



GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT

COMMBUYS Number: BD-27-1046-DMF-FW205-131120

Dated: 07/06/2026

Massachusetts Large Whale and Sea Turtle Conservation Program

1. Grant Opportunity Summary

- A. PROPOSALS SOUGHT FOR:** The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF) announces the availability of grant funds to support Massachusetts' efforts to monitor, document, protect, and recover large whale and turtle species found in state waters and adjacent areas for 2026-2027.
- B. OVERVIEW AND GOALS:** Federal and state funding will provide support for a contract for surveillance research and monitoring of North Atlantic right whales and for entanglement response for all large whale species and sea turtles. This includes aerial and focused shipboard ecosystem surveys of right whales from late fall through the spring in Cape Cod Bay and adjacent waters. The disentanglement project will contribute to ongoing conservation efforts and entanglement readiness and response for whales from New Hampshire to Rhode Island, and sea turtles off Massachusetts.
- Goals:**
1. Conduct aerial surveillance flights from fall 2026 through spring 2027 to document individual right whale residency and distribution in Cape Cod Bay and adjacent areas.
 2. Collect information documenting changes in the Cape Cod Bay ecosystem, including changes in zooplankton characteristics, productivity, and seasonality.
 3. Maintain an entanglement response readiness with trained entanglement responders to respond to reports of live and dead entangled large whales and sea turtles.
- C. ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS:** The Massachusetts Large Whale and Sea Turtle Conservation Program is open to legally recognized entities and people, excluding federal agencies/federal employees, that have the ability to enter into a contract with the Commonwealth. All respondents must be in good standing with both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and federal government, be registered in sam.gov with an active UEI, and be able to obtain the proper permits. See additional details in Section 2A.
- D. PROPOSAL DEADLINE:** July 20, 2026, 11:59 pm EST (see further details on deadlines in Section 4)
- E. FUNDING AVAILABILITY:** Contingent upon state and federal funds availability; respondents may request up to \$1,300,000 at this time.
- F. MATCH REQUIREMENT:** There is no match requirement for this funding opportunity.
- G. ANTICIPATED DURATION OF CONTRACTS:** Contracts will end on September 30, 2027.
- H. REGULATIONS, STATUTES, OR AUTHORIZATION GOVERNING THIS GRANT PROGRAM:** Respondents are responsible for compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing the funding source(s).
- I. CONTACT INFORMATION:** Leah Crowe, MADMF Protected Species Science Lead, leah.m.crowe@mass.gov

2. Performance and Contract Specifications

A. ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS: The Massachusetts Large Whale and Sea Turtle Conservation Program is open to legally recognized entities and people, excluding federal agencies/federal employees, that have the ability to enter into a contract with the Commonwealth. All respondents must be in good standing with both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and federal government, be registered in sam.gov with an active UEI, and be able to obtain the proper permits. The grantee will have at a minimum, the following expertise/skills:

- Ten years' experience disentangling large whales and sea turtles.
- Ability to sample zooplankton in water columns and provide data analysis on these counts.
- Knowledgeable on state and federal regulations that protect endangered large whales, including time-of-year vessel speed restrictions.
- Ability to identify large whale and sea turtle species that frequent Massachusetts waters and adjacent areas, both from an aerial surveillance point of view and vessel-based; in addition to zooplankton species identification for vessel-based sampling.
- Ability to maintain vessel and flight logs documenting all surveillance and monitoring activity, including photographic and environmental data compatible with the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium.
- Ability to write comprehensive reports documenting all activities under this grant for the purposes of state and federal management discussions.
- Ability to track expenditures and invoice monthly as work is completed.

B. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS: Eligible projects must include the grantee responsibilities listed below:

- Year-round on-call entanglement readiness and response for whales and sea turtles in Massachusetts and adjacent waters using their own vessel, equipment, trained personnel, and (permit) authorization from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct disentanglements.
- Near real-time reporting of confirmed entanglement sightings to MADMF and National Marine Fisheries Service, with in-depth documentation when responding to entanglements.
- Obtain permits from NOAA for aerial and vessel-based surveillance and monitoring of right whales.
- Conduct large whale habitat monitoring cruises and zooplankton analysis using their own vessel and trained personnel from fall 2026 through spring 2027.
- Under the direction of MADMF, conduct aerial surveillance surveys every year to document individual right whale residency and distribution in Massachusetts waters and adjacent areas from late fall through spring.
- Report all large whale sightings to the Sightings Advisory System at the end of each flight, provide a summary report of sightings to MADMF within 24 hours, and provide photo-ID right whale data to the New England Aquarium.
- Document the distribution and abundance of any other marine mammals, fishing gear, and shipping activity in Cape Cod Bay and adjacent waters in winter through spring.
- Collect information documenting changes in the Cape Cod Bay ecosystem including changes in zooplankton characteristics, productivity, and seasonality.
- Submit semi-annual performance reports to MADMF detailing program activities.

