

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**Financial Assistance  
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**



Program Title	Cooperative Research and Training Programs
Notice of Funding Opportunity Number:	P17AS00037
Announcement Type:	Initial General Announcement
CFDA Number:	15.945
Issue Date:	April 3, 2017
Application Due Date:	<b>EXTENDED</b> - December 31, 2018

This announcement remains open until **December 31, 2018**. Applications are reviewed and evaluated as they are received and may be submitted at any time. The submission process for applications is discussed in [section D](#) of this announcement.

Agency Contact Information:  
Questions and concerns should be directed to the program points of contact contained in [section G](#) of this announcement.

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## **Definitions**

### **1. Cooperative Agreement:**

A legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302-6305:

(a) Is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity to the non-Federal entity to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal Government or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use; (b) Is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award (2 CFR 200.24).

A cooperative agreement may be entered into to accomplish various projects or tasks anticipated and initiated over a span of up to five (5) years unless otherwise indicated. Such a cooperative agreement should establish the general scope of the agreement, as well as its essential elements and the estimated funding. Either a bilateral modification or a task agreement may then be issued to authorize specific project commencement and funding. A bilateral modification or a task agreement is not always required as a cooperative agreement may stand on its own without task agreements and can contain the specific scope of work and related funding.

### **2. Master Cooperative Agreement:**

A master cooperative agreement is used to enter into a relationship with a non-Federal entity in which the primary purpose is to establish a relationship with the non-Federal to carry out broad public purpose objectives when more than one project is anticipated. This type of cooperative agreement will include a detailed description of all types of work that could be done under the agreement as well as citation to the legal authority(s) that authorize the agreement. The master cooperative agreement also establishes the overarching terms and conditions and the general level of substantial involvement.

A master cooperative agreement is not a funded legal instrument. Funding is provided through specific task agreements which reference and are subject to the terms and conditions of the master cooperative agreement. See task agreement definition below for additional information.

### **3. Public Purpose of Support or Stimulation:**

Public purpose is government assistance for which the principal purpose is to promote the general welfare, security, prosperity, or public convenience as authorized by a Federal law. Public purpose is required for all financial assistance awards. A financial assistance award must principally fulfill a public purpose of support or stimulation, which is different than a procurement contract which is designed to directly benefit the NPS.

### **4. Substantial Involvement:**

Substantial Involvement is significant NPS participation during the performance of a cooperative or task agreement. Substantial involvement is a required component of a cooperative agreement and task agreement. Some examples of substantial involvement include: NPS involvement in program

management decisions; NPS collaboration in the accomplishment of the activity; or NPS operational involvement or participation during the project. NPS funding and monitoring/administering the financial assistance agreement alone does not constitute substantial involvement. The nature of the Federal involvement will be identified within the resulting master cooperative agreement.

#### **5. Task Agreement**

Once a master cooperative agreement is established, specific projects with funding are provided through subsequent task agreements which are issued under the applicable legal authority documented within the master cooperative agreement. A task agreement will authorize performance, establish timetables, identify key personnel, and obligate funds for a project that falls within the scope of an established master cooperative agreement. Task agreements incorporate by reference the master cooperative agreements thereby not repeating the terms and conditions contained in the master cooperative agreement. The task agreement will cite the specific legal authority(s) contained in the master cooperative agreement that authorizes that specific task agreement project. Task agreements may contain applicable “as-needed” terms and conditions or specific conditions that are not otherwise specified within the master cooperative agreement.

**Section A: Program Description**

1. **Federal Agency Name:** Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS)
2. **Funding Opportunity Title:** NPS Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Units (CESU) Master Cooperative Agreements
3. **Funding Opportunity Number:** P17AS00037
4. **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 15.945, Cooperative Research and Training Programs
5. **Federal Regulations:** 2 C.F.R. § 200 & 2 C.F.R. § 1402
6. **Legislative Authorities:**
  - a. **54 U.S.C. § 100703 - Agreements with Educational Institutions to Study National Park System Resources and Non-Park Service Resources:** The NPS is authorized and directed to enter into cooperative agreements with colleges and universities in partnership with other Federal and State agencies, to establish cooperative study units to conduct multi-disciplinary research and develop integrated information products on the resources of the National Park System or the larger region of which parks are a part.
  - b. **54 U.S.C. § 101702(b) – Cooperative Research and Training Programs:**

The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with public or private educational institutions, States, and their political subdivisions, for the purpose of developing adequate, coordinated, cooperative research and training activities concerning the resources of the NPS.
  - c. **54 U.S.C. § 101702(a) – Agreements for the Transfer of Appropriated Funds to Carry out NPS Programs:** The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements that involve the transfer of National Park Service appropriated funds to State, local and tribal governments, other public entities, educational institutions, and private nonprofit organizations for the public purpose of carrying out National Park Service programs.
  - d. **54 U.S.C. § 101702(d)(1) – Cooperative Agreements for National Park Natural Resource Protection:** The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with State, local, or tribal governments, other Federal agencies, other public entities, educational institutions, private nonprofit organizations, or participating private landowners for the purpose of protecting natural resources of units of the National Park System through collaborative efforts on land inside and outside of National Park System units.
  - e. **54 U.S.C. § 200103(g)(1) - Outdoor Recreation of Programs, Research and Education:** The NPS is authorized to sponsor, engage in, and assist in research relating to outdoor recreation, directly or by contract or cooperative agreements, and make payments for such purposes without regard to the

limitations of section 3324(a) and (b) of title 31 concerning advances of funds when he considers such action in the public interest, (2) undertake studies and assemble information concerning outdoor recreation, directly or by contract or cooperative agreement, and disseminate such information without regard to the provisions of section 3204 of title 39, and (3) cooperate with educational institutions and others in order to assist in establishing education programs and activities and to encourage public use and benefits from outdoor recreation.

