



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

### Ocean Odyssey Grants: Marine Debris Prevention Awards For Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility

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**Are you part of a community group and/or institution that is underserved, underrepresented, or overburdened by marine debris? Is your entity looking to create positive change by addressing issues caused by marine debris through prevention?**

#### Funding Opportunity Overview

The [National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#), in cooperation with the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Marine Debris Program](#), is excited to offer awards to support communities that are underserved, underrepresented, or overburdened by marine debris and to promote initiatives that prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris across the coastal United States, Great Lakes, territories, and Freely Associated States.

#### **Funding Availability and Eligibility:**

Awards between \$5,000 - \$10,000  
The Foundation anticipates funding 10 - 15 projects.

The objective of the Ocean Odyssey Marine Debris Prevention Awards for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA) competition is to further DEIJA initiatives to address the adverse impacts of marine debris by supporting marine debris prevention, education, and outreach activities.

*Funding is available for non-federal organizations (individuals are not eligible). U.S. Native American Tribes, Indigenous communities, Alaska Native communities, and Native Hawaiian communities are encouraged to apply. There is no match requirement. Only applicants from the United States, territories, and Freely Associated States are eligible to apply.*

#### **Implementation Period:**

April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026  
Projects should span the full 12 months.

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#### **Application Package Due:**

Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time.

Please be sure to review this entire document and the full Application Template for more important information before submitting.



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## Background

Marine debris is a widespread problem that can impact all of us in a multitude of ways. Marine debris can threaten human health and safety; reduce the quality of life in coastal areas; degrade habitats; cause economic loss to tourism, fisheries, and maritime activities; and injure and kill marine wildlife due to entanglement or ingestion. Marine debris can take many forms, including items that come from activities that take place on land, such as plastic bags, cigarette butts, foam take-out containers, and balloons, as well as debris from on-water activities, such as derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels. Marine debris is primarily the result of human actions, such as ineffective or improper waste management, dumping, and littering, or contamination of stormwater runoff. Fishing gear may be lost as a result of storms, accidents, or improper disposal, and become marine debris. You can learn more on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Program's "[What is Marine Debris?](#)" webpage.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (the Foundation) in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program is offering awards to support communities that are underserved, underrepresented, or overburdened and to promote initiatives that prevent marine debris and its adverse impacts.

The Foundation and the NOAA Marine Debris Program are committed to providing funding opportunities across the coastal United States, Great Lakes, territories, and Freely Associated States. For over 10 years, this partnership has leveraged the public-private partnership to enhance America's ability to address impacts of marine debris and to support our sanctuaries and monuments. These activities are in alignment with the goals of the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the Foundation to support Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility.

## Overview of Funding Opportunity

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, in cooperation with the NOAA Marine Debris Program, will offer awards to support communities that are underserved, underrepresented, or overburdened and to promote initiatives that prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris. Awards will range between \$5,000 to \$10,000 per project. There is no non-federal match requirement. Interested parties may learn more about eligibility, project specifications for each objective, and application requirements in the following sections.

## Objective

The objective of the Ocean Odyssey Marine Debris Prevention Awards for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility competition is to further DEIJA initiatives to address the adverse impacts of marine debris by supporting marine debris prevention, education, and outreach activities.

Potential projects could include (but are not limited to):

- Experiential learning opportunities and field trips that emphasize marine debris science, education, outreach, and prevention;
- Curriculum development and educator trainings;
- Formal and informal educational opportunities;



- Creation of interactive art displays and educational signage;
- Support for zero waste infrastructure, supplies, and planning at community events;
- Response exercises to increase emergency preparedness to marine debris influx events;
- Technical assistance and outreach campaigns with entities such as restaurants, community centers, parks, hunting preserves, and more;
- Support for prevention, education, and outreach activities within Marine Debris Action Plans (please see the NOAA Marine Debris Program [regional action plans page](#) for more information or contact your local Regional Coordinator from the NOAA Marine Debris Program [contact page](#));
- Resource development that supports reduction of single use plastics;
- Small-scale cleanups within the built environment and related urban settings with a prevention and awareness component;
- Workforce development such as marine debris-related internships and skills-based training;
- Projects may also include complimentary components, such as support for alternative disposal and small-scale infrastructure to accompany the prevention activities.

Projects that will not be considered under this competition are those that involve marine debris removal from the natural environment (i.e., beaches), the funding of interception technologies, and research projects with or without field components.

The timeline of project activities should be clearly addressed in the applicant's proposal. Project proposals that do not address whether work can be completed within the noted timeline will not be rated as highly in the review process. Grant duration should be 12 months.

