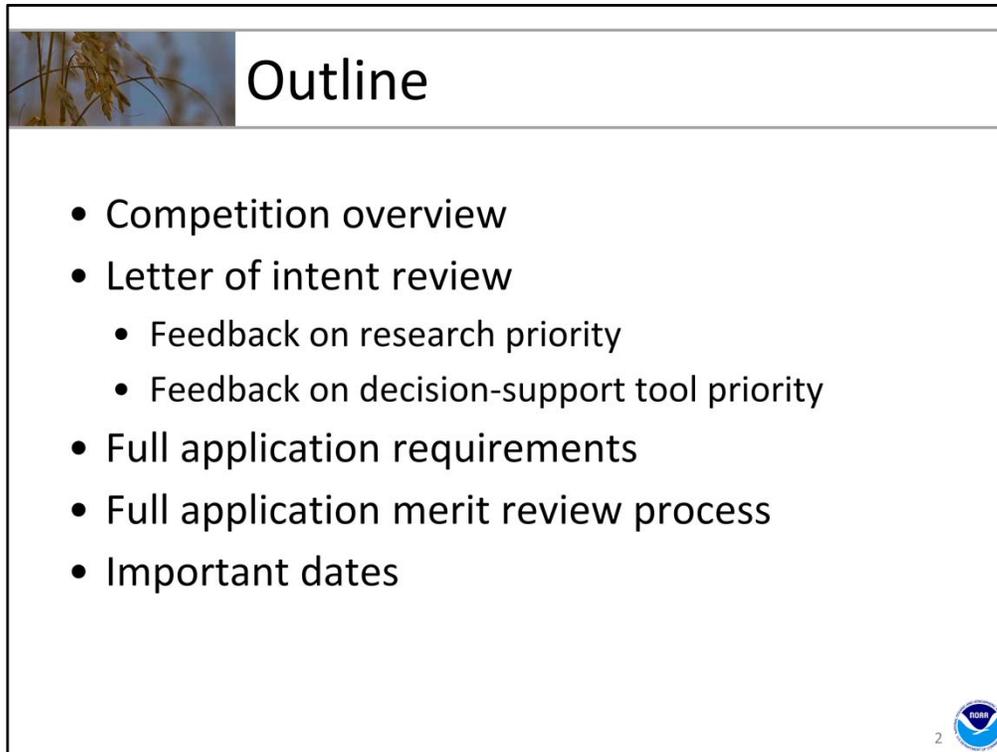


## Federal Funding Opportunity 2017 Full Application Webinars

- Wednesday, August 10, 9 AM Central (10 AM Eastern)
- Wednesday, August 10, 2 PM Central (3 PM Eastern)
- Thursday, August 11, 10 AM Central (11 AM Eastern)
- Friday, August 12, 2 PM Central (3 PM Eastern)
- Monday, August 15, 9 AM Central (10 AM Eastern)

For audio: 888-530-3010 pin: 2930343#





## Outline

- Competition overview
- Letter of intent review
  - Feedback on research priority
  - Feedback on decision-support tool priority
- Full application requirements
- Full application merit review process
- Important dates

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Good morning/afternoon, my name is Julien Lartigue and I am the director of the NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program.

We are holding this webinar for those who submitted letters of intent to our current funding competition to explain the purpose of the letter of intent review and explain the most common feedback we provided to those who submitted letters. If you submitted a letter of intent, you may find it useful to have the response we sent you on hand when I review the common feedback we provided.

This webinar is also an opportunity for us to clarify certain requirements for the full application and answer questions about the full application merit review process.

Our goal is to be as clear and consistent as possible in the feedback we are providing to those who submitted letters of intent. We also want to make sure the instructions in the competition announcement for the full application are clear.

I will take questions at the end of this roughly 15 minute presentation, but I will not answer specific questions about individual letters of intent or our response to them. Those questions are best directed and answered in one on one conversations with Frank Parker, the federal program officer for this competition, or myself. If you wish to have such a conversation, please contact one of us and we can schedule a time to meet.