## **7. Program Background Information and Objectives:**

The National Park Service (NPS) Intermountain Region, Alaska Region, Northeast Region, National Capital Region, and Washington Service Office are seeking applications for master cooperative agreements from CESU network participants in the following CESU network regions:

- Chesapeake Watershed
- Colorado Plateau
- Desert Southwest
- North and West Alaska
- North Atlantic Coast
- Rocky Mountain

Cooperative agreements to CESU network participants residing in CESU network regions other than those listed above will be pursued separate from this notice of funding opportunity; however, those CESU network participants may still apply for a master cooperative agreement under this announcement. Application instructions are found in [Section D](#).

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated as they are received and may be submitted at any time up until the closing date of this announcement.

The Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units network is a national consortium of Federal agencies, tribes, academic institutions, state and local governments, nongovernmental conservation organizations, and other partners working together to support informed public trust resource stewardship. The CESU network includes [390 non-Federal partners and 15 Federal Agencies](#) in [seventeen \(17\) CESUs](#) representing biogeographic regions encompassing all 50 states and U.S. territories. The CESU network is well positioned as a platform to support research, technical assistance, education and capacity building that is responsive to long-standing and contemporary science and resource management priorities.

The seventeen (17) CESUs bring together scientists, resource managers, students, and other conservation professionals, drawing upon expertise from across the biological, physical, social, cultural, and engineering disciplines (from Anthropology to Zoology) to conduct collaborative and interdisciplinary applied projects that address natural and cultural heritage resource issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context. Each CESU is structured as a working collaborative with participation from numerous Federal and non-Federal institutional partners. CESUs are based at host universities and focused on a particular biogeographic region of the country.

The NPS is required under “Research Mandate” 54 USC 100702 to ensure the management of NPS units are “enhanced by the availability and utilization of a broad program of the highest quality science and

information.” To help answer this mandate, the NPS works cooperatively with approved CESU cooperators. Annually the NPS obligates between \$30M and \$40M in CESU cooperative agreements agency wide. Individual projects are up to five (5) years in duration with an average of approximately \$60,000 per agreement.

The NPS plans to create master cooperative agreements with CESU partners to carry out the CFDA program 15.945, Cooperative Research and Training Programs – Resources of the National Park System. The NPS is announcing the intent to solicit applications from organizations within the CESU network. The objectives of the CESU program are:

- a.** Provide usable knowledge to support informed decision making.
- b.** Ensure the independence and objectivity of research.
- c.** Create and maintain effective partnerships among the Federal agencies and universities to share resources and expertise.
- d.** Take full advantage of university resources while benefiting faculty and students.
- e.** Encourage professional development of current and future Federal scientists, resource managers, and environmental leaders.
- f.** Manage Federal resources effectively.

## **Section B: Federal Award Information**

### **1. Types of Agreements:**

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) allows for the award of master cooperative agreements by NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officers service-wide. The NPS shall award non-funded agency wide master cooperative agreements from this NOFO under CFDA 15.945, Cooperative Research and Training Programs. The master cooperative agreements awarded under this notice of funding opportunity announcement will be used to award future task agreements for the NPS. Master cooperative agreements are not funded, but the awarded master cooperative agreements will allow for the NPS to fund subsequent task agreements bureau wide.

Non-Federal entities that are awarded a CESU master cooperative agreement are not guaranteed funding under task agreements. Funded CESU task agreements will be issued under the awarded master cooperative agreements based on program need and the availability of fiscal appropriations. The number of awards made under this announcement will depend on the number of meritorious applications.

**The receipt of a master cooperative agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Separate cooperative agreements with CESU partners may still be pursued by the NPS apart from this notice of funding opportunity. The award of a master cooperative agreement does not preclude the NPS from soliciting for additional CESU projects through separate competed or single source financial assistance agreements.**

### **2. Anticipated Awards and Funding**

Based on prior year data, the NPS anticipates awarding between \$30M and \$40M annually in financial assistance to CESU network participants across all the CESU regions. Funding provided under this NOFO will be provided through the issuance of subsequent task agreements based on individual program goals and funding made available through annual appropriations. The amount of funding provided through individual task agreements will vary depending on the scope of individual project objectives, but past CESU projects have typically averaged approximately \$50,000-\$70,000 per task agreement.

### **3. Anticipated Start Date:**

Master cooperative agreements will typically be selected for award within 90 days of application submittal. Master cooperative agreements are not effective until fully executed with a signature from the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer. Master cooperative agreements do not allow for individual projects to begin. Projects shall not start until a NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer signs a funded task agreement.

