



Request for Letters of Interest (RFLOI) MARACOOS Operations

Introduction

MARACOOS is inviting Letters of Interest (LOIs) describing projects for consideration for inclusion in our proposal for the next 5-year cooperative agreement (June 1, 2021-May 31, 2026) with the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). This RFLOI focuses on OPERATIONS across MARACOOS. A separate RFLOI is targeted at ENGAGEMENT and can be found [HERE](#).

There are ten states (and D.C.), five estuaries, and 25 percent of the U.S. population living in the MARACOOS region. From Cape Cod to Cape Hatteras, we make over 48 million observations of our oceans, coasts, and estuaries, supporting extreme weather forecasts, fisheries, coast guard search and rescue, maritime shipping, beach safety, water quality tracking, and much more.

MARACOOS has been providing value to the region since 2005. Every five years, we review and renew our funding proposal to ensure we are meeting the region's most pressing and current needs. As an IOOS Regional Association with an emphasis on sustained, reliable observations that serve the information needs of our stakeholder communities, we prioritize our robust observing infrastructure while developing and expanding our reach and impact through new and enhanced partnerships across the Mid-Atlantic region.

MARACOOS will submit a proposal in response to the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) FY 2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). This opportunity will cover the 5-year period from June 1, 2021 through May 31, 2026 with the goals of sustaining critical observing, modeling, product, and service activities while also seeking opportunities to expand project areas. To develop the proposal, MARACOOS is soliciting Letters of Interest (LOIs) from a broad stakeholder base. Responses that comply with the LOI requirements will be evaluated by a Review Committee, and selected projects will be assembled as part of the MARACOOS 5-year proposal.

The MARACOOS Strategic Plan will serve as a guide for our 5-year proposal, and is available [HERE](#).

LOIs should:

- Address at least one of MARACOOS focus areas: (1) coastal hazards; (2) fisheries; (3) maritime commerce & safety; (4) energy; and (5) water quality;
- Be prepared to meet MARACOOS' data management requirements;
- Commit to work with the MARACOOS engagement team;
- Include a regional (mid-Atlantic bight) or sub-regional (bay or estuary scale or section of a coast along the mid-Atlantic coast) scope or contribute to a regional-scale enterprise; and
- Include a demonstrated benefit to user(s), with at least one user willing to write a letter of support to be later solicited should the LOI be selected for inclusion

Please Note: MARACOOS does not require formal institutional approval for the purposes of the LOI. MARACOOS will work with the selected project leads to begin the formal proposal writing process that will include formal institutional approval. Contact info@maracoos.org with questions.

Timeline

- June 1, 2020
 - Request for LOIs announced
- June 8, 2020 at 11:00 am ET
 - Community Q&A Session
 - [CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)
- July 17, 2020 at 11:59pm ET
 - LOIs are due
- August 31, 2020
 - Notification of selected projects
- November 15, 2020
 - Draft proposal complete
- December 15, 2020
 - MARACOOS submits proposal to NOAA IOOS

Budget

MARACOOS anticipates writing a 5-year proposal for \$30,000,000. MARACOOS' proposal will prioritize projects for funding based on the results of the review process. Annual funding levels will be determined based on annual Congressional appropriations.

Eligible projects will address at least one of the MARACOOS theme areas and support the implementation of our Strategic Plan. We anticipate funding between 10-30 partner efforts in total over the next five-year period.

Collaborative and individual submissions are permitted. For LOIs submitted as collaborative efforts, individual partners/project roles, responsibilities, and budget must be provided for each. As necessary, MARACOOS will work with project leads to adjust the scale to fit into a cohesive proposal.

The final MARACOOS proposal, following review and acceptance by the federal government, will be funded based on available appropriations from Congress. Those aspects of the proposal for which available appropriations do not suffice will be prioritized for additional sources of funding by MARACOOS through other funding vehicles or through funding campaigns.

LOI Review Committee

The Review Committee will be composed of non-conflicted experts within and external to the MARACOOS stakeholder community of experts.

Guidelines for Evaluation

These guidelines for evaluation are tied to our core values outlined in the Strategic Plan with a focus on sustained operations and value to the stakeholder community.

