

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Office of the Under Secretary (USEC), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Environmental Literacy Grants: Science On a Sphere Network Capacity Building

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: SEC-OED-2009-2001662

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.469, Congressionally Identified Awards and Projects.

Dates: The deadline for applications is 5:00 PM EST on February 19, 2009.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will have a date and time indication on them. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received.

PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Office of Education (OEd) is issuing a request for applications for projects designed to build capacity within NOAA's Science On a Sphere (SOS) Users Collaborative Network (Network) to enhance the educational use of spherical display systems as public exhibits. There are two goals for this program (1) to improve the understanding of how spherical display systems can be used to enhance informal science education learning, and (2) to build environmental literacy among the general public through increased use of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate data in informal education institutions. This FFO meets NOAA's Mission Goal to provide Critical Support for NOAA's Mission. It is required that the Principal Investigator (PI) for any application submitted to this opportunity be affiliated with a Network member institution. Members of the Network are those institutions that have received funding from NOAA related to spherical display systems or have purchased NOAA's SOS system to display in a public education setting. More information on the Network and an up-to-date list of members is available at:

<http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/network>. It is anticipated that recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by May 29, 2009 and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than August 1, 2009. Note: an MS Word-formatted version of this announcement is available at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NOAA promotes the inclusion of Earth system science concepts in informal science education venues through exhibits involving spherical display systems. NOAA's SOS Users Collaborative Network (Network) is a key component of this effort. The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA's Office of Education (OEd) is requesting applications for projects designed to build capacity within the Network to enhance the educational use of spherical display systems as public exhibits. Funded projects will be one to three years in duration and should expect to start no earlier than August 1, 2009.

There are two goals for this program (1) to improve the understanding of how spherical display systems can be used to enhance informal science education learning, and (2) to build environmental literacy among the general public through increased use of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate data in informal education institutions. See NOAA's Education Strategic Plan for more details: (<http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan>).

Proposed projects should aim to improve environmental literacy among the general public in fields relevant to NOAA-related sciences and to one or more of the following mission goals of the Agency (http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/PPI_Capabilities/Documents/Strategic_Plans/FY09-14_NOAA_Strategic_Plan.pdf):

- Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through an Ecosystem Approach to Management
- Understand Climate Variability and Change to Enhance Society's Ability to Plan and Respond
- Serve Society's Needs for Weather and Water Information
- Support the Nation's Commerce with Information for Safe, Efficient, and Environmentally Sound Transportation

This FFO meets NOAA's Mission Goal to provide Critical Support for NOAA's Mission.

B. Program Priorities

This funding opportunity is in response to needs stated by the members of the Network during the summer 2008 workshop for smaller-scale grants that serve to build capacity at both the institution and Network level. Projects funded through this announcement will build capacity to allow institutions to utilize the findings of the Network to improve their spherical display exhibits and build critical Network capacity that serves multiple institutions' needs.

Projects focused on building institutional capacity will need to fully justify the need for the activities and describe how the effort is reflective of research or evaluation on best use of spherical display systems in informal education settings and was informed by discussions with other members of the Network. Front-end evaluation or needs

assessment should be part of the justification and plans for formative and summative evaluations should be included so that the Network may benefit from knowledge of the impact of the increased institutional capacity. How the capacity will be maintained beyond the award period should also be described.

Projects focused on Network capacity building should also fully justify the need for the project based on discussions of the Network. Descriptions of how the activities will benefit the Network, how the activities will involve Network members, and how results will be shared with the Network should be included. Network capacity building applicants should also include plans for establishing working groups and/or electronic communications mechanisms (e.g., wikis) within the Network around appropriate topics to ensure regular input from the Network and possible broad adoption of results.

It is expected that Network capacity building awards will be closer to the upper range of the funding threshold and institutional capacity building grants will be smaller awards.

It is required that the Principal Investigator (PI) for any application submitted to this opportunity be from a Network member institution. Members of the Network are those institutions that have received funding from NOAA related to spherical display systems or have purchased NOAA's SOS system to display in a public education setting. More information on the Network and an up-to-date list of members is available at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/network>.