### **4. Anticipated Term of the Agreement:**

Master cooperative agreements may have a period of performance up to five (5) years, if selected. Task agreements awarded under the master cooperative agreements may have a period of performance up to five (5) years, depending on the negotiated project statement of work for the specific task agreement. Should the task agreement require continuation of funding over that duration, continuation funding (funding for the second and subsequent budget periods) is contingent on: (1) availability of funds



appropriated by Congress and future year budget authority; (2) progress towards meeting the objectives of the approved proposal; (3) submission of required reports; and (4) compliance with the terms and conditions of the award.

**5. Substantial Involvement:**

NPS substantial involvement will vary for individual projects and will be defined within subsequent task agreements. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- NPS staff assistance in selecting projects, providing orientation to park resources, overseeing assignments, teaching new skills, distributing tools and equipment and providing technical assistance and safety training.
- NPS staff providing cultural/environmental programs to team members including park tours, educational programs, talks on the history of the park, and other similar programs in a variety of media; and coordination among other NPS units in the area to provide joint educational programs and field trips to NPS and other related sites.
- NPS staff providing the programmatic structure of a project, providing special interpretive programs, and/or providing educational elements of the project such as trade skill development and leadership development.
- NPS staff working together with the non-Federal entity to jointly organize and deliver seminars, workshops, and types of training programs for the purpose of promoting historic preservation to non-Government entities, States, Tribes, and local governments and the general public.
- NPS staff providing the services of a Program Coordinator to serve as liaison to the non-Federal entity for the work under this agreement. This includes consulting and working specifically with the entity's program coordinator and team leaders on recruiting, interviewing, and recommending appropriate candidates.

## **Section C: Eligibility Information**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

All applicants must be a partner of the CESU network prior to being considered for an award of a master cooperative agreement under this announcement. Information on how to join the CESU network can be found at: <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>.

Federal law mandates that all entities applying for Federal financial assistance must have a valid Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). A Federal award may not be made to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements. Additionally if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NPS is ready to make the award, NPS may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

### **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing or matching, under Federal research proposals is not required or expected and will not be used as a factor during the merit review of applications. Any cost share offered is voluntary and will not be used as a factor during the merit review of applications.

### **3. Other**

CESU network partners with skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the program objectives are invited to work with their organizations to develop an application for financial assistance.

The receipt of a master cooperative agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Separate cooperative agreements with CESU partners may still be pursued by the National Park Service apart from this notice of funding opportunity.

### **4. Excluded Entities**

Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding. As stated above in 1.a., all applicants must be a partner of the CESU network prior to being considered for an award of a master cooperative agreement under this announcement.

## **Section D: Application and Submission Information**

### **1. Address to Request Application Package**

An Application Package has been included within this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for your convenience, found in Appendix A. The Application Package contains two mandatory forms, which must be submitted with a proposal narrative. The forms include: form [SF-424](#) (Application for Financial Assistance) and form [SF-424B](#) (Assurances). The Application Package can also be accessed and downloaded from the Synopsis page of this announcement in Grants.gov. Please refer to [Section G](#) for contact information if assistance is needed to access any of the forms.

### **2. Contents and Form of Application Submission**

You must complete the mandatory forms and any applicable optional forms, in accordance with the instructions below, as required by this NOFO. Do not include any proprietary or personally identifiable information (PII). All applications must be signed and dated where indicated; electronic signatures are allowed.

#### **A. Proposal Narrative – Proposal Submission Format**

The proposal narrative should identify the following:

NOTE: The applicant is permitted to substitute their organization's original CESU proposal narrative used for acceptance into the CESU network in lieu of the required proposal narrative under this NOFO.

#### **(1) Organization and Mission**

- i. Description of the institution/organization, its mission, and the primary focus of collaborative activities in accordance to cooperative research and training.
- ii. Description or list of the primary programs, departments, or other institutional divisions of relevance to cooperative research and training. Include website addresses for further information, as appropriate.
- iii. Summary of the organization business management department to include number of dedicated staff currently allocated to administer grants/cooperative agreements/contracts, pre and post grant/agreement personnel, accounting, internal controls.

#### **(2) Personnel and Resources**

- i. A list and brief description of the staff or faculty with expertise in disciplines and subject areas of relevance to cooperative research and training (do not attach CVs).
- ii. Description or list of facilities, equipment, centers, or institutes that would provide support for research, technical assistance, or educational activities.

**(3) Past Performance**

Description or list of past research, technical assistance, and educational services supported through Federal financial assistance awards.

**(4) Formatting Requirements (not applicable if submitting original CESU proposal narrative for acceptance into the CESU network):**

The proposal narrative shall be in one of these file extensions: .pdf, .docx, or .doc. The proposal text must be no smaller than font size 10, have 1-inch margins and be single spaced. Proposal narrative shall be a maximum of 10 pages in length (excluding required SF forms).

**B. Required Forms:**

**(1) Standard Form 424 (SF 424) – Application for Federal Assistance**

Complete this form with all applicable information. This form must be signed by an official signatory.

