proposed habitat restoration projects. This should be small scale in nature (project cost less than 50% of a program's annual capacity building funding request) and should only be used for the 'final mile' or work needed in getting a high priority project viable for competitive funding (e.g., moving a project from 60% to 90% design complete, rather than funding a project starting at 0-25% design complete).

- Pre-acquisition due diligence costs such as obtaining surveys, appraisals, and title documentation.
- Programs may also sub-award or pass-through a portion of their Infrastructure Capacity Building-Funding to key partners, such as other state agencies, local governments, or non-profit partners. The allowable uses described in this guidance apply. Pass-through funding could be used, for instance, to support larger scale regional initiatives or to partner with underserved communities to develop projects to be funded through the IIJA. The same tracking and reporting requirements apply, including the requirement for tracking how many projects result in IIJA project proposals and how many are eventually funded.

Funds may not be used for:

- On-the-ground habitat restoration projects.
- Acquisition of real property (fee simple or easement interests).
- Equipment purchases, other than equipment needed for habitat restoration site monitoring or office equipment (such as computers and monitors) needed to support staff hired through this award. Equipment purchases should generally be less than 10% of the total annual funding for a program.
- General administration of coastal zone management or research reserve programs.

IV. Process for Applying for Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funds

NOAA will publish two funding opportunities for Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funds: one for research reserves, and one for coastal zone management programs.

Applications will be submitted via grants.gov. Applicants may use the Coastal and Marine Management Program (CAMMP) to develop their project applications, but are not required to use CAMMP.

NOAA anticipates awarding these funds as individual multi-year cooperative agreements with a timeframe of up to three years. Awards should have a planned start date of December 1, 2022 and a planned award end date of November 30, 2025. Funding for fiscal years 2023 and 2024 will be awarded through this initial cooperative agreement, rather than through another cooperative agreement. NOAA will provide additional guidance regarding the process for requesting funding future fiscal years.

Please note that NOAA will closely monitor and track award implementation and fund expenditure rates. If a program falls behind schedule on their work plan, NOAA may choose to release only a portion of the requested funds for the following year's work to ensure the award recipient does not accumulate excessive unspent funds.

V. Content and Form of Application

Applications will include a workplan for each proposed year of funding. The workplan may have one task or several. Each task narrative should clearly describe the work to be completed, as well as how the work will support the program's ability to plan for and implement habitat restoration and conservation projects through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). All applications should include specific project objectives; project approach; project outcomes; project milestones; and an equity and inclusion statement.

The project application should follow the [Budget Narrative Guidance for NOAA Grants](#). All funded staff (or staff positions) should be described within the project application. Subaward and contractual budget details should be provided to the maximum extent practical.

Please note that the annual funding amount is **UP TO** \$150,000 for coastal zone management programs and \$100,000 for research reserve programs. Programs should only apply for the amount of funding necessary for implementing the proposed work. Please note that NOAA may choose to award less than the requested funding if the program does not provide a clear and compelling award narrative and budget.

NOAA will closely review applications to ensure that the proposed tasks and budget will support IIJA-funded project coordination and implementation. Programs may not have all of the details ready at the time of application for new hires or new project coordination work, but NOAA asks that programs include sufficient background information to clearly justify the need for this funding, as well as a clear timeline for providing the necessary detail and completing the work.

All funds will be awarded as a cooperative agreement between NOAA and the coastal zone management or research reserve program.

VI. Reporting

Financial and progress reporting will be required semi-annually.

NOAA is still developing progress reporting criteria for IIJA projects. NOAA is also developing performance measures related to habitat (e.g. acres protected), jobs created, and communities benefited, as well as diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) related performance measures. Recipients of Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding will be asked to show how the funding has contributed to meeting these criteria.

While the Infrastructure Capacity Building-Funding will not fund on-the-ground work, a mechanism for tracking long-term results is still required. Programs should be able to describe which projects were developed and supported (in whole or in part) through the Infrastructure Capacity Building-Funding, and the results of those projects. A sample tracking table is provided below, but this table is not comprehensive and programs may find it helpful to track additional information beyond what is listed here.