### **Priorities**

Preference will be given to:

- Projects that clearly identify and address a marine debris issue through prevention, education, or outreach;
- Projects that directly benefit or support communities in need and involve community members in all aspects of the project, from planning to execution;
- Projects that include an evaluation plan to assess impact (measurable outcomes preferred);
- Projects that can be completed in 12 months;
- Proposals that can demonstrate impact during the period of performance;
- Projects that will continue to benefit the community and/or support outcomes after the completion of the project.

### **Eligibility**

Eligible applicants for project activities taking place in the coastal United States, Great Lakes, territories, and Freely Associated States are state, local, tribal, and U.S. territory governments. Equally eligible are schools, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, or organizations that meet the competition priorities. Applicants who have not previously received funding from the Foundation are strongly encouraged to apply. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Only applicants from the United States, territories, and Freely Associated States are eligible to apply.



Competitive awards will incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility when writing their proposals and performing their work. In addition, priority will be given to projects that directly benefit or support disadvantaged communities and involve community members in all aspects of the project, from planning to execution.

When possible, please use the White House Council on Environmental Quality's [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) to determine whether any known project locations take place in disadvantaged communities. We recognize this tool does not cover all burdens or lack of resources for all tribal and/or underserved communities, especially for territories and Freely Associated States. In cases where CEJST does not identify a community where project activities will occur as disadvantaged, applicants may include their own determination of underserved communities based on similar burdens or lack of resources. This may include, but is not limited to, a description of the community's previous or current access to resources, community history, power, values, or how they have been historically marginalized and/or overburdened. There are other tools and platforms available for consideration, including the [Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Screen](#) tool. Equivalent state-sponsored or localized tools may also serve as justification/description.

## How To Apply

Application packages should be submitted by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, November 20, 2024.

Please submit your application package to the Foundation through C-STAAR (the Foundation's Collaborative System for Tracking Activities, Awards, and Reporting) using the following link: [C-STAAR](#).

### Step 1:

You will need to register your organization to begin your application. You can find registration steps and instructions [here](#).

While you are registering your organization, there is an opportunity to add multiple contacts for the organization. C-STAAR will be used to draft, execute, and manage the grants generated by this award, so please add more than one contact to ensure more than one person has access to your submission(s)/grant(s) in the system. All contacts that are added to the organization profile will receive an email asking them to register in C-STAAR. Once the additional contacts register in C-STAAR, their account will be tied to the organization, and they will have access to the organization's submissions in the system.

### Step 2:

Once you have set up your organization profile, navigate to the applicant home page. You can always access the homepage by clicking the "Applicant Homepage" button in the top right corner. You should then scroll down and click "View Active Grant RFPs" to find the **Ocean Odyssey Grants: Marine Debris Prevention Awards For Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility** RFP. Click the "Apply to RFP button" to see the application page and be sure to click the blue "Start Application" button at the bottom of the page to begin the application.

Only complete the sections that are indicated as required fields (these are indicated with an asterisk \*). These sections include: Title, Amount Requested, Start Date, End Date, and Agreement Signatory. Leave the remaining sections in the C-STAAR application blank.



Step 3:

**Download and complete the Application Template linked [here](#). Once completed, upload the completed Application Template in the Supplemental Attachments section of the RFP application on C-STAAR as a pdf document.**

Step 4:

Upload any supplemental materials, including letters of support, if applicable in the Supplemental Attachments section of the RFP application on C-STAAR as a pdf document.

Please direct all questions regarding the RFP and registering in C-STAAR to [support@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:support@marinesanctuary.org) with the email subject line: RFP QUESTION Ocean Odyssey Marine Debris Prevention Award, [Organization Name].

Application packages should include:

- Completed required fields in C-STAAR
- Completed Application Template
  - Uploaded in the Supplemental Attachments section of the RFP application on C-STAAR
- Letter(s) of support from community organizations and/or community leaders (this is required if the proposal is reliant on outside partners)
  - Uploaded as PDF documents in the Supplemental Attachments section of the RFP application on C-STAAR

Determinations will be made by Friday, February 7, 2025, and applicants notified shortly thereafter.

### **Informational Webinar**

The Foundation and NOAA Marine Debris Program will host an informational webinar for this funding opportunity on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, from 4:00 - 5:00 PM EDT. Register [here](#) for more information.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

The technical review and evaluation process will be graded by the following point system. Each proposal will be subject to a technical review process and evaluated on the objectives and priorities stated above.