The LOI must state succinct project goals and objectives that align with the MARACOOS Strategic Plan, provide value to the community, and address MARACOOS theme areas and identify specific user(s) in one or more of the following communities: (1) coastal hazards; (2) fisheries; (3) maritime commerce & safety; (4) energy; and (5) water quality. LOIs should also consider opportunities to expand and improve coverage of communities, partners, and users. Contact info@maracoos.org to discuss or clarify which communities your project may impact.

High quality and accessible data requirement:

LOIs must express a commitment to work with the MARACOOS Data Management and Communication (DMAC) team to ensure data provided are aligned with the MARACOOS Data Management Plan, thus ensuring that IOOS core capacity and IOOS certification requirements are met. LOIs must outline a cohesive strategy for meeting DMAC requirements. Expectations of data providers include:

- **Data availability:** Data providers must commit to making data freely available in a timely manner (near real-time). We do make exceptions for data that are not readily available in real-time or necessarily embargoed data for a defined period of time
- **Data Access:** Please explain how you will make your data available to the DMAC team, e.g. through an API, FTP, WAF, etc
- **Data archiving:** Please provide estimated files sizes and summarize expectations for archiving with MARACOOS
- **Data format standardization:** Most data streams will be managed as netCDF; data providers may either provide data as netCDF or work with the DMAC team on a suitable file format for conversion. Data providers must commit to providing data in a consistent format for the duration of the grant cycle
- **Provision of compliant metadata:** The DMAC team will use the IOOS Compliance Checker to verify metadata requirements are met. Data providers commit to working with the DMAC team to meet those requirements (guidance will be provided)
- **Quality Control:** If you are already performing QA/QC on your data please explain the process. If not, MARACOOS can assist with implementation of Quality Assurance/Quality Control of Real-Time Oceanographic Data (QARTOD)

Email datamanagement@maracoos.org with questions about data management requirements.

LOIs will be measured based on the following criteria:

Stakeholder Driven - 30%

LOIs must demonstrate an understanding of, and be in response to, diverse stakeholder needs in the Mid-Atlantic. Additionally, the LOI must identify the specific MARACOOS focus area(s) and theme(s) which the team is addressing. LOIs should demonstrate the degree to which users have been brought into the development of the LOI and how the users will be engaged in project execution. Project teams may include strategies to assure that products, services, or activities will meet the requirements of a significant number of users. Clear/direct links to a specific identified user will rank higher, with an indication of who would be willing to write a letter of support if the LOI is selected for the final proposal.

Contribution to Sustained Observations - 30%

LOI must demonstrate a commitment to and capability for sustained observations/operations in the presence of continued funding. Project leads should ensure efforts will provide data that are reliable and can be sustained in the future.

Scientific Merit and Innovation - 30%

LOI should demonstrate a credible scientific/technical approach or methodology to meet the objectives. The project team must be composed of competent members with relevant education, scientific, and technical experience to complete the work described within the LOI. LOI should provide scientific leadership and demonstrate innovation and efficiency. Innovation is determined as the extent to which the project will improve, develop, or support existing assets/models/products and/or services. LOI should highlight any opportunities to expand and improve coverage of communities, partners, and users.

Leveraged Partnerships and Efficiency - 10%

The LOI should demonstrate collaborative relationships leveraging resources and knowledge with other MARACOOS or non-MARACOOS projects. Projects may provide extra value by bringing, or having the potential to bring, non-IOOS resources to leverage MARACOOS investments. LOIs should demonstrate the value provided by the project or activity and include any other projects that are or have the potential to

leverage the work that is being proposed. Efficiency will be determined by the project team demonstrating the infrastructure, expertise, and experience to cost effectively deliver the product or service being proposed. LOI budget must clearly identify annual costs (direct and indirect costs) and include the institution's IDC rate. Project teams should also identify cost savings from personnel or equipment sharing, leveraged activities, etc.

Review Process

The Review Committee will rank LOIs based on guidelines for evaluation above. They will provide recommendations to the MARACOOS management team for preparation of the MARACOOS proposal. Project leads of selected projects will be notified by August 31, 2020.

