§ 923.126 Pre-application procedures.

(a) Pre-submission consultation. Each State is strongly encouraged to consult with the Assistant Administrator prior to the submission of its draft proposal (see §923.126(b)) and formal application for section 309 funding. The purpose of the consultation will be to determine whether the proposed projects are consistent with the purposes and objectives of section 309 and with the State’s approved Strategy, to resolve any questions concerning eligibility for funding under section 309 (see §923.121(b)), and to discuss preliminarily the State’s recommendations regarding which projects should be funded by weighted formula and which projects should be individually evaluated and ranked as projects of special merit.

(b) Draft proposals. States shall submit draft proposals for section 309 funding annually on a schedule to be determined by the Assistant Administrator. These draft proposals shall contain all of the information needed for final application, including the following:

(1) A clear and concise description of the projects that the State proposes to be funded under section 309. This description shall explain the relationship of each proposed project to the State’s approved Assessment and Strategy and how each proposed project will accomplish all or part of a program change that the State has identified in its Strategy. In addition, each project description shall include:
   (i) A specific timetable for completion of each project;
   (ii) A description of the activities that will be undertaken to complete each project and by whom;
   (iii) The identification of any subawardees, pursuant to §923.94(d)(3)(i); and
   (iv) The estimated total cost for each project.

(2) Section 309 funds may be used for any of the following allowable uses which support the attainment of a program change:
   (i) Personnel costs;
   (ii) Supplies and overhead;
   (iii) Travel;
   (iv) Equipment (pursuant to 15 CFR part 24);
   (v) Projects, studies and reports; and
   (vi) Contractual costs including subcontracts, subawards, personal service contracts with individuals, memoranda of agreement/understanding, and other forms of passthrough funding for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of section 309.

(3) Funds may not be used for land acquisition or low cost construction projects.

(4) The State may recommend which projects should be funded by weighted formula under §923.125(a) and which projects should be funded as projects of special merit under §923.125(b).

(5) The draft proposal shall contain documentation of fiscal needs and technical needs, if any. This documentation shall include:
   (i) For fiscal needs, information on the current State budget (surplus or deficit), the budget of the applying agency (increase or decrease over previous fiscal year), future budget projections, and what efforts have been made by the applying agency, if any, to secure additional State funds from the Legislature and/or from off-budget sources such as user fees; and
   (ii) For technical needs, identification of the technical knowledge, skills and equipment that are needed to carry out proposed projects and that are not available to the applying agency, and what efforts the applying agency has
made, if any, to obtain the trained personnel and equipment it needs (for example, through agreements with other State agencies).

(6) The Assistant Administrator may request additional documentation of fiscal and technical needs.

(7) Following the first year of funding under section 309, the draft proposal shall describe how the past year’s work contributed to the attainment of a program change as defined in §923.123(a) in one or more of the coastal zone enhancement objectives.

(8) If the sum of estimated project costs for projects the State recommends be funded under §923.125(a) exceeds the State’s weighted formula funding target pursuant to §923.124(d), NOAA shall determine, in consultation with the State, which projects are appropriate for funding with weighted formula funds.

(c) Review of draft proposals. (1) The Assistant Administrator will make the final determination of which projects should be funded by weighted formula and which projects should be funded as projects of special merit, taking into account the State’s recommendations.

(2) The Assistant Administrator may seek advice from technical experts in the fields of the coastal zone enhancement objectives as to the technical soundness and overall merit of section 309 project proposals.

(3) The Assistant Administrator will make the final determinations on project selection using the criteria at §923.125(a) and evaluate and rank projects of special merit based on the criteria at §923.125(b).

(4) If the Assistant Administrator determines that a State’s project proposal(s) for weighted formula funding fails to meet the criteria at §923.125(a), the Assistant Administrator may either reduce or deny the amount available to the State under §923.124(d).

(5) Each state will be notified of the results of the review of draft proposals, as described in paragraphs (c) (3) and (4) of this section, in time to include approved section 309 projects in their applications for financial assistance pursuant to subpart I of 15 CFR part 923.

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