**(2) Standard Form 424B (SF 424B) – Assurances**

This form must be signed and submitted with the application by an official signatory.

**C. Additional Instructions:**

(1) The proposal should clearly state the goal is to obtain a master cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.

(2) In accordance with the CESU network base joint venture agreements, a 17.5% indirect cost rate shall be used for resulting financial assistance agreements. Task agreement proposed budgets shall apply the 17.5% indirect cost rate using the same base identified in the non-Federal entity's Federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.

(3) If selected for a master cooperative agreement, NPS reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary, for the duration of the master cooperative agreement, including, but not limited to:

- Financial capability;
- Evaluation of risk;
- Name and phone number of the Designated Responsible Employee for complying with national policies prohibiting discrimination (See 43 C.F.R. § 17);
- Travel policies and regulations;
- Procurement policies and regulations.
- Continuing and/or overlapping Federally funded projects.

(4) If an applicant is selected for a master cooperative agreement, additional required forms, to include an SF-424a and certification regarding lobbying (SF-LLL), may be requested on a per project basis prior to the issuance of subsequent task agreements. In addition, individual projects funded through a task agreement must be reviewed to ensure there is not an overlap or duplication of funding. This review may require the applicant to provide a statement indicating whether or

not there is an overlap of funding being received between the proposed individual project and any other active or anticipated projects in terms of activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel.

(5) As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200, Subpart F, Audit Requirements, a non-Federal entity that expends \$750,000 or more during the non-Federal entity's fiscal year in Federal awards must have a single or program specific-specific audit conducted for that year in accordance with the procedures 2 CFR 200, subpart F.

### **3. Duns and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Each applicant (unless exempt under 2 CFR §25.110) is required to:

- A. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
- B. Provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application (currently a DUNS number)
- C. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

Registration processes for SAM can be found at <https://www.sam.gov>

The NPS may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

In addition, in order to submit an application through Grants.gov an applicant must have an active SAM registration and register for submission permissions through the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) website. Utilize the following link to guide you through this process: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

### **4. Submission Dates and Times**

This Notice of Funding Opportunity will remain open until December 31, 2018, or until it is succeeded by another issuance. Applications and associated required documents shall be submitted to the National Park Service contact identified in [Section G](#) no later than December 31, 2018, 1700 Eastern Standard Time.

### **5. Intergovernmental Review**

Applicants subject to EO 12372 must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State's process. The names and addresses of the SPOC's are listed in the OMB's home page at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/)

### **6. Funding Restrictions**

Master cooperative agreements are not funded. Master cooperative agreements must be awarded prior to funding task agreements. Any applicable funding restrictions will be identified on subsequent task

agreements. Pre award funding through this NOFO shall not be allowed without an awarded master cooperative agreement.

**7. Other Submission Requirements:**

Applications to this announcement must be submitted by e-mail to the applicable contacts below based upon the CESU network region in which you reside. **A copy shall also be provided to [Financial\\_assistance\\_policy@nps.gov](mailto:Financial_assistance_policy@nps.gov) for tracking purposes.** Only one application needs to be submitted, and separate applications are not required for consideration across other regions.

<u>CESU Network Name</u>	<u>E-mail for Application Submission</u>
Chesapeake Watershed	chwa_cesu@nps.gov
Colorado Plateau	nofo-imr@nps.gov
Desert Southwest	nofo-imr@nps.gov
Gulf Coast	ser_fa@nps.gov
North and West Alaska	erica_cordeiro@nps.gov akr_fa@nps.gov
North Atlantic Coast	nofo-ner@nps.gov
Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast	ser_fa@nps.gov
Rocky Mountain	nofo-imr@nps.gov
Southern Appalachian	ser_fa@nps.gov
Southern Florida – Caribbean	ser_fa@nps.gov

In addition to e-mail, applications may also be submitted through Grants.gov. Please note that due to system limitations, Financial Assistance Awarding Officers do not receive a notification when an application is submitted through Grants.gov. For this reason, applicants must notify the applicable contact above if an application is submitted through the grants.gov system to ensure it is received.

Applications submitted by other means, or not received by December 31, 2018, will not be considered.

If a CESU network participant is a member of a CESU network region that is not listed above, but still wishes to submit an application for a master cooperative agreement under this announcement, they may do so by contacting one of the NPS regional points of contacts listed in [Section G](#) of this NOFO. Applications from other CESU network regions shall be submitted directly to one of the points of contact listed above with a copy provided to [Financial\\_assistance\\_policy@nps.gov](mailto:Financial_assistance_policy@nps.gov) for tracking purposes.

**A master cooperative agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Separate cooperative agreements with CESU partners may still be pursued by the National Park Service apart from this notice of funding opportunity. The award of a master cooperative agreement does not preclude the NPS from soliciting for additional CESU projects through separate competed or single source financial assistance agreements. Additional future funding opportunities are anticipated.**

If the applicant experiences technical difficulties with grants.gov relating to the registration process, system requirements, application forms, or submitting process, please contact the grants.gov helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Please only contact the grants.gov help desk for questions related to grants.gov.

If the applicant has other questions with submitting their application, please contact the applicable regional contact listed within [Section G](#) of this NOFO.