C. FUNDING AVAILABILITY, BUDGETING GUIDELINES, AND ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES: MADMF expects to award, contingent upon availability of state and federal funds, approximately \$1,300,000 in total funding for this

grant opportunity. Respondents may request up to \$1,300,000 for a project. Costs eligible for reimbursement include all approved project costs incurred on or after a selected respondent's contract execution date, and on or before June 30, 2027, or September 30, 2027, depending on programmatic funds as described in Attachment A.

Equipment Purchases: Equipment is defined as tangible property having a useful life of at least five years and a per-unit acquisition cost of \$10,000 or greater. The equipment must be purchased in full to qualify for reimbursement. An explanation of the review and selection of the winning bid must also be included. The equipment title will reside with the grantee and must be used for its intended purpose, as described in the approved project proposal. The grantee is required to use the equipment for its proposed and intended purpose for the useful life of the equipment.

D. MATCH REQUIREMENT: There is no match requirement for the funding opportunity.

E. PROJECT TERMS: If awarded, all grantees will be required to abide by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Terms and Conditions. If funds are awarded to an agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) will be used as the grant agreement. In addition, all contracts are subject to successful negotiation of a Final Scope of Services and/or Budget. Please note that MADMF does not guarantee that any contracts may result from this grant opportunity or that any funding level will be awarded. It is anticipated that projects could commence immediately upon MADMF's decision and execution of a contract. The awarded contracts may be reviewed during their course and, upon request by the grantee, may be amended at the sole discretion of MADMF. Any amendments granted may not necessarily change the monetary value of the contract.

In accordance with the Massachusetts Comptrollers Guidance on Grants Procurement and Contracts,

The department, at its discretion, may negotiate a change in any element of contract performance or cost identified in the grant application, RFR or the grantee's response which results in lower costs, or a more cost-effective or better value grant result than was presented in the grantee's original proposal. Changes can be negotiated which result in overall increased costs, provided the overall result is the best value or a "better value" than was originally proposed.

F. TOTAL ANTICIPATED DURATION OF CONTRACT(S): The contract period will begin on the date that the contract is executed by MADMF and end on September 30, 2027, or as funding sources allow.

G. REPORTING: The grantee shall submit Interim and Final Performance Reports upon request. Other deliverables are project specific and will be confirmed at the time of the contract award and project scoping.

H. INVOICING: Grantees must first pay for grant-approved expenditures then submit for reimbursement along with required acceptable documentation for eligible costs. Project costs and match may not be incurred until after the grantee has an executed contract from MADMF. Grantees must pay for 100% of an expenditure before submitting for reimbursement and only approved expenses (as written in the contract's scope/budget) incurred during the period of the contract are eligible for reimbursement, unless an exemption is agreed upon during the contract negotiation process allowing for upfront costs. The

grantee may submit multiple reimbursement requests, monthly at most, during the contract period. The final reimbursement request must be submitted no later than 30 days after the contract end date. Ten percent of available funds will be withheld until all deliverables are met. Funds issued pursuant to this Grant Opportunity must be expended and match documented on or before the contract end date. Any funds not used within the contract period will be released back to the state. The grantee must ensure that costs claimed under this Grant Opportunity are not double billed across other federal grants or state funding.

- I. **OWNERSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** The grantee shall acknowledge funding from MADMF and its federal source on all products for public distribution and viewing, including PowerPoint presentations, press releases, fact sheets, brochures, reports, web content, and signs. Additionally, it is encouraged that the grantee develop and distribute a press release upon the award of the grant and/or project completion, with said acknowledgement.

3. Instructions for Proposal Submission

A. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS: Complete proposals must be received by July 20, 2026; 11:59 pm EST. Any proposal received after the deadline will be rejected. Proposals may be submitted via email to leah.m.crowe@mass.gov. All form instructions and required documents are attached to this document. Failure to complete and submit all required information may result in the disqualification of the proposal.

Proposals must not be longer than 18 pages and must include the following (see Attachment A: Proposal Template, for more detailed instructions):

1. Name, address, and contact information of entity applying, including UEI and sam.gov expiration
2. Proposed project name
3. Requested start and end dates
4. Relevant background information on proposed project
5. Respondent experience, including partnerships involved in proposal
6. Description of proposed project and deliverables
7. Project timeline
8. Budget

B. ADDITIONAL REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION:

- Respondents will need to fill out these forms with their proposal submission:
 - Commonwealth Standard Contract Form, filled out and signed by the Respondent
 - Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Verification Form
- If a proposal is selected, the Respondent will also need to fill out these forms:
 - Commonwealth W-9 tax information form, filled out and signed by the Respondent
 - Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer Form filled out and signed by the Respondent
 - Subrecipient forms

Respondents are encouraged to review these forms prior to submission of a response to understand the requirements for receipt of funds. They are available as attachments to this document.

