

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Ocean Education Partnership Grants for Professional Development and other Capacity-building of Informal Science Educators and Volunteers

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-SEC-OED-2012-2003333

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.008, NOAA Mission-Related Education Awards

Dates: The deadline for full applications is 11:59:59 pm EDT on May 7, 2012 (note that Office of Education staff will only be available to answer questions until 5 PM EDT). Applications must be submitted online through Grants.gov; no hard copy or email applications will be accepted. 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, applicants should register as soon as they decide they intend to apply, even if they are not yet ready to submit their applications. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically date/time stamped when they are validated and submitted to the Agency. PLEASE NOTE: When submitting through Grants.gov, you will receive 2 emails. An initial email will be sent to confirm your attempt to submit an application. This is NOT a confirmation of acceptance of your application. It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application and send you a second email. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

Two informational webinars with the program officers will occur on March 28, 2012 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM EDT and March 29, 2012, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM EDT. By noon EDT on March 27, 2012, interested applicants should register by contacting [oed.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:oed.grants@noaa.gov) and include in the Subject line of the email: "Register for Aquarium Professional Development FFO Webinar" and provide the interested party's name, institution, telephone number, email address and preferred date in the body of the email. You will receive an email response from [oed.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:oed.grants@noaa.gov) with the log-in information and date for the webinar. Whenever possible, individuals from the same institution should try to join the webinar from the same computer/phone line.

Funding Opportunity Description: The goal of this funding opportunity is to support a collaborative team of aquariums and other institutions to expand or develop professional development and other capacity-building activities for informal science educators and

volunteers. A successful project will utilize the resources of multiple institutions to enhance the capacity of informal science educators and volunteers to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or freshwater environments. A successful project will also incorporate NOAA assets through partnerships with NOAA entities. When applicable, project design should be informed by successful capacity-building and professional development activities previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants Program (See "Awards" tab under <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html>). Project topics should relate to NOAA's mission in the areas of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences and stewardship and focus on one or more of the goals of NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan <http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/goals/>: healthy oceans; weather-ready nation; climate adaptation and mitigation; and resilient coastal communities and economies.

Proposed projects should be between two and five years in duration and have maximum total combined budget requests of \$1,000,000 for all years of the project. The combined total must include any funding that would support a partnership with NOAA. No awards funds for NOAA project costs will be given to any collaborative applicant; the anticipated NOAA project costs will be transferred directly within NOAA. Eligible applicants are collaborative teams that include at least three (3) non-profit U.S. aquariums, of which at least one must be accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Collaborative teams should involve applicants from multiple U.S. states and are strongly encouraged to include at least one aquarium that has not previously received a grant from NOAA's Office of Education. There is special interest in collaborative teams that include aquariums representing a wide range of annual operating budgets, total visitorship numbers, and/or physical sizes. Also, there is special interest in projects that address reaching groups traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented in Earth System science.

It is anticipated that recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 28, 2012 and that the collaborative project funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2012. Note: Links to this announcement and other helpful information for applying is available at <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html>, under the "Funding" tab.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

##### 1. Overview:

The ocean education partnership grants for professional development and other capacity-building of informal science educators and volunteers is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Environmental Literacy Grants Program. The Environmental Literacy Grants Program provides support to improve environmental literacy among our Nation's citizens and to promote a diverse workforce in ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences, with the goal of increasing understanding and use of environmental information to promote stewardship and increase informed decision making by a diverse pool of educators, students and the public. The program supports Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education through a focus on Earth System Science and Environmental Education. Improving the public's environmental literacy, its understanding of how our Nation's natural resources are managed, and its understanding of the importance of these resources is critical to meeting the Agency's stewardship mission. To address this mission and to create a pipeline to meet future workforce needs, NOAA engages in and supports formal, informal, and nonformal education activities at local, state, regional, and national levels. NOAA has a particular interest in reaching communities that are underrepresented and underserved in STEM fields.

This solicitation supports Goal 1 of NOAA's 2009-2029 Education Strategic Plan ([http://www.education.noaa.gov/noaa\\_educ.html](http://www.education.noaa.gov/noaa_educ.html)), with a specific focus on:

\*Outcome 1.2: Educators understand and use environmental literacy principles.

\*Outcome 1.4: Lifelong learners are provided with informal science education opportunities focused on ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate topics.

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support a collaborative team of aquariums and other institutions to expand or develop professional development and other capacity-building activities for informal science educators and volunteers. A successful project will utilize the resources of multiple institutions to enhance the capacity of informal science educators and volunteers to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or freshwater environments.