#### **8. Application Checklist**

- DUNS Registration (see requirement in [Section C](#) Eligibility Requirements)
- SAM active registration (see requirement in [Section C](#) Eligibility Requirements)
- SF 424, [Application](#) for Federal Assistance: A complete, signed and dated SF 424
- SF 424B, [Assurances](#) form: Signed and dated SF 424B
- Proposal narrative (can substitute original CESU proposal)

**Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.**

**START THIS PROCESS EARLY DON'T DELAY!!**



**Section E: Application Review Information**

**1. Criteria**

Applications submitted under this NOFO are evaluated through a merit review process and will be first reviewed for the following initial screening factors by the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer:

- The applicant is eligible for award based on the criteria identified in [Section C](#), paragraph 1
- The applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements (reference [Section D](#), paragraph 3)
- All required documents and additional information have been provided (reference [Section D](#), paragraph 2a – 2c)

Following this initial screen, applications will be evaluated based on three equally weighted criteria:

<b>Criterion 1: Organization and Mission</b>
The degree to which the applicant adequately demonstrates valued and preferred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Description of the institution/organization, its mission, and the primary focus of collaborative activities in accordance to cooperative research and training.</li> <li>ii. Primary programs, departments, or other institutional divisions of relevance to cooperative research and training.</li> <li>iii. Organizational business management to administer grants/cooperative agreements/contracts, pre and post grant/agreement personnel, accounting, internal controls.</li> </ul>
<b>Criterion 2: Personnel and Resources</b>
The degree to which the applicant adequately demonstrates valued and preferred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Staff or faculty with expertise in disciplines and subject areas of relevance to cooperative research and training.</li> <li>ii. Facilities, equipment, centers, or institutes that would provide support for research, technical assistance, or educational activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Criterion 3: Past Performance</b>
The degree to which the applicant adequately demonstrates valued and preferred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Past research, technical assistance, and educational services supported through Federal financial assistance awards.</li> </ul>

**2. Review and Selection Process**

The NPS shall review each submitted application and make a determination whether or not to proceed with awarding a master cooperative agreement. The NPS merit review panel shall consist of Federal personnel, and in some cases, non-Federal reviewers. All applications for master cooperative agreements will be reviewed against the criteria outlined [section E.1](#).

**A. Initial Review**

Prior to conducting the merit review, an initial review will be conducted by the awarding office to determine whether: (1) the applicant is part of the CESU network; (2) the applicant is eligible for an award based on their current SAM registration; and (3) all mandatory documents and information of the NOFO have been provided. If an applicant fails to meet the eligibility requirements of the NOFO,

or does not provide sufficient information for review, the applicant will be considered non-responsive and eliminated from further review.

### **B. Comprehensive Merit Review**

All applications that satisfactorily pass the initial review will go through a merit review process. The merit review panel will conduct the review based on the equally weighted criteria outlined [section E.1](#). Each criterion will be reviewed and assigned a rating of “Exceptional”, “Satisfactory”, or “Unsatisfactory” based on whether it exceeds, meets, or does not meet the criteria. Applications that meet or exceed the criteria with a strong confidence that future task agreement objectives will be met based on demonstrated qualifications, experience, and capabilities of the applicant may be selected to receive a master cooperative agreement.

### **C. Program and Policy Factors:**

In addition to the criteria listed above, the following program and policy factors may also be considered when making a selection:

**(1) Potential for Future Project Funding:** A determination may be made to not select an applicant for receipt of a master cooperative agreement if the NPS regional offices participating in this NOFO (reference [section G](#)) determine that there are no anticipated projects within their NPS region for which the applicant may qualify based on either the applicant’s primary focus of collaborative activities, or their geographic location. If an application is found to otherwise meet or exceed the criteria of [section E.1](#)., the application will be held on file for the duration of this NOFO and may be considered for a master cooperative agreement at a later date should projects become anticipated for which the applicant would qualify based on their primary focus and/or geographic location.

**(2) Program Support for Minority Institutions:** when applicable based on program policy, anticipated funding limitations, or other program restrictions, an applicant may be selected for a master cooperative agreement based upon minority status or Native American tribal preference. If a minority institution is selected for a master cooperative agreement based upon program support for minority institutions, but the application is rated as “unsatisfactory” in any of the merit review criteria of [section E.1](#)., the resulting master cooperative agreement may be subject to additional specific conditions as defined 2 CFR 200.207.

### **D. Discussions and Award**

The NPS may enter into discussions with a selected applicant for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to: (1) only a portion of the application is selected for award; (2) the NPS needs additional information to determine that the applicant is capable of complying with the requirements of Financial Assistance Regulations, and/or (3) additional specific terms and conditions are required. Failure to satisfactorily resolve the issues identified by the NPS may preclude award to the applicant.

## **3. Evaluation of Applicant Risk**

In accordance with [2 C.F.R. § 200.205](#), applications selected will be subject to a pre-award risk assessment which may include a review of information contained within the applicant's proposal, past audits, Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System ([FAPIIS](#)), and/or past performance on previous Federal financial assistance awards. Negative information may result in specific conditions, as identified in [2 C.F.R. § 200.207](#), being incorporated into the final award or subsequent task agreements, or a decision to not proceed with a final award.

