

**Fiscal Year 2025 NOAA Marine Debris Removal under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Notice of Funding Opportunity
(NOAA-NOS-ORR-2025-25974)**

Meaningful Engagement Guidance

Applicants must follow the requirements stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, or they may not be considered. Please visit the [FY25 NOAA Marine Debris Removal under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Applicant Resources webpage](#) to view additional resources available for your application.

Please reach out to the NOAA Marine Debris Program grants team (grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov) with any questions

****For this competition, meaningful engagement refers to [an intentional exchange between the applicant and the local community where both have multiple opportunities to ensure the other is correctly understanding each other's perspectives and ideas.](#)**

The NOAA MDP will prioritize removal projects that clearly incorporate meaningful engagement with communities connected to the proposed project locations and outcomes. This is to ensure that the scope of the activities is inclusive of the priorities and needs of communities where the work is occurring and that the benefits of the activities and the appropriate, associated compensation flow back to the community impacted by the targeted debris. The most competitive projects will be those that meaningfully engage with Tribes and/or communities facing environmental/climate and socioeconomic burdens.

The table below includes examples of how meaningful engagement could be included in the proposal development, decision-making opportunities, and project implementation/execution. The strongest proposals will incorporate meaningful engagement across all three components. The final section of the table includes general considerations for describing your meaningful engagement activities in your proposal.

Project Visioning/Planning

- *Identification of the local community impacted by the targeted marine debris issue and any individuals who will be engaged in the project activities and/or part of the project team*
- *Identification of project goals and outcomes includes the local community*
 - *How were priorities and needs of communities identified and incorporated in project development? Was a needs assessment, visioning exercise, town hall meeting, virtual discussions, etc., conducted with the local community?*
 - *Did the community have an opportunity to discuss concerns for any unintentional consequences with the removal targets/locations and/or methods?*
 - *Was community input included in the development and/or application of the criteria for the selection of removal targets?*
- *Identification of known or potential barriers for working with local communities and solutions for appropriately addressing those barriers developed with the community*
 - *Description of ongoing or past engagement with the community to learn about the specific challenges they are facing and how the proposed removal activities can be conducted to help mitigate those challenges (i.e., ADV removals will make a local waterfront*

safer/more accessible, removal of DFG will enhance local fisheries and improve food security, removal of large debris items is expected to restore tourism revenue to improve the local economy, etc.)

- *Community member or organization leads or co-leads design for removal, prevention, outreach/education, monitoring, removal, and/or disposal activities related to targeted debris removals*
- *Community member or organization contributes to proposal development*

Decision-Making Opportunities

- *Community member or organization has a lead role on project team (PI or Co-PI) to ensure shared power in decision-making throughout the award*
- *Community member or organization has a lead or co-lead role in decision-making for certain project components which could include (but is not limited to):*
 - *Creating shared community agreements for decision making processes to ensure transparency, and that participants feel comfortable expressing their perspectives or disagreement.*
 - *Facilitating community meetings to foster community discussion on decisions in award planning and/or execution*
 - *Final selection of removal targets*
 - *Selection/implementation of the methodology/approach for project activities*
 - *Prevention/Outreach/Monitoring/Disposal Activities*
- *Community member or organization will play an active role in developing solutions to known and/or unexpected challenges*

Implementation/Execution

- *Community member or organization will lead or co-lead coordination/implementation of the removal, prevention, outreach/education, monitoring, and/or disposal activities*
- *Proposed project activities include creating incentive programs that are co-developed with the community, when applicable, which could include but are not limited to:*
 - *Supporting local fishers to use new traps with technology that prevents lost and/or illegal traps through trap trade-in programs*
 - *Working with marinas and local boat owners to encourage participation of turning in end-of-life vessels to prevent reaccumulation of abandoned and derelict vessels in the project area*
 - *Partner with small businesses selling fishing gear to share messaging about the importance of both environmental and economic benefits of gear retrieval and new technologies to help prevent lost gear*

- *Hands-on training opportunities for stakeholders*
- *Hiring local fishers to help with collection of identified sites with large accumulations of derelict fish gear*
- *Creating professional development opportunities for the community to address community-identified needs and challenges*

General considerations

- *Describe how individuals/community organizations/members became part of the project team and their connection to the targeted debris issue and local community*
 - *How are they physically connected to where the removal activities are occurring?*
 - *Are they experiencing firsthand the negative impacts of the targeted debris?*
 - *Did they identify the expected benefits from the proposed removal activities?*
- *Describe history of engagement including historical and recent examples of other meaningful engagement work the applicant has with these or similar community partners*
 - *If the applicant does not have past experience working with the community/individuals the applicant could:*
 - *Describe how the applicant is working to build trust in developing the new connection*
 - *Describe how the applicant is ensuring respectful and consensual public communication about the partnership, the marine debris issues addressed, and any culturally or otherwise sensitive information (e.g. a tribal partner leads communications about their community, review between parties is required prior to publishing, etc.)*
 - *Incorporate a subaward with an organization already working with the community or that specializes in community engagement initiatives to ensure the proposed activities are executed in an informed, meaningful, and trusted way with the surrounding community*
- *Include letters of support written by the community and partner organizations that demonstrate a commitment to being engaged throughout the proposed project tailored to the interests/needs/roles of each entity*
- *Include paid positions created for individuals from the local communities*
- *Include compensation for community members participating in the project for their time and knowledge-sharing*
- *Reduce barriers to participation by providing resources like language translation, meeting times that accommodate various work schedules, etc.*
- *Where applicable, applicants may describe any intentional reasoning for areas where meaningful engagement is not described, such as the applicant cannot compensate community members prior to receiving funding*
 - *In these situations, applicants may describe what actions have been and/or will be taken to ensure the community's needs are otherwise incorporated.*

****Please note outreach or communications directed to communities without any description for how feedback and ideas from the community receiving the messaging will be incorporated into the project, will not be considered meaningful engagement.**