## Federal Funding Opportunity - 2017

- Living coastal marine resources and their habitats
- Two priorities
  - **Research** in six specific areas
  - **Decision support tools**
- Link to management is key
- Up to \$17M
- Open competition
- A letter of intent is required



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This funding opportunity, which we have named FFO-2017, is directed at growing our understanding of living coastal and marine resources and their habitats with the goal of improving our capacity for managing them. We are focused on connections within the ecosystem - the movement of organisms, the linkages among habitats, and food web dynamics.

This competition has two priorities – a research priority with six specific areas of research and a decision support tool priority. Applicants must select one of the two priorities.

The link to management is key. To be competitive, an applicant will have to connect their research or tool development to a challenge or decision facing living coastal and marine resource managers. I will explain the importance of this connection in further detail later in this webinar.

This federal funding opportunity is an open competition. All qualified applications will be evaluated and scored individually using an independent peer review process. This process is designed to identify the strongest applications based on the merit of the work being proposed.

Finally, to be eligible to submit a full application to this competition, you must have submitted a letter of intent by the July 8 deadline for those letters.



# Letter of Intent Review

- We received 270 Letters of Intent
  - **Research:** 186 letters
  - **Decision support tools:** 82 letters
- Review did not focus on quality but on alignment with the funding opportunity.
- Letters of intent received a response of:
  - Encouraged to submit full application
  - Encouraged to submit full application with modifications
  - Not encouraged to submit full application
- Response letters with a response of encouraged with modifications or not encouraged included specific feedback



In total, the Science Program received 270 letters of intent – 186 letters for the research priority, 82 letters for the decision support tool priority, and 2 letters that did not identify a priority.

Each letter was reviewed by the Science Program for the alignment of the proposed work with the competition announcement. This was not a review of quality. I repeat, this was not a review of quality, only whether the proposed work aligned with the priorities in the competition announcement.

Each letter received one of three responses...

Letters whose projects were *relevant and responsive* to the priority they proposed to address received a response **encouraging** them to submit a full application.

Letters whose projects were *somewhat relevant and responsive* received a response **encouraging** them to submit a full application, but **with modifications**. A full application structured along the lines outlined in these letters may not be as competitive as others that were received.

Letters whose projects were *not relevant and/or responsive* received a response **not encouraging** them to submit a full application. A full application structured along the lines outlined in these letters is unlikely to be as competitive as others that were received.

All response letters included a reminder that the projective narrative is limited to 12 pages and then general language emphasizing key aspects of strong applications for each priority, for example, the importance of a link to management.

If you were in the **encouraged with modifications** or **not encouraged** categories, we also provided one or more bullets specific to your letter that encapsulated reviewer feedback.

Anyone who decides to submit a full application should think carefully about 1) how to address their selected priority as it is described in the competition announcement, 2) the general feedback that all applicants received for their priority, and 3) any specific feedback for your letter.

**Feedback – Research Priority**

“The issue you intend to address, while perhaps a need scientifically, does not **clearly indicate a management challenge** related to living coastal and marine resources and their habitats”



I will now walk through the more common feedback included in our response letters. I will cover the common feedback for the research priority first followed by the decision support tool priority.

Several letters under the research priority received this feedback...

“The issue you intend to address, while perhaps a need scientifically, does not **clearly indicate a management challenge** related to living coastal and marine resources and their habitats”

This competition is not designed to support basic research. Full applications that clearly describe **how the research will be applied** to a challenge living coastal and marine resource managers are facing or will face will be given priority.



## Feedback – Research Priority

“Your letter of intent does not provide a **detailed path** for communicating research results **to the management community**. Providing a plan for the transfer of knowledge gained from projects to the management community is a fundamental goal for all Science Program funded projects”



Another common piece of feedback included in our research priority response letters was...

“Your letter of intent does not provide a **detailed path** for communicating research results **to the management community**. Providing a plan for the transfer of knowledge gained from projects to the management community is a fundamental goal for all Science Program funded projects”

In addition to applying to a challenge being faced by the management community, there must be a clear and detailed path for communicating the research results to the management community. Simply publishing peer-reviewed papers or presenting findings at a conference is not a clear and detailed path for communicating your research results to the management community.