If an application is selected for a master cooperative agreement any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system (currently FAPIIS) will be reviewed and considered (see [41 U.S.C. § 2313](#)). Applicants may review and comment about any information about themselves in FAPIIS. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 C.F.R. §200.205.

#### **4. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

Applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis as applications are received. Notification of award selection and non-selection typically will occur within 90 days of application receipt. Master cooperative agreements will be negotiated and awarded on a case by case basis after selection notification.

## **Section F: Federal Award Administration Information**

### **1. Federal Award Notices**

NPS will notify applicants selected for award. A notice of selection is not an authorization to begin performance on an agreement. Once all clearances and reviews have been conducted, a master cooperative agreement will be sent for signature. Master cooperative agreements do not obligate the government to fund any project or program with the applicant.

Organizations whose applications have not been selected will be notified as promptly as possible.

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **A. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)**

By accepting Federal financial assistance, the non-Federal entity agrees to abide by the applicable Federal regulations in the expenditure of Federal funds and performance under this program: [2 C.F.R. Part 200](#) - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements For Federal Awards

#### **B. Standard Award Terms and Conditions**

Acceptance of a Federal financial assistance award from the NPS carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Acceptance is defined as the start of work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the application submitted to, and as approved by the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer. All financial assistance master cooperative agreements are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated either directly or by reference in the award document. All subsequent task agreements are subject to the terms and conditions of the master cooperative agreement and may contain applicable “as-needed” terms and conditions, or specific conditions that are not otherwise specified within the master CA. Code of Federal Regulations/Regulatory Requirements, as applicable, are listed below (Contact the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer with any questions regarding the applicability of the following):

- 2 C.F.R. Part 175 - Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000
- 2 C.F.R. Parts 182 & 1401 - Government-wide Requirements for a Drug-Free Workplace
- 2 C.F.R. Parts 180 & 1400 - Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)
- 43 CFR. 18 - Restrictions on Lobbying

#### **C. Special Terms and Conditions**

##### **1. Order of Precedence**

Any inconsistency in the agreement shall be resolved by giving precedence in the following order: (a) Any national policy requirements and administrative management standards; (b) 2 C.F.R. Part 200, in its entirety; (c) requirements of the applicable OMB Circulars and Treasury regulations; (d) special terms and conditions; (e) all agreement sections, documents, exhibits, and attachments; (f) and the non-Federal entity’s project proposal.

## **2. Modifications**

The agreement may be modified by written agreement signed by both the non-Federal entity's Authorized Representative and the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer. Administrative changes which do not change the statement of work, agreement amount, etc., or otherwise affect the non-Federal entity may be signed unilaterally by the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer. Additionally, a unilateral modification may be utilized due to Executive Orders, changes to regulation or policy, or if it should become necessary to impose remedies for non-compliance, suspension or termination of the agreement in accordance with 2 CFR 200, Section 200.338 – 200.342.

All other changes shall be made by means of a bilateral modification to the agreement. No oral statement made by any person, or written statement by any person other than the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer shall be allowed in any manner or degree to modify or otherwise effect the terms of the agreement.

## **D. Payments**

All applicants must be registered in the System for Awards Management (SAM) prior to award under this NOFO. Instructions for registering for SAM are located at <http://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM>. All applicants must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times while they have an active Federal award or an application under consideration.

All applicants must also be registered with, and willing to process all payments through, the Department of the Treasury Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system. All non-Federal entities with active NPS financial assistance agreements must be enrolled in ASAP under the appropriate Agency Location Code(s) (ALC) and the Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number prior to the award of funds. If a non-Federal entity has multiple DUNS numbers they must separately enroll within ASAP for each unique DUNS Number and/or Agency. Note that if your entity is currently enrolled in the ASAP system with an agency other than NPS, you must enroll specifically with NPS in order to process payments.

## **E. Liability**

*The following is the standard insurance and the liability term that may be adjusted in accordance with the Department of Interior Policy, currently DIG 2014-01. The final term will be based on an evaluation of the statement of work and associated risk as determined by the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer.*

### **(1) Insurance:**

The non-Federal entity shall be required to (1) obtain liability insurance or (2) demonstrate present financial resources in an amount determined sufficient by the Government to cover claims brought by third parties for death, bodily injury, property damage, or other loss resulting from one or more identified activities carried out in connection with this financial assistance agreement.

**(2) Insured:**

The Federal Government shall be named as an additional insured under the non-Federal entity's insurance policy.

**(3) Indemnification:**

The non-Federal entity hereby agrees to indemnify the Federal Government, NPS or from any act or omission of the non-Federal entity, its officers, employees, or (members, participants, agents, representatives, agents as appropriate), (1) against third party claims for damages arising from one or more identified activities carried out in connection with this financial assistance agreement and (2) for damage or loss to government property resulting from such an activity. This obligation shall survive the termination of this Agreement.