C. EVALUATION CRITERIA: MADMF will evaluate all complete and responsive proposals on a competitive basis and select projects that obtain the highest scores. MADMF reserves the right to request additional, clarifying information from the respondent during the evaluation period, and to reject any or all proposals that do not meet the requirements, intent, and terms of this Grant Opportunity. Each proposal will be reviewed based on the criteria and point values below. Respondents must agree to provide all required supporting documentation as requested.

- Scientific merit, project objectives, methods and feasibility (50%) - This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, whether there are clear project goals and objectives, data management considerations, communications, and feasible milestones and deliverables. For this criterion, respondents will be evaluated based on the following:
 - *Does the project's technical approach and proposed methodology account for the grantee responsibilities required in Section 2B?*
 - *Are the project's goals and objectives clear and attainable within the contracted timeframe?*
 - *How will the project maintain raw data, transfer data, and keep confidential data?*
 - *Do performance measures accurately reflect the project's ability to succeed?*

- *How will the project and project team members collaborate and communicate with MADMF and other relevant agencies/stakeholders, including but not limited to, management or regulatory agencies and other public entities?*
- *Does the project have contingency plans to their methods/approaches to ensure timely deliverables and reduce delays?*
- Qualifications and/or expertise of the research team (30%) - This criterion assesses whether the respondent possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, permits, and administrative resources to accomplish the proposed activities. This criterion may also evaluate whether researchers previously funded by MADMF were successful in accomplishing their prior projects. For this criterion, respondents will be evaluated based on the following:
 - *Does the research team have the minimum expertise/skills, or reasonably equivalent, as described in Section 2A of this grant opportunity?*
 - *Does the research team have the proper training and/or permits to conduct the research described?*
 - *If any member(s) of the research team has received funding in the past from MADMF, was the work completed according to the contracted statement of work?*
 - *If any member(s) of the research team has received funding in the past from MADMF, have the funds been administered and invoiced on time and within budget?*
- Price Evaluation (20%) - This criterion assesses whether the project's budget effectively incorporates the grantee responsibilities and project goals into the contracted timeframe. For this criterion, respondents will be evaluated based on the following:
 - *Does the budget account for all costs necessary to fulfill the required grantee responsibilities?*
 - *Are costs reasonable and allocable to the project and its goals and deliverables?*
 - *Have all costs been justified and tied to project deliverables?*

4. Deadlines and Procurement Calendar

- A. RELEASE OF GRANT OPPORTUNITY:** July 6, 2026
- B. INFORMATION SESSION:** No information session is scheduled currently.
- C. PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** July 20, 2026; 11:59 pm EST.
- D. ESTIMATED AWARD DATE:** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' decisions are estimated to be announced up to 10 days after the grant proposal deadline.
- E. ESTIMATED CONTRACT START DATE:** Notwithstanding any verbal representations by the parties, or an earlier start date listed in the Standard Contract Form, and only after an award is issued and a final scope of services has been negotiated, the effective start date of a contract shall be the latest of the following dates: the date the Standard Contract Form has been executed by an authorized signatory of the contractor and the procuring department; the date of secretariat or other approval(s) required by law or regulation; or a later date specified in the Standard Contract Form. The earliest start date for contracts resulting from this Grant Opportunity is July 21, 2026.

5. Miscellaneous

A. TYPE OF PROCUREMENT: Grant

B. USE OF THIS PROCUREMENT BY SINGLE OR MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTS: This Grant Opportunity is a single department procurement. All contracts awarded under this Grant Opportunity will be utilized solely by MADMF.

C. REQUEST FOR SINGLE OR MULTIPLE RECIPIENTS: This Grant Opportunity may result in multiple contracts.

D. DISTRIBUTION METHOD: This Grant Opportunity has been distributed electronically via COMMBUYS. It is the responsibility of every Respondent to check COMMBUYS for any addenda or modifications to a Grant Opportunity to which they intend to respond. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its subdivisions accept no liability and will provide no accommodations to Respondents who fail to check for Grant Opportunity amendments and submit inadequate or incorrect responses. Potential Respondents are advised to check the “last change” field on the summary page of Grant Opportunity for which they intend to submit a response to ensure they have the most recent Grant Opportunity files.

Respondents may not alter grant language or any grant component files. Those submitting a proposal must respond in accordance with the grant directions and complete only those sections that prompt a response. Modifications to the body, specifications, terms and conditions, or which change the intent of this grant are prohibited. Any unauthorized alterations will disqualify a response.

All contracts shall be subject to available funding, whether through the appropriation and authorization of sufficient funds or the receipt of sufficient revenues. If available funding ceases for any reason, a contract shall be deemed under suspension, and contract performance must halt. A contractor will not be entitled to compensation for any performance provided during the period of contract suspension. MADMF may lift the suspension if available funding is received. In the absence of foreseeable available funding, MADMF may terminate the contract.

E. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:

1. Grant Proposal Template
2. Commonwealth Standard Contract Form and Instructions
3. Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing
4. Subrecipient Risk Assessment
5. Sample W-9 Form
6. Sample Authorization of Electronic Funds Payment form