This request to communicate research results should not be seen as a request for outreach to K-12 students or educators. It is not. The goal should be transferring the knowledge gained to specific resource managers who will find the research results relevant and useful.



## Feedback – Research Priority

- Specific Areas of Research:
  - A proposed project and its outcomes should **clearly and fully align** with each of the specific area(s) of research identified in a full application

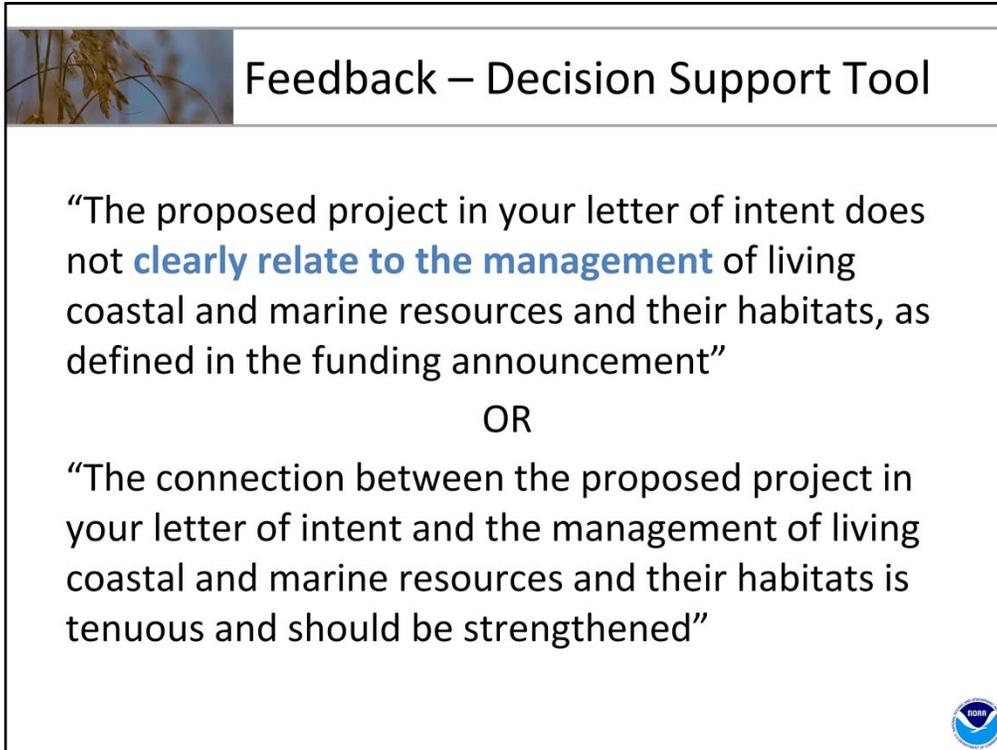


Before we move onto the common feedback we provided to decision support tool letters, I would like to cover one more issue related to the research priority. Under the research priority, the competition announcement lists six specific areas of research.

These specific areas of research were identified by resource managers and scientists as areas where more information and understanding is needed. This information and understanding is often lacking because it is logistically or technically difficult to conduct this type of research. Working in these areas is not easy. We are not interested in full applications that do a little bit of each specific area. We want applications that clearly and fully address the specific areas they identify and tackle the hard questions.

It is a requirement that at least one specific area of research be selected. Applicants should read the specific areas of research very carefully and make certain that their application clearly and fully addresses all aspects of the specific areas of research they identify.

Frequently, a letter of intent fully addressed one specific area of research but also identified other specific areas of research as being addressed that were either tangentially related to the work being proposed or not fully addressed. There is no advantage to doing so, and in fact, doing so in a full application will result in a lower score. I repeat... if a full application identifies a specific area of research that is not fully addressed in the application, it will result in a lower score for that application.



## Feedback – Decision Support Tool

“The proposed project in your letter of intent does not **clearly relate to the management** of living coastal and marine resources and their habitats, as defined in the funding announcement”

OR

“The connection between the proposed project in your letter of intent and the management of living coastal and marine resources and their habitats is tenuous and should be strengthened”

I will now walk us through the more common feedback included in our decision support tool response letters.