- i. To purchase public and employee liability insurance at its own expense from a responsible company or companies with a minimum limitation of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per person for any one claim, and an aggregate limitation of Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000) for any number of claims arising from any one incident. The policies shall name the United States as an additional insured, shall specify that the insured shall have no right of subrogation against the United States for payments of any premiums or deductibles due thereunder, and shall specify that the insurance shall be assumed by, be for the account of, and be at the insured's sole risk. Prior to beginning the work authorized herein, the non-Federal entity shall provide the NPS with confirmation of such insurance coverage.
- ii. To pay the United States the full value for all damage to the lands or other property of the United States caused by the non-Federal entity.
- iii. To provide workers' compensation protection to the non-Federal entity, its officers, employees, and representatives.
- iv. To cooperate with NPS in the investigation and defense of any claims that may be filed with NPS arising out of the activities of the non-Federal entity, its agents, and employees.
- v. In the event of damage to or destruction of the buildings and facilities assigned for the use of the non-Federal entity in whole or in part by any cause whatsoever, nothing herein contained shall be deemed to require NPS to replace or repair the buildings or facilities. If NPS determines in writing, after consultation with the non-Federal entity that damage to the buildings or portions thereof renders such buildings unsuitable for continued use by the non-Federal entity, NPS shall assume sole control over such buildings or portions thereof. If the buildings or facilities rendered unsuitable for use are essential for conducting operations authorized under this Agreement, then failure to substitute and assign other facilities acceptable to the non-Federal entity will constitute termination of this Agreement by NPS.

**(4) Flow-down:**

For the purposes of this clause, "non-Federal entity " includes such sub-awardees, contractors, or subcontractors as, in the judgment of the non-Federal entity and subject to the Government's determination of sufficiency, has sufficient resources and/or maintains adequate and appropriate insurance to achieve the purposes of this clause.

**F. Award Instrument Information**

If an application results in the issuance of a master cooperative agreement, each subsequent task agreement will provide: the amount of funding provided by the NPS; a detailed Statement of Work (SOW) for the project; a project plan noting proposed milestones; and a project budget.

Individual projects will be funded, subject to the availability of funds, by issuance of subsequent task agreements. A task agreement issued and signed by the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer obligates NPS funds. Notification of a successful application does not constitute authority to incur costs. Once the master cooperative agreement is signed, only a subsequent task agreement signed by the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer permits the non-Federal entity to incur costs as specified in the approved budget submittal.

**G. Funding Restrictions**

All funding is contingent upon the availability and appropriation of funds by the United States Congress.

**H. Cost Principles:**

Costs must be allowable in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles referenced in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E – Cost Principles.

**I. Pre-award Costs:**

Must comply with 2 CFR Part 200.458 and requires written approval from the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer.

**3. Reporting**

**A. Financial Status Reports:**

A report of expenditures is required as documentation of the financial status of task agreements according to the official accounting records of the non-Federal entity's organization. The financial information will be reported for individual task agreements by completing and submitting the Federal Financial Report (FFR), SF425. At a minimum, financial reports will be required annually and shall be submitted within 90 calendar days after the end of the annual reporting period. The Financial Assistance Awarding Officer may designate a reporting schedule requiring more frequent reporting based on the assessment of risk. The reporting requirements will be defined within task agreements issued under a master cooperative agreement. A final FFR shall be submitted no more than 90 calendar days after the end date of the task agreement.

The FFR can be downloaded at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/standard\\_forms/ffr.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/standard_forms/ffr.pdf).

The NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer will review the report for patterns of cash expenditures and assess whether performance or financial management problems exist. Before submitting the FFR to the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer, non-Federal entities must ensure that the information submitted is accurate, complete, and consistent with the non-Federal entity's accounting system. The non-Federal entity Authorized Certifying Official's signature on the FFR certifies that the information in the FFR is correct and complete and that all outlays and obligations are for the purposes set forth in the agreement documents, and represents a claim to the Federal Government. Filing a false claim may result in the imposition of civil or criminal penalties.

**B. Performance Reports:**

For each subsequent task agreement, a report of performance is required as documentation of performance towards the accomplishments of the Federal award and detailing project activity and participant profile information. At a minimum, performance reports will be required annually and shall be submitted within 90 calendar days after the end of the annual reporting period. The Financial Assistance Awarding Officer may designate a reporting schedule requiring more frequent reporting based on the assessment of risk. The reporting requirements will be defined within the task agreements issued under master cooperative agreements. A final performance report shall be submitted no more than 90 calendar days after the end date of the agreement.

In accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200 § 200.328, the performance reports shall contain brief information on:

- (1) A comparison of actual accomplishments to the objectives of the Federal award established for the period. Where the accomplishments of the Federal award can be quantified, a computation of the cost (for example, related to units of accomplishment) may be required if that information will be useful. Where performance trend data and analysis would be informative to the Federal awarding agency program, the Federal awarding agency should include this as a performance reporting requirement;
- (2) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
- (3) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Before submitting the performance report to the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer, the non-Federal entity must ensure that the information submitted is accurate, complete, and consistent with the non-Federal entity's Federal financial report. Filing false information may result in the imposition of civil or criminal penalties.

**4. Non-Compliance:**

Failure to comply with the reporting requirements contained in an agreement may be considered a material non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the award. Non-compliance may result in withholding of future payments, suspension or termination of the agreement, recovery of funds paid under the agreement, and the withholding of future awards. The specific information regarding type, frequency and means of submission of post-Federal award reporting requirements will be contained in the award document.