Evaluation Criteria	Sub-Questions	Score	Scoring for this criterion will be assessed on how well proposals:
<p><b>DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, JUSTICE, ACCESSIBILITY (DEIJA)</b></p>	<p>Does the proposal clearly describe how the proposed work incorporates diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility?</p> <p>Does the proposal describe proposed activities taking place in tribal and/or underserved communities, whether a portion of the benefits will flow to those communities, and/or how those benefits will be measured?</p> <p>Does the proposal clearly describe how community members will be included in all aspects of the project, from planning to execution?</p> <p>Does the proposal describe how project activities will minimize identified barriers to reach and involve the specified communities in marine debris prevention?</p>	30	<p>Demonstrate how the project will involve and/or benefit disadvantaged communities that have been underserved, underrepresented, or overburdened as defined in the <a href="#">CEJST</a>, the Environmental Protection Agency's <a href="#">EJ Screening tool</a>, or equivalent tools.</p>
<p><b>IMPORTANCE, RELEVANCE, APPLICABILITY</b></p>	<p>Does the proposal clearly and impactfully identify and address a marine debris issue through prevention, education, and/or outreach?</p> <p>Are the proposed activities adequately described and do they fit the objective of the competition?</p>	25	<p>Explain the project activities and how they align with the competition objective.</p> <p>Clearly state the purpose of the project and the specific marine debris issue being addressed; summarize planned activities; explain benefits to the environment, community, and local/regional economy; and indicate the project scope.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this project clearly identify and address a marine debris issue?</li> <li>• To what extent will the project impact the local community and environment?</li> <li>• Are the project's scale, scope, and planned activities appropriately matched to the intended outcomes and budget of the project?</li> </ul>

Evaluation Criteria	Sub-Questions	Score	Scoring for this criterion will be assessed on how well proposals:
<b>TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PROJECT FEASIBILITY</b>	<p>Does the proposal clearly identify reasonable goals and objectives?</p> <p>Is the proposal feasible for the 12 month period of performance timeframe?</p> <p>Is a descriptive timeline included?</p> <p>Do the applicant and any project partners have the ability and expertise (or the potential) to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work?</p> <p>If external partners are involved, is their commitment demonstrated through supporting materials (i.e., letters of support)?</p>	20	<p>Demonstrate a thorough level of planning that will allow the applicant to begin the project promptly and complete the project within the period of the performance timeline.</p> <p>Considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are milestones identified in the project timeline that align with project goals and objectives?</li> <li>• Are project partners and roles clearly identified?</li> <li>• Are letters of support included from project partners?</li> <li>• Do activities take place during the implementation period?</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT EVALUATION PLAN</b>	<p>Does the applicant list specific project metrics that are tangible, quantifiable, and related to the grant's objective?</p> <p>Does the project clearly indicate how progress will be evaluated and success determined?</p> <p>Does the project describe how benefits will flow directly to the underserved community?</p>	10	<p>Specific project metrics, indicators, and outcomes are included that align with project activities.</p> <p>Explain how these outcomes (quantitative and qualitative) will demonstrate the project's success.</p> <p>Explain what tools and methods will be used to capture metrics/outcomes.</p>
<b>PROJECT COSTS</b>	<p>Is the budget realistic? Does the budget have a meaningful use of funding?</p> <p>Does the budget description sufficiently explain how each item in the budget table supports project activities? Projects with budgets that prioritize direct costs over indirect costs may be more competitive.</p>	10	<p>Provide a detailed list of specific items, tools, materials, etc., and associated costs for each expense category. Considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are explanations provided for how each item in the budget table supports project activities?</li> <li>• Are budgeted items prioritized that directly support projects and capacity-building opportunities?</li> <li>• Are budgeted items prioritizing direct support and benefit tribal and/or underserved community members?</li> </ul>

Evaluation Criteria	Sub-Questions	Score	Scoring for this criterion will be assessed on how well proposals:
<b>SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUATION POTENTIAL</b>	<p>What is the long-term potential of the proposed activities?</p> <p>Is there potential for the project to continue to benefit the community and/or support desired outcomes after the completion of the project?</p>	5	Demonstrate the potential for the project activities and/or project outcomes to continue beyond the funding period.
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100</b>		

### Grant Logistics

The following is an estimated timeline for this competition. External deadlines and reporting periods for applicants will not change.

- Proposal Submission Period: September 30, 2024 to November 20, 2024. Proposals are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time
- Proposal Review Period: November 2024 to January 2025
- Internal Award Selections and Grantee Notification Period: February 2025
- Awardees Publicly Announced: March 2025
- Awards and Project Period Begin: April 1, 2025
- Interim Report Due: September 30, 2025
- Awards and Project Period End: March 31, 2026
- Final Reports Due: April 30, 2026

### Additional Information

For questions and additional information, please email [support@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:support@marinesanctuary.org).