Several letters under the decision support tool priority received this feedback...

“The proposed project in your letter of intent does not clearly relate to the management of living coastal and marine resources and their habitats, as defined in the funding announcement”

OR

“The connection between the proposed project in your letter of intent and the management of living coastal and marine resources and their habitats is tenuous and should be strengthened”

This competition is not designed to support decision-support tool development in general. It is instead targeted specifically at tools that clearly relate to the management of living coastal and marine resources. Applications that do not clearly place their tool within the context of managing living coastal and marine resources will not score well during the merit review process.



## Feedback – Decision Support Tool

“The issue you intend to address, while perhaps a need scientifically, does not clearly indicate a **current or near-term management decision or challenge** that has been identified as a priority by the management community and for which there is a **clear path for the adoption and use** of the tool by a resource manager”



Another common piece of feedback included in our decision support tool priority response letters was...

“The issue you intend to address, while perhaps a need scientifically, does not clearly indicate a current or near-term management decision or challenge that has been identified as a priority by the management community and for which there is a clear path for the adoption and use of the tool by a resource manager”

Again, the link to management is key. For a decision-support tool application to be competitive, it has to address a current or near-term management decision or challenge that is a priority for a specific management end user and there has to be specific steps to getting the tool adopted and used by that end user.



## Feedback – Decision Support Tool

“It was unclear if the decision support tool in your letter of intent ‘would be of **great utility and value** to the management community.’ This connection should be strengthened”

OR

“It was unclear how the decision support tool proposed in your letter of intent would **assist resource managers** with the ‘management of living coastal and marine resources and their habitat, including habitat restoration planning and the social, behavioral, and economic components of human use’”



Two other common pieces of feedback included in our decision support tool priority response letters were...

“It was unclear if the decision-support tool in your letter of intent ‘would be of great utility and value to the management community.’ This connection should be strengthened”

OR

“It was unclear how the decision-support tool proposed in your letter of intent would assist resource managers with the ‘management of living coastal and marine resources and their habitat, including habitat restoration planning and the social, behavioral, and economic components of human use’”

Both of these pieces of feedback speak to the utility of the tool to those responsible for managing living coastal and marine resources. Not only must the tool address a priority of the management community, it must be clear how the tool will be of value and fit within existing management frameworks. For example, a tool that displays or synthesizes information on a geographic or time scale that is not compatible with the scales on which management decisions are made has questionable utility.



## Feedback – Decision Support Tool

“Your letter of intent does not clearly describe the process by which **collaboration** will occur between the tool developer and the end user(s) and/or how the end user(s) will be trained on the tool”

OR

“Your letter of intent failed to provide a **plan for the transfer** of your proposed decision-support tool to end-users”



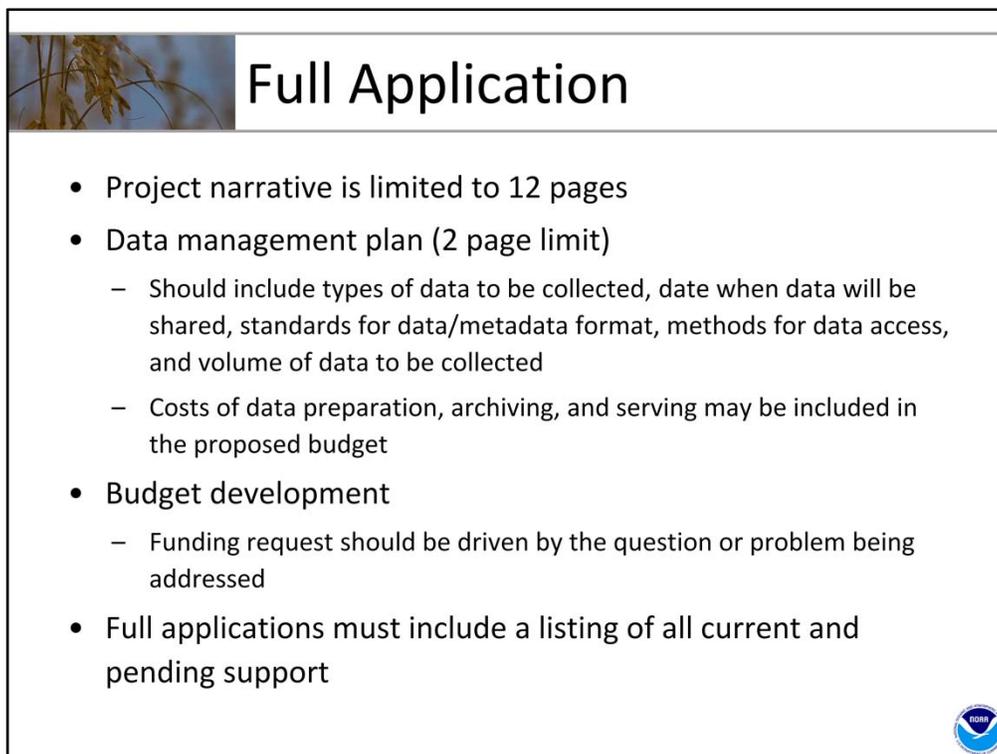
The last two common pieces of feedback included in our decision support tool priority response letters that I would like to review with you are...