Informal science educators play a key role in the experiences of visitors to aquariums and other informal science institutions, and the educators' level of knowledge and pedagogical and interpretative skills have a strong impact on the quality of that experience (Evans et al., 2011). For example, evidence from the

Science On a Sphere? cross-site summative evaluation report demonstrated that visitors to informal science education venues report greater learning as a result of interactions with a well-trained facilitator. (Haley Goldman et al., 2010) Yet the professional preparation of informal science educators and volunteers can be varied and inconsistent, affecting their ability to put into practice the most effective methods to support visitor learning (Evans et al., 2011; Tran and King, 2007). Supporting high-quality professional development experiences for informal science educators and volunteers is a priority both for NOAA and for the broader informal science education community.

Project topics should relate to NOAA's mission in the areas of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences and stewardship and focus on one or more of the goals of NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (<http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/goals/>): healthy oceans; weather-ready nation; climate adaptation and mitigation; and resilient coastal communities and economies. A successful project will also leverage NOAA assets through partnerships with NOAA entities.

Projects must be carried out by a collaborative team of applicants that includes at least three 501(c)(3) non-profit U.S. aquariums. Applicants should be from multiple U.S. states and are strongly encouraged to include at least one aquarium that has not previously received a grant from NOAA's Office of Education (see "Awards" tab under <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html> for a list of previous awardees). There is special interest in collaborative teams that include aquariums representing a wide range of annual operating budgets, total visitorship numbers, and/or physical sizes. Also, there is special interest in projects that address reaching groups traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented in Earth System science.

A successful project will be based on established best practices and will fill an identified need to better prepare informal science educators and volunteers to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or freshwater environments. Projects should include robust evaluation plans designed to measure their effectiveness in meeting the proposed project goals and objectives as well as the goal of this funding program.

Applications that propose the expansion or enhancement of a previously funded project that meets the requirements outlined in this funding opportunity are eligible. However, the applicants must explicitly demonstrate the significant accomplishments of the previous award and how the project will significantly improve, and build off of, the previous award. Applicants are also encouraged to leverage the work of successful capacity-building and professional development activities previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants Program. A list of previously funded projects is available at <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html>, under the "Awards" tab.

## 2. Description of Required Activities:

All projects must focus on expanding or developing professional development and other capacity-building activities that enhance the ability of informal science educators and volunteers to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or freshwater environments. Professional development and other capacity-building activities can focus on interpretive techniques, communication techniques, scientific content understanding, design and evaluation of education programs, and/or inquiry techniques. Projects may also consider fostering professional learning communities/communities of practice among informal science educators and/or volunteers as a strategy to support capacity-building.

The design of project structure and activities should be based on established best practices. In particular, projects should support implementation of a key recommendation in the National Research Council report on "Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits" (2009) that: "Front-line staff should actively integrate questions, everyday language, ideas, concerns, worldviews, and histories, both their own and those of diverse learners." Professional development standards contained within the National Science Education Standards (National Research Council, 1996) should be considered in the design of professional development programs in informal settings, particularly the emphasis on the educator as an active participant in the process (Falk and Yager, 2008) and the incorporation of ongoing reflection and collaboration (Evans et al., 2011).

Professional development and other capacity-building programs should ultimately prepare their participants to engage visitors in discussions about stewardship and promote understanding of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather and climate sciences. Special care should be given to incorporating the latest scientific findings and to correcting and preventing scientific inaccuracies and misinterpretations. Partnerships with NOAA entities and other science institutions that can provide scientific knowledge and expertise to inform professional development programs are strongly encouraged for these projects.

Successful projects will fill an identified gap in training and support for informal science educators and volunteers, as demonstrated through an existing needs assessment. Projects may involve the development of material and technologies that aid informal science educators and volunteers in presenting programming to the public, as long as professional development in the use of those materials or technologies is included as a core component of the project.

### 3. Characteristics of a Successful Project

Successful projects under this funding opportunity will exhibit all the following characteristics:

- Increase the ability of informal science educators and/or volunteers to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or

freshwater environments.

- Utilize the resources of multiple institutions, including aquariums that represent a wide range of annual operating budgets, total visitorship numbers, and/or physical sizes. Collaborative applicant teams are encouraged to include at least one aquarium that has not previously received a grant from NOAA's Office of Education (see "Awards" tab under <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html> for a list of previous awardees).

- Include applicants from multiple U.S. states and have a broad geographic reach that spans multiple U.S. states.

- Employ the relevant strategies and address one or more of the goals articulated in the NOAA Education Strategic Plan ([www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA\\_Ed\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)) and in the NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan (<http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/goals/>)

- Incorporate the highest quality scientific research, data, and models related to ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences.

- Leverage NOAA assets through partnerships with NOAA entities.

- Base the project's approach on established best practices (see Section I.A.2).