To learn about the projects that were awarded funding through the 2024 Ocean Odyssey Marine Debris Awards for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility, [click here](#). Please note, the scope of this current request for proposals has been modified since the 2024 competition.

### About Us

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is a leading voice for U.S. protected waters, working with communities to conserve and expand those special places for a healthy ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Working together, we safeguard species and the places they call home, and preserve America's maritime history.

Established in 2000, the Foundation is the official non-profit partner of the National Marine Sanctuary System. The Foundation directly supports America's national marine sanctuaries through our mission to protect species, conserve ecosystems, and preserve cultural and maritime heritage. We accomplish our mission through community stewardship and engagement programs, on-the-water conservation projects, public education and outreach programs, and scientific research and exploration. The Foundation fosters innovative projects





that are solution-oriented, scalable and transferable, and develop strategic partnerships that promote the conservation and recovery of species and their habitats. Learn more at [marinesanctuary.org](https://marinesanctuary.org).

The [NOAA Marine Debris Program](#) was authorized by Congress in 2006 to serve as the U.S. Federal government's lead for addressing marine debris. The NOAA Marine Debris Program, authorized in the Marine Debris Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq., supports the development and implementation of locally-driven marine debris assessment, removal, and prevention projects that benefit coastal habitats, waterways, and marine and Great Lake resources. The NOAA Marine Debris Program achieves its mission through six main pillars: Prevention, Removal, Research, Monitoring and Detection, Response, and Coordination. Staff are positioned across the country to support projects and partnerships with state and local agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry. In striving to learn and better support all communities, the NOAA Marine Debris Program provided staff training on diversity and inclusion and initiated an evaluation of and updates to federal funding opportunities to reduce barriers to the application and receipt of grants.

The Marine Debris Prevention Awards for DEIJA competition was created in cooperation with the Foundation under a cooperative agreement with the [NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#).

## Definitions

**Accessibility** means the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.

**Diversity** is a collection of individual attributes that together help organizations achieve objectives.

**Equitable** means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

**Freely Associated States** include the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

**Inclusion** is a culture that connects each person to the larger organizing structure.

**Outreach** is a one-way communication approach, where the grantee is sharing information with an underserved community, but there is no confirmation if they received the message and interpreted it as intended.

**Marine debris** is defined as any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned in the marine environment or the Great Lakes.



**Marginalization** is a social process by which individuals or groups are (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to power and resources and constructed as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged to a community or “mainstream” society. This term describes a social process, so as not to imply a lack of agency. Marginalized groups or people are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. As a result of exclusionary practices, marginalized groups are underrepresented in these spheres.

**Meaningful engagement** refers to an intentional exchange between the applicant and the underserved community where both have multiple opportunities to ensure the other is correctly understanding each other’s perspectives and ideas. This will ensure the tribal and/or underserved community is an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, and/or leadership for project activities that may affect their environment and/or health and wellbeing.

**Underserved communities** include populations who receive inadequate or inequitable services, who experience quality-of-life disparities, and who by design have little power or influence over outside decisions that impact their daily quality of life (e.g. schools qualifying for or organizations working with student populations supported by Title 1 funds).

### **Terms and Conditions**

This is a Request for Proposals (RFP) only. Issuance of this RFP does not in any way obligate the Foundation to make an award or pay for costs incurred by potential offerors in the preparation and submission of an offer. In addition:

- (a) The Foundation may cancel RFP and not award;
- (b) The Foundation may reject any or all responses received;
- (c) Issuance of RFP does not constitute award commitment by The Foundation;
- (d) The Foundation reserves the right to disqualify any offer based on offeror failure to follow RFP instructions;
- (e) The Foundation will not compensate offerors for a response to RFP;
- (f) The Foundation reserves the right to issue an award based on an initial evaluation of offers without further discussion;
- (g) The Foundation may negotiate with short-listed offerors for their best and final offer;
- (h) The Foundation reserves the right to order additional quantities or units with the selected offer or;
- (i) The Foundation may reissue the solicitation or issue formal amendments revising the original RFP specifications and evaluation criteria before or after receipt of proposals;
- (j) The Foundation may modify the specifications without issuing a formal notice to all offerors when the revisions are immaterial to the scope of the RFP;
- (k) The Foundation may choose to award only part of the activities in the RFP or issue multiple awards based on multiple RFP activities; and
- (l) The Foundation reserves the right to waive minor proposal deficiencies that can be corrected prior to award determination to promote competition.