IIJA Project Name	Project Lead Agency/Org.	Infrastructure Funding Source	Additional Project Funds Leveraged	How Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funds Supported the Project	Project Summary	Notable Results or Outcomes
		(e.g. CZM, NERR, other federal funding opportunity)		1. 2. 3.	What was the result or outcome?	

VII. NOAA Review Criteria

For the Infrastructure Capacity Building-Funding, NOAA will review all applications to ensure the proposed projects are supporting the purposes and objectives outlined within this funding guidance, the associated notices of funding opportunity, and other known state or regional priorities. NOAA may provide suggestions and modifications to the work plan and possibly decide to partially fund certain portions of the proposed work plan.

NOAA will monitor progress through performance reports, financial reports, draw-down rates for award funds, as well as discussions with the coastal zone management or research reserve program. As noted previously, if a work plan falls behind schedule, NOAA may choose to release only a portion of the requested funds for the following year.

Please note that NOAA may also consider performance on other NOAA-funded awards when making decisions regarding awarding new Infrastructure Capacity Building-Funding awards or the release of funds from an existing award.

Appendix 1 - Sample Task:
Department of Natural Resources Infrastructure Project Coordination

Timeframe: October 1, 2022 – September 3, 2023

Task Description:

The goals of this task are to develop project selection criteria, project proposals, and project performance measures for IIJA funding that support the goals of the *Region 1 Restoration Plan*, the *Region 2 Conservation Plan*, and the *Statewide Land Conservation Plan*. These plans are the program's highest priority because.....

This work will be supported through the hiring of a new Infrastructure Project Coordinator within the State Department of Natural Resources. This position will coordinate within the DNR, as well as with key external stakeholders such as {stakeholder 1, stakeholder 2} to:

- Develop project selection criteria;
- Identify and develop project proposals for IIJA funding competitions;
- Develop performance measures for IIJA funded projects; and
- Monitor and track the results of IIJA-funded projects, specifically those projects where the Infrastructure Project Coordinator or research reserve or coastal management staff have provided significant technical assistance during the project development or implementation phases.

This project coordinator will focus 25% of his or her time specifically on coordinating with underserved communities such as {stakeholder 2} through bi-monthly meetings andWe expect that this will likely result in at least one habitat restoration project proposal for submission to the FY2024 IIJA competition.

Task Outcomes:

1. Hire infrastructure project coordinator

The State Department of Natural Resources will hire a new infrastructure project coordinator who will work within the DNR as well as with key external stakeholders such as {stakeholder 1, stakeholder 2} to identify and develop project proposals for IIJA funding competitions. The DNR has developed a position description and anticipates that the position will be advertised by December 2022 and hired by March 2023. This position will be fully funded through this award.

Outcome End Date: March 2023

2. Coordination with key stakeholders to develop project selection criteria

Three stakeholder meetings will be held during the year. The infrastructure project coordinator will organize the agendas and reserve staff will provide updates during the meetings. These meetings are intended to develop project selection criteria in order to select projects that best support the goals of *Region 1 Restoration Plan*, the *Region 2 Conservation Plan*, and the *Statewide Land Conservation Plan*. These project selection criteria will be utilized to prioritize the state's submittals to the FY23 IIJA competitions held for coastal zone management and research reserve programs, as well as other federal funding opportunities.

Outcome End Date: June 2022

3. Developing project proposals

The infrastructure project coordinator will work within the DNR and with key stakeholders such as {stakeholder 1, stakeholder 2] to develop and refine FY23 habitat conservation and restoration project proposals that best meet the project selection criteria for IIJA funding that were developed in outcome 2. Project partners and stakeholders will coordinate to determine which projects are best suited for various funding sources.

Outcome end Date September 30, 2023

2. Performance reporting

The infrastructure project coordinator will track the progress of project proposals developed or supported through the Infrastructure Capacity-Building Funding. The coordinator will track project type, project lead, whether the project was funded (and if so, through which funding source), the project summary, and notable results from the project.

Outcome End Date: September 30, 2023