There should be a significant emphasis on sharing lessons learned and project deliverables with the Network. Awardees should plan to participate in at least one Network workshop and request funding to cover travel to the workshop (assume workshop will require at least one person to travel to Boulder, CO for a three day workshop).

Funding can be requested to support activities such as the following:

- Establishment or strengthening of a training program for spherical display system docents.
- Development of content creation capability. Emphasis should be placed on developing in-house capacity to work with datasets from the SOS dataset library and other images and scientific information to create new sphere programming. For example, efforts to add audio narration and/or scientifically accurate docent scripts to existing content pieces, development of stories featuring multiple existing contentpieces, or development of new content modules and/or complimentary data visualizations that address a demonstrated need within an institution(s) would be appropriate. NOAA's draft guidelines for sphere content creation (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/network/content_guidelines) should be followed for any content that is created. Projects can request software and hardware needed to create content.
- Updates of an exhibit featuring an existing spherical display system, including efforts such as development of supporting exhibitry and creation of new playlists.
- Incorporate recent technological innovations to an existing spherical display system, including items such as updated projectors and computers,

accompanying flat panel screens, kiosks, docent control tools, and equipment to support spherecasting.

- Utilization of an existing spherical display system in education programs such as science cafes or formal education offerings.
- Performance of focused evaluation studies. Projects must coordinate with program-wide evaluation that is currently underway.

Any proposed exhibitry or content should focus on NOAA science themes or mission goals and incorporate the use of appropriate current scientific information and data. Content focused on the following topics: climate, climate change and variability, the impacts of climate change, any topic related to the ocean literacy essential principles and large-scale weather phenomena is of high priority. Partnerships with science institutions that will be able to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to inform the development of exhibitry or content are strongly encouraged. Partnerships with NOAA programs are encouraged whenever possible. A summary of NOAA programs and activities sorted by the state or territory that they are based or focused in is available at: <http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS0107/noaainyourstate.html>

Any proposed exhibitry or content that is focused on the topics of the ocean or climate should be aligned with the Ocean Literacy: Essential Principles of OceanSciences (<http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/>) or the Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Science (<http://www.climate.noaa.gov/education/>).

Projects should be informed by and reference the discussions of best practices for the application of the spherical display systems that have occurred at meetings and workshops of the Network. Reports from these meetings and workshops are available from the Network home page at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/network>.

If components of the project being proposed are designed to be implemented at more than one institution, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit letters of commitment from additional institutions with public displays of spherical display systems indicating their interest in the topic and format of the activity being proposed.

This opportunity will not fund installations of spherical display systems. A funding opportunity planned for release in June 2009 will provide support for installations, as well as for projects that will enhance the delivery of scientific information through spherical display systems.

Project Evaluation

Project evaluation should be specifically addressed and a plan for how the project will be evaluated should be well constructed and included in the project description and budget sections. Project activities should be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting stated project goals and objectives as well as against the goals of the program, which are (1) improving the understanding of how spherical display systems can be used to enhance informal science education learning, and (2) building environmental literacy among the general public through increased use of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate data in informal education institutions. Evaluation should be handled by an external professional evaluator or by internal staff who has significant

experience with evaluation and are not otherwise substantively involved with the project. Evaluation should include assessment of changes in target audience attitudes, knowledge, awareness, and/or behaviors as a result of the activities undertaken and benefit to the Network.

Also, applicants should plan to participate in the ongoing program-wide evaluation.

C. Program Authority

Authority for this program is provided by the following 33 USC 893a(a).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates the availability of approximately \$500,000 of total Federal financial assistance from FY09 and FY10 for Environmental Literacy Grants for Science On a Sphere Network Capacity Building.

NOAA will only consider projects that have an award period of one to three years. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$100,000 including direct and indirect costs. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of more than \$100,000 total for all years of the award will not be considered for funding through this announcement.