“Your letter of intent does not clearly describe the process by which collaboration will occur between the tool developer and the end user(s) and/or how the end user(s) will be trained on the tool”

OR

“Your letter of intent failed to provide a plan for the transfer of your proposed decision-support tool to end-users”

Both of these pieces of feedback speak to the need for strong collaboration between the tool developer and the end user in the development of the tool. Not only must the tool address a priority of the management community and be of clear value, but the proposal should also specify how the end user will be part of the development process, be trained on the tool, and have the tool transitioned to them for application.



## Full Application

- Project narrative is limited to 12 pages
- Data management plan (2 page limit)
  - Should include types of data to be collected, date when data will be shared, standards for data/metadata format, methods for data access, and volume of data to be collected
  - Costs of data preparation, archiving, and serving may be included in the proposed budget
- Budget development
  - Funding request should be driven by the question or problem being addressed
- Full applications must include a listing of all current and pending support



Lets now talk about the full application requirements.

Detailed instructions on what needs to be included in a full application are available in the full announcement for this competition. I will not be reviewing all of those instructions. Instead, I will be clarifying a few of those instructions and highlighting at least one that may not be as common as others.

First, there are two page limits listed for the project narrative in the full announcement. The first page limit listed, which is 12 pages, is the correct limit. This correct page limit for the project narrative was also included in the responses to the letters of intent.

Second, the data management requirements for this competition and the detail with which we ask them to be addressed are consistent with the new federal and NOAA policies for data stewardship (LINK: [https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data\\_Sharing\\_Directive\\_v3.0.pdf](https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf)). Please read the relevant portions of the competition announcement carefully and include a strong data management plan in your full application. A short paragraph with generic statements about how you will archive your data is not sufficient.

Third, in developing your budget, please request what is needed to address the question or problem you have identified. Do not divide the amount of funding available by the expected number of awards and propose to that amount. It is the relevance, quality, and return on investment of the work being proposed that will determine which applications are funded, not the amount requested.

Finally, full applications must include a listing of all 'current and pending support' and there is a link in the announcement to a form that can be used for this listing (<https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/funding/applicants/forms>). We are aware that the form on the website is dated and now has expired, but we cannot upload a new form until we receive permission from the Office of Management and Budget to do so. In the meantime, you can open the form in Adobe, save it as a WORD document, then edit the form as you as needed to convey the required information. For example, you can change the years on the form. If you have trouble doing so, please reach out to us and we can help. We will upload a new form as soon as it is available.



## Full Application Review

- Full applications will go through a merit review process
- The letter of intent review **will have no bearing** on the full application merit review process
- Full Application Merit Review Process:
  - Step 1: Administrative Review
    - Completeness, eligibility, etc.
  - Step 2: Independent Peer Mail and/or Panel Review
    - Each proposal will be reviewed by three technical experts
    - Projects scoring >70 on 0-100 scale advance to panel



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All complete full applications received by the September 27 deadline will enter a merit review process.

The outcome of the letter of intent review will have no bearing on the full application merit review process. All full applications will start with the same score regardless of the results of the letter of intent review.