Next Steps

Project leads from the selected LOIs will integrate proposed activities as members of the writing team for the full proposal. Project leads must commit to supporting the writing team efforts through the completion date in mid-December.

MARACOOS Letter of Interest (LOI) Format

The LOI should be no smaller than 11-point font and must identify the project leads, users, and their affiliations, and include a concise but detailed project description and budget narrative. Email your LOI as a PDF to info@maracoos.org with the email subject: MARACOOS 2020 Operations LOI.

Cover Page (1 page):

- Project Title
- Primary project lead name, affiliation, email, and phone number
- Co-lead names, affiliations, emails, and phone numbers
- Project Duration (e.g. 1 yr, 2 yrs, 3 yrs, 4 yrs, 5 yrs)
- Project location – list cities/states/regions or other information that describes where the proposed effort will occur
- Total budget request

Project description (4 pages, including graphics):

- Project Description – address the following:
 - a. Goals and measurable objectives
 - b. Methodology (summary of the protocols/methods you will use to conduct the project)
 - c. Intended regional environmental, economic, and/or social benefits of activity
 - d. Observing assets being maintained or deployed and/or other RCOOS activities being proposed
 - e. Parameters to be collected, modeled, or used for this proposed effort
 - f. Identify any existing MARACOOS or other RA assets or models that will be leveraged (if there are any available for the proposed effort)
 - g. Articulate the outcomes of the project (what benefits/products will result from this project)
 - h. Identify other MARACOOS LOIs, if any, that this effort supports, including an explanation of personnel resources and economies of scale that will be achieved if the project(s) are funded
 - i. Explain how the results will be applied across the MARACOOS region. Explain how results will be applied across other IOOS regions, if teaming with other RAs
 - j. Data management commitment (See DMAC section)
- Connection to stakeholders/users: As a “user driven” organization MARACOOS is charged with responding to needs in our region. All projects should address specific regional demands.
 - a. How will this project impact/connect with specific users?
 - i. Name(s) of users, their affiliation
 - ii. Need(s) addressed by project
 - iii. Describe any past or current coordination and communications between project team and user groups;
 - iv. Identify user contributions/partnerships if any (e.g. direct funding, in-kind support, event partnerships)

Other required documents (no page limit):

- Literature cited
- 2-page CV for project lead and co-leads only
- Brief budget estimate following the following template:
 - a. **SENIOR PERSONNEL**
 Salary costs and amount of effort should be estimated and indicated separately for each individual involved in the project who will draw salary. Project role(s) should also briefly be explained.
 (If your LOI is selected, the formal proposal process will require additional detailed information on salary and effort.)
 - b. **OTHER PERSONNEL**
 Salary costs and amount of effort should be estimated and indicated separately for each individual involved in the project who will draw salary. Project role(s) should also briefly be explained.
 (If your LOI is selected, the formal proposal process will require additional detailed information on salary and effort.)
 - c. **FRINGE BENEFITS**
 Fringe benefit amounts.
 (If your LOI is selected, the formal proposal process will require additional detailed information, including justification and link to agreement.)
 - d. **EQUIPMENT**
 Estimate the cost of proposed equipment purchases and explain why this purchase is necessary to the success of the project.
 (If your LOI is selected, the formal proposal process will require additional detailed information.)
 - e. **DOMESTIC TRAVEL**
 Domestic travel requested for each individual, with estimated cost and the purpose of the travel.
 (If your LOI is selected, the formal proposal process will require additional detailed information.)
 - f. **OTHER DIRECT COSTS**
 ODC items should be explained in relation to the project scope of work.
 - g. **INDIRECT COSTS**
 Indirect cost rate
 (If your LOI is selected, the formal proposal process will require additional detailed information including link to agreement.)
 - h. **COST SHARING/MATCHING**
 Please outline any cost share or matching funds dedicated to this project in the same format as above.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Senior Personnel					
Other Personnel					
Fringe					
Equipment					

Travel					
Other Direct Costs					
Institutional IDC Rate: XX%					
Total MARACOOS funding request					
Total Cost Share/Match					

Questions or comments can be directed to info@maracoos.org at any time and will be answered as received.