The amount of funding available through this announcement will be dependent upon the final FY09 and FY10 appropriation. Publication of this notice does not oblige DOC/NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA Grants Officer, the applicant would do so solely at one's own risk of such costs not being included under the award.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a project period of 12 to 36 months. Start dates can be as early as August 1, 2009.

Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the Federal government may include, but is not limited to, liaison between the grantee and NOAA personnel who are contributing data or expertise to the project. Applications selected for funding from NOAA organizations will be funded through an intra-agency transfer. Applications selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency transfer.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are U.S. institutions of higher education, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and state, local, and Indian tribal governments and Federal agencies in the United States. Foreign institutions, foreign organizations and foreign government agencies are not eligible to apply. Individuals not affiliated with an eligible institution are not eligible to apply for funding under this announcement. PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities. Applications are encouraged that involve any of the above types of institutions.

An individual may serve as Principal Investigator (PI) on only one application through this funding opportunity. However, individuals may serve as co-PIs or key personnel on more than one application.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no cost-sharing requirements. Applicant resource commitment will, however, be considered in the competitive selection process (see the Federal Funding Opportunity Notice, section V. A. 4. Evaluation Criteria, Project Costs).

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Applications with budgets in which the total Federal share requested from NOAA is more than \$100,000 total for the direct and indirect costs for all years of the proposed project will not be considered for review.

Applications that are lacking any of the required elements of the application or do not follow the format prescribed in IV.B will not be reviewed.

Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. See additional details in Section IV.C.

An individual may serve as a Principal Investigator on only one application through this funding opportunity and must be affiliated with a Network member institution.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

For non-Federal applicants, application forms are available through grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If an applicant does not have Internet access, please contact the program officer for information on how to submit an application. The program officer can be reached at the following mailing address: Carrie McDougall, Dept. of

Commerce, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230, or by phone (202) 482-0875, or by e-mail carrie.mcdougall@noaa.gov.

For Federal applicants, please contact NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Carrie McDougall at carrie.mcdougall@noaa.gov or (202) 482-0875 or John McLaughlin at john.mclaughlin@noaa.gov or (202) 482-2893 for application forms.

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide you intend to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your application. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

The provisions for application preparation are mandatory. Failure to comply with the stated format and content requirements will result in the application not being reviewed. See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/network_funding_faqs.html

1. **FORMAT:** The page margin on standard letter-size paper must be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right. All pages should be numbered. The typeface must be standard 11-point size or larger and must be clear and easily legible. Color or high-resolution graphics, unusually sized materials, or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the application are allowed, but should be employed only when necessary for adequate description of the proposed project. All narrative sections of the application should be single spaced and consist of the sections described in Section IV.B.2. Failure to comply with the required format and within the prescribed page limits will result in the application not being reviewed.

Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, original forms and one printed copy of the rest of the application. Applicants are also asked to provide a CD of the application, including scanned signed forms or forms with electronic signatures.

2. **CONTENT:** Full applications must include the elements (a) through (i) below; element (j) is optional. Failure to provide this information in the required format and within prescribed page limits will result in the application being excluded from further review.

a) **Required Forms.** At the time of application submission, all applicants anticipating direct funding shall submit the following forms with signatures of authorizing representative of the submitting institution (Note: submission through Grants.gov results in automatic electronic signatures on these forms.):

- (i) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- (ii) SF-424-A, Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs
- (iii) SF-424-B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs
- (iv) CD-511, Certifications Regarding Lobbying

(v) SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable, see instructions on form)

Only the versions of these forms available in Grants.gov are acceptable.

(b) Title Page. The title page identifies the funding opportunity to which you are applying, the project's title, the PI's and co-PI's names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers and fax numbers. There should be an executive summary of the project that does not exceed 150 words. The proposed start and end dates for the project and requested budget must also be included on the title page. Title page templates are available at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html.

(c) One-page Abstract. Describe the essential elements of the proposed project. Include: (1) Project Title; (2) List of names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project; (3) Total funding requested from NOAA; and (4) Concise statement of the objectives of the project, description of the project activities, the location of the project, the expected outcome(s) and the rationale for the work proposed. The abstract is used to help compare applications quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words. Project summaries of applications that receive funding may be posted on program-related websites. The abstract should appear on a separate page, and not exceed one page in length.

(d) 7-page Project Description. The project description section must not exceed 7 pages and must follow the requirements in IV.B, Content and Form of Application. Page limits are inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of references, budget information, resumes, milestone charts, proposed work plans, and letters of commitment. Each page of the project description should include page numbers and the PI's name in the header or footer.

The proposed project must be completely described. The project description should clearly describe project implementation and management. It should provide a full justification for and explanation of the project. This section should also include:

- (i) The objective(s), expected outcomes, and an explanation for how the activity and outcomes support the priorities of this funding program (refer to I.B);
- (ii) Description of the proposed activities. This should include a description of all products that will be created or activities that will be undertaken. Descriptions of the key messages associated with any planned exhibitry or content, and how NOAA science themes or mission goals will be incorporated into the project.
- (iii) A discussion of the project's target audience that specifically identifies whether the audience is public, professional, or both.
- (iv) A discussion of the institution's capability to complete the proposed activities.
- (v) A description of the visitorship to the institution(s) that will display the content or exhibit the system, and any existing partnerships with community groups or formal education institutions;

- (vi) A description of how partners or partnership programs may benefit from this project;
- (vii) A description of any in-kind resources or equipment that will be provided;
- (viii) A description of any other funding that is being sought or has been obtained that could be leveraged to complement this project;
- (ix) A description of the capabilities of the personnel that will be involved in the project;
- (x) A description of how project results will be disseminated beyond the audience immediately involved in the activities of the project;
- (xi) A description of how the project activities will be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting stated project goals and objectives as well as against the goals of (1) improving the understanding of how spherical display systems can be used to enhance informal science education learning, and (2) building environmental literacy among the general public through increased use of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate data in informal education institutions. See Section I.B for guidance on evaluation.

(e) References Cited. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication, the article title, publication or publication title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. While there is no established page limit, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside the 7-page project description. If there are no references to cite, applicants must indicate that this is the case.

(f) Proposed Work Plan and Milestone Chart. Describe the involvement of your institution and partners including deliverables. Provide time lines of major tasks and potential outcomes covering the duration of the proposed project, including project evaluation. There is no page limit for this element.

(g) Budget. All applications must include a budget section that contains both a table and a narrative, as well as the required official budget form (SF-424A). Both the table and the narrative should use the same categories as shown on the SF-424A form.

The Budget Section should provide enough detail to allow OEd staff and the review panel to evaluate the level of effort proposed by investigators and staff on a specific project. When appropriate, the narrative and table must provide details on: personnel salaries and fringe benefits (broken out by percent time and number of months devoted to the project for each individual to be paid by the project); travel including per person and per trip costs for transportation, lodging and meals; equipment; supplies; contractual costs, such as anticipated sub-awards; and other costs, including printing, publications and communication costs. Funding should also be requested to provide for the PI(s) to attend one workshop of the SOS Users Collaborative Network (assume workshop will require at least one person to travel to Boulder, CO for a three day workshop). If appropriate, also include in the budget narrative, a description of any in-kind resources or equipment that will be provided as well as a description of any other funding that is being sought or has been obtained that could be leveraged to complement this project. The same amount of

budget detail provided for the lead institution's activities should be provided for all partners and any planned subcontracts associated with the grant. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for a budget narrative template and model and a budget table model. Documentation regarding indirect-cost-rate agreements must also be included. For additional guidance on providing adequate budget justifications, visit http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html and click on "NOAA Standard Budget Guidelines".

Although a range of budgets for the project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10% of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project.

There is no page limit for this element.

(h) Brief Resumes. All principal investigators, co-principal investigators, and/or key personnel of project partners must provide summaries of no more than 3 pages per person that include a list of professional and academic credentials and contact information (mailing address, email address, phone, fax). Failure to provide this information in the required format and within the prescribed page limits will result in the application not being reviewed.

(i) Current and Pending Support. Describe all current and pending Federal and non-Federal funding for all principal investigators (PIs) and co-PIs. The capability of the applicants (PIs and co-PIs) and their collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects must be assessable. Therefore, please list the percentage of time the applicant and collaborators have committed to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be committed to the project solicited under this notice. If the applicants have no current or pending funding beyond this application, this must be clearly indicated under a heading "Current and Pending Support".

(j) Letters of commitment or other supplemental materials. If substantive partnerships are described in the project description, letters of commitment should be provided. Letters of commitment are important for demonstrating the commitment of project partners. Letters of commitment should be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov, or if after deadline emailed to the Program Officer. Any other supplemental material should also be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov.

(k) NEPA Questionnaire. The Office of Education has determined that applicants do not need to provide answers to the NOAA NEPA Questionnaire at this time.

C. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for applications is 5:00 PM, EST on February 19, 2009.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Additional instructions for Grants.gov can be found at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/dataviz_faqs.html.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by two automated email receipts of the date and time of submission (the first email confirms receipt, the second email confirms that there are no errors with your application submission and it has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If both email confirmation receipts are not provided within two (2) days of application submission, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk and oed.grants@noaa.gov. Applicants must ensure all required elements have been appropriately submitted.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will have a date and time indication on them. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the Office of Education. (Note that late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EST February 19, 2009 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time, and if the proposals are received in Office of Education by 5 p.m., EST, no later than 2 business days following the closing date.)

Please note: paper applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; therefore applicants are recommended to send paper applications via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).

Applications from Federal applicants will be date and time stamped when they are received in the Office of Education in Washington, DC. Applications from Federal applicants should be submitted via e-mail as attachments to oed.grants@noaa.gov.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted to this funding opportunity are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

There are no special restrictions.

F. Other Submission Requirements

- a. Address to submit applications:

Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY (<http://www.grants.gov>). However, if an applicant does not have Internet access, paper applications will be accepted and should be delivered to: Carrie McDougall, Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230; Telephone: 202-482-0875.

Applications from Federal applicants should be submitted via e-mail as attachments to oed.grants@noaa.gov.

- b. Additional information about Grants.gov submissions

Because first-time registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks, it is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired.

The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to 48 hours to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only "validated" applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application is submitted 48 hours prior to the submission deadline. Please note applicants may have to register or renew their central contractor registration prior to submitting to grants.gov. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the Central Contractor Registration website (<http://www.ccr.gov/>).

c. Additional information about paper submissions.

Remember, paper applications can be submitted only if an applicant does not have internet access. Paper applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; therefore applicants are recommended to send paper applications via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).

See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/network_funding_faqs.html for more details.

For non-Federal applicants, application should be submitted through grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). For Federal applicants, please contact NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Carrie McDougall at carrie.mcdougall@noaa.gov or (202) 482-0875 or John McLaughlin at john.mclaughlin@noaa.gov or (202) 482-2893 for application submission instructions.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, original forms and one printed copy of the rest of the application. Applicants are also asked to provide a CD of the application, including scanned signed forms or forms with electronic signatures. Paper applications should be delivered to: Carrie McDougall, Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230. See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/dataviz_faqs.html for more details.

Please note: paper applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; therefore applicants are recommended to send paper applications via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).

V.Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA's Federal, regional, or local activities. The application should address how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities.

Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well the project addresses the program priorities (refer to Section I.B);
- How well aligned the project is with NOAA education goals and strategies;
- The extent to which NOAA mission goal topics or NOAA-related science themes are incorporated into the project;
- The extent to which the project is connected to and/or aligned with the activities of the SOS Users Collaborative Network;
- The likelihood that the project will impact environmental literacy in any of NOAA's mission goal areas; and
- The likelihood that the SOS Users Collaborative Network and the individual institutions that are members of the Network will benefit from the project.