**5. Reporting Matters Related to Integrity and Performance:**

If the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of this Federal award, then you as the non-Federal entity during that period of time must maintain the currency of information reported to the System for Award Management (SAM) that is made available in the designated integrity and performance system (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)) about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings in accordance with [Appendix XII to 2 C.F.R. 200](#).

**Section G: National Park Service Financial Assistance Contacts**

The following NPS financial assistance regional offices are requesting applications for master cooperative agreements under this NOFO. Questions pertaining to the application process, CESU network regions supported, or other NPS regional questions and concerns should be directed to the NPS financial assistance regional contacts as follows:

<b>NPS REGION</b>	<b>Point of Contact for CESU CAs</b>	<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b>	<b>Primary CESU Network supported</b>
Intermountain Region	Todd Wilson	nofo-imr@nps.gov 303-358-8403	Colorado Plateau Desert Southwest
Alaska Region	Erica Cordeiro	erica_cordeiro@nps.gov 907-644-3315	North and West Alaska
Northeast Region	Keith Zotti	nofo-ner@nps.gov 215-597-9153	North Atlantic Coast
National Capital Region	LaQuita Palmer  Andrew Lubner	chwa_cesu@nps.gov 202-619-7082 andrew_lubner@nps.gov 303-969-2378	Chesapeake Watershed
Southeast Region	Brian Straka	ser_fa@nps.gov	Gulf Coast Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast Southern Appalachian Southern Florida - Caribbean

Other NPS financial assistance offices may pursue cooperative agreements to CESU network participants separate from this notice of funding opportunity through competed or single source financial assistance agreements. A master cooperative agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Additional future funding opportunities are anticipated.

Questions specific to this NPS-wide Notice of Funding Opportunity may be directed to the NPS Financial Assistance Policy Office:

Name      Michelle Maher  
 Phone     303-987-6986  
 Email     Financial\_assistance\_policy@nps.gov

Questions relating to the grants.gov registration process, system requirements, how an application form works, or the submittal process must be directed to grants.gov at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Please only contact the grants.gov help desk for questions related to grants.gov.

## **Section H: Other Information:**

### **1. Program Information**

Information on the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units National network, inclusive of information on how to join the CESU network can be located at: <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>

### **2. Proprietary and Personally Identifiable Information**

#### **A. Notice of Potential Disclosure under Freedom of Information Act**

Applicants should be advised that identifying information regarding all applicants, including applicant names and/or points of contact, may be subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, whether or not such applicants are selected for negotiation of award. Applicants must identify any proprietary information within their applications.

#### **B. Personally Identifiable Information**

In responding to this Notice of Funding Opportunity, applicants must ensure that Protected Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is not included in the following documents: Project Abstract, Project Narrative, Biographical Sketches, Budget or Budget Justification. These documents will be used by the Merit Review Committee in the review process to evaluate each application. PII is defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as:

Any information about an individual maintained by an agency, including but not limited to, education, financial transactions, medical history, and criminal or employment history and information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as their name, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, biometric records, etc., including any other personal information that is linked or linkable to an individual. This definition of PII can be further defined as: (1) Public PII and (2) Protected PII.

#### **Public PII:**

PII found in public sources such as telephone books, public websites, business cards, university listing, etc. Public PII includes first and last name, address, work telephone number, email address, home telephone number, and general education credentials.

#### **Protected PII:**

PII that requires enhanced protection. This information includes data that if compromised could cause harm to an individual such as identity theft.

### **3. Routine Notices to Applicants**

#### **A. Modification or Changes to the Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Notices of any modifications to this Notice of Funding Opportunity will be posted on Grants.gov. You can receive an email when a modification or an announcement message is posted. When you download the application at Grants.gov; you can also register to receive notifications of changes through Grants.gov.

**B. Government Right to Reject or Negotiate**

NPS reserves the right, without qualification, to reject any or all applications received in response to this announcement and to select any application, in whole or in part, as a basis for negotiation and/or award.



**C. Evaluation and Administration by Non-Federal Personnel**

In conducting the merit review evaluation, the Government may seek the advice of qualified non-Federal personnel as reviewers. The Government may also use non-Federal personnel to conduct routine, nondiscretionary administrative activities. The applicant, by submitting its application, consents to the use of non-Federal reviewers/administrators. Non-Federal reviewers must sign conflict of interest and non-disclosure agreements prior to reviewing an application. Non-Federal personnel conducting administrative activities must sign a nondisclosure agreement.

**D. Notice of Right to Conduct a Review of Financial Capability**

NPS reserves the right to conduct an independent third party review of financial capability for applicants that are selected for negotiation of award (including personal credit information of principal(s) of a small business if there is insufficient information to determine financial capability of the organization).

**Appendix A - Application Package  
Forms SF 424 & SF 424B**

<p><b>SF-424:</b></p>	 <p>Adobe Acrobat Document</p> <p><b>SF-424</b></p>
<p><b>SF-424B:</b></p>	 <p>Adobe Acrobat Document</p> <p><b>SF-424b</b></p>