The first step in the full application merit review process will be an administrative review of the full application to assess its completeness and the eligibility of the applicant.

The second step will be an independent peer mail and/or panel review. The decision on whether to conduct an independent mail review as well as a panel review will depend on the volume of applications and their breadth. Either a high volume of applications or a pool of applications which covers very diverse subject matters may necessitate an independent mail review prior to a panel review.

All complete full applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by three technical experts and the results of this review will be shared with the applicants.

The evaluation criteria that will be used by these reviewers is contained in section V of the competition announcement. If you decide to prepare a full application, please read this criteria carefully.

## FFO-2017: Important Dates

**June 1, 2016:** FFO released on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

**July 8, 2016:** Letter of intent due to [Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov](mailto:Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov)

**September 27, 2016:** Full proposal due to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

**May 2017-** Awards made

**June 1, 2017** - Project start date

[Apply Now](#)



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As I mentioned earlier, full applications are due no later than September 27.

We anticipate making awards no later than May 2017 with projects having a projected start date of June 1, 2017.

Our goal is to conduct a high quality merit review of the full applications and keep the time between when you submit full applications and when you learn the results of the competition to a minimum.

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring and Technology Program

## NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program

# Questions and Answers

### Contact Information

Director –

Dr. Julien Lartigue ([julien.lartigue@noaa.gov](mailto:julien.lartigue@noaa.gov)) 240-429-5966

Associate Director (Federal Program Officer for FFO-2017) –

Frank Parker ([frank.parker@noaa.gov](mailto:frank.parker@noaa.gov)) 240-533-0148

Grants administration –

Laura Golden ([laurie.golden@noaa.gov](mailto:laurie.golden@noaa.gov)) 240-533-0285

<http://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/>

[noaarestorescience@noaa.gov](mailto:noaarestorescience@noaa.gov)



Thank you for taking time out of your day to attend this webinar and I will now be happy to answer any questions you may have....

We have received a number of questions about the spatial extent of projects. The competition announcement does not request a specific spatial scale for work under either priority. This is by design. We expect research or decision support tool to fit the relevant geographic scale for the question or challenge being addressed. The only geographic or spatial restriction is that the work be within the Gulf of Mexico or its watersheds.

**Could the Science Program provide a breakdown of how many letters of intent received responses of 'encouraged', 'encouraged with modifications', or 'not encouraged'?**

The Science Program has decided to not share this information. Since the letter of intent review was focused on alignment with the funding announcement and not on the quality of the proposed work, a response of 'encouraged with modifications' or 'not encouraged' does not necessarily mean those letters were of lower quality. The letter of intent responses will not be shared with the full application merit reviewers and all full applications submitted by the September 27 deadline have an equal opportunity to earn a high score.

**What is the role of letters of support in the evaluation of full applications? Can letters of support be used to demonstrate a connection or collaboration with managers?**

Letters of support are encouraged but not required. Letters of support can be used to demonstrate the need for and/or applicability of the proposed research or decision support tool to resource managers and end-users. Letters of support can be bundled into one pdf file and uploaded in the Optional Document box as "Other Attachments" in [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

## Questions and Answers (cont.)

### Contact Information

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<http://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/>

[noaarestorescience@noaa.gov](mailto:noaarestorescience@noaa.gov)



### Who does the Science Program consider managers?

This funding competition broadly defines resource managers and end users. Living coastal and marine resource management can take many forms including wildlife and fishery management, federal and state rulemaking and permitting, conservation practices by private landowners, place-based management, and restoration planning. Managers can come from state or federal agencies and can also be private landowners or other individuals or groups who make decisions that directly impact living coastal and marine resources.

### Can state agency employees serve as principal investigators or collaborators? If so, is it a requirement?

Listing state agency employees who are living coastal and marine resource managers as co-principal investigators or collaborators is a way of demonstrating a strong connection to the management community. However, it is not a requirement. We also understand that some state agencies have prohibitions against personnel serving on a grant proposal or even submitting a letter of support for a grant proposal. If this is the case for your project, please mention this issue in the project narrative of your full application to allow it to be considered during the merit review process.