(2) Technical/scientific merit (30%): This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description including clearly stated goals and measurable objectives;
- The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is educationally and technically sound and uses appropriate methods to achieve project outcomes;
- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time proposed;
- Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes; and,

(3) Overall Qualifications of Applicants (15%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The qualifications and demonstrated ability within their areas of expertise of the applicants, of key personnel who would receive funds from this program, and of key personnel of project's partners;
- Whether there is a clear delineation of responsibilities of the project's key personnel and whether there are adequate communication mechanisms in place for coordinating among project partners;
- The applicant's previous experience in implementing similar projects;
- The technical capability of the personnel involved.

(4) Project Costs (15%): The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The adequacy of the proposed resources to accomplish the proposed work within the indicated time-frame, specifically have all required hardware and software costs been covered either through requested funds or through in-kind support;
- The adequacy of detail in the budget narrative in allowing an informed determination of how well justified all costs associated with the project are;

- If other funding is being leveraged to complement requested funds;
- Adequacy of in-kind resources and equipment being provided;
- If funds are requested for partial support of a project, how does the overall project budget allow an informed determination of the project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio; and
- How well justified are all costs associated with the project.

(5) Outreach and Education (10%): This criterion ascertains whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How the outcomes and results of the proposed project will be disseminated to audiences beyond those participating directly in the project. These may include publications, conferences, community events, media, etc.;
- The intention to collaborate with the other users of this technology and specifically with NOAA's SOS users collaborative network as indicated by letters of commitment; and
- The likelihood that the project will increase awareness of NOAA and NOAA-related sciences.

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a completed application by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All applications that meet the eligibility and minimum requirements and that are ascertained to be complete will be evaluated and scored by a panel of independent reviewers. The reviews will be conducted by panel review. Reviewers may be Federal or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in a separate area so that the reviewers as a whole cover the spectrum of applications received. The reviewers will score each application using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual review ratings shall be averaged for each application to establish rank order. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel. The Program Officer will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review process. The Program Officer will make his/her recommendations for funding based on rank order and the selection factors listed in the next paragraph to the Selecting Official, the Director of NOAA Education, for the selection of applications.

C. Selection Factors

The panel review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official will select applications based on the evaluation criteria and rank order established by each panel unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types

3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups;
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Selected applicants may be asked to modify objectives, project plans, time lines, or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant.

In anticipation of additional funding, applications will be retained until September 2010 and may be funded if additional funds become available in FY09 or from newly appropriated FY10 funds. After September 2010 all applications not funded will be destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of applications will occur during April 2009. Recommendations for funding will be made in May 2009. Awards will be made approximately in July 2009 (for FY09 funds). Start dates should be no earlier than August 1, 2009. Additional awards may be made in FY10.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification (either hard copy or electronically) from OEd that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division in May 2009. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, authorized by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be made by e-mail from Grants Online to the Authorizing Official of the project.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their reviewed application was not recommended for funding (declined) or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements prescribed in Sections IV.B and IV.C by May 2009.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data. The Program uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6-TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This notification involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SFLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040 and 0348-0046 and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Executive Order 12866

It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comments are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due every six months from the start date of the project. Progress reports should be submitted electronically through the NOAA Grants Online system and are due for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final comprehensive report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports should detail the accomplishments that have occurred during the reporting period, correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the project narrative and provide specific, project-related information. A suggested template for project reports will be provided to grantees.

Federal Cash Transaction reports, form SF-272, should be submitted electronically through the NOAA Grants Online system and are due semi-annually on October 30th and April 30th for the preceding 6-month period (April 1st to September 30th and October 1st to March 30th) or portion there of if the project start- or end-date falls in the middle of one of these intervals. Financial reports are due for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month period. The Final Financial Status report, form SF-269, is a comprehensive financial report that is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the OEd website for further information at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html or contact Carrie McDougall at (202) 482-0875 or carrie.mcdougall@noaa.gov; or John McLaughlin at (202) 482-2893 or john.mclaughlin@noaa.gov.

For those applicants without Internet access, hard copies of referenced documents may be requested from NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Carrie McDougall at (202) 482-0875 or John McLaughlin at (202) 482-2893 or sending a letter to Carrie McDougall,

DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863,
Washington, DC 20230.

VIII. Other Information

None.