- Base the project on an existing needs assessment and have clearly stated outcomes and objectives that are measurable and appropriate to the target audience(s).

- Include robust project evaluation that assesses changes in the target audiences' attitudes, knowledge, awareness, and/or behaviors as a result of project activities (see Project Evaluation section below for further guidance).

- Share information on project impacts and design with NOAA and the broader informal science education communities.

- Increase awareness and use of NOAA resources among target audiences.

Additionally, successful projects under this funding opportunity may also exhibit the following characteristics where appropriate:

- Where appropriate, align activities to the principles in:

- "Ocean Literacy: Essential Principles of Ocean Sciences" ([http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts\\_10.11.05.pdf](http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf)).

- "Great Lakes Literacy: Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts for Great Lakes Learning" ([http://greatlakesliteracy.net/\\_downloads/gllp-brochure-web.pdf](http://greatlakesliteracy.net/_downloads/gllp-brochure-web.pdf))

- "Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts for Atmospheric Science

Literacy" (<http://eo.ucar.edu/asl/pdfs/ASLbrochureFINAL.pdf>)

--"Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Science"  
(<http://www.noaa.gov/climateliteracy.html>).

--"Estuary Principles & Concepts"  
(<http://estuaries.noaa.gov/Teachers/Default.aspx?ID=79>)

-Address reaching groups traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented in Earth System science (see Target Audience section below for further guidance).

-Be informed by successful professional development activities previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants Program (See "Awards" tab under <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html>).

-Be designed for sustainability beyond the project period.

#### 4. Target Audiences:

The target audiences for this funding opportunity are informal science educators and volunteers spanning multiple U.S. states. There is a special interest in projects that build the capacity of educators/volunteers to serve populations that are traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented in Earth System science. To engage underrepresented and underserved groups, projects should incorporate what is known about best practices for broadening participation in STEM fields (e.g., BEST 2004; Levine, et al. 2009). A listing of groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields can be found in the 2010 NSF Science and Engineering Indicators Report at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind10/pdf/c03.pdf>.

#### 5. Management Structure:

Projects should have a clear management structure and decision-making process that specifies the roles of each collaborative applicant. Applicants may choose their preferred method for managing their collaborative team and should specify this choice in their project narrative. One applicant from each collaborative team must be designated as the lead institution for the purpose of submitting applications (see Section IV.B. below), so collaborative teams may also assign this institution a leadership role in coordinating the project. Alternatively, collaborative teams may form a leadership committee that is responsible for overall coordination of project activities. For projects that receive funding, the lead institution or leadership committee must be consulted in any major project decisions, including but not limited to changes in key personnel, changes in project scope, or significant budget revisions, prior to seeking approval from the NOAA Grants Officer for such changes.

## 6. Project Evaluation:

Project activities should be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting the proposed project goals and objectives as well as the goal of this funding program. Projects should be based on an existing front-end evaluation/needs assessment and there should be some discussion of that needs assessment in the project description. Plans for formative and summative project evaluations should be well constructed and specific to the project type (see "Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Informal Science Education Projects" at [http://caise.insci.org/resources/Eval\\_Framework.pdf](http://caise.insci.org/resources/Eval_Framework.pdf)). Discussion of formative and summative evaluations should be included in both the project description and budget sections. Lastly, potential impact of the project beyond the award period should also be described.

Project evaluation should be handled by external professional evaluators or by internal staff who have significant experience with evaluation and are not otherwise substantively involved with the project. Project evaluation should include assessment of changes in the target audiences' attitudes, knowledge, awareness, and/or behaviors as a result of the activities undertaken.

To further inform the broad field of informal science education about what was learned from the project, applicants are encouraged to develop appropriate project dissemination strategies that utilize a variety of mechanisms to engage relevant community members and to inform future efforts. Project teams are encouraged to engage their peers in active discussion of relevant best practices. This may or may not be best accomplished by attending and presenting at annual meetings of professional societies. Also, project teams should post evaluation reports to [www.informalscience.org](http://www.informalscience.org) and include any resulting instructional products and materials in the NSDL's Science and Math Informal Learning Educators (SMILE) Pathway ([www.howtosmile.org](http://www.howtosmile.org)).

## 7. Award Dates and Mission Goal:

It is anticipated that recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 28, 2012 and that the collaborative project funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2012. This FFO meets NOAA's four Mission Goals: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation, Weather-Ready Nation, Healthy Oceans and Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies (<http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/goals/>)

## 8. Definitions:

Earth System Science: an integrated approach to the study of Earth that stresses investigations of the interactions among Earth's components in order to explain Earth dynamics, evolution, and global change. (Source: NASA's Earth Observatory Glossary, <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Glossary/index.php?mode=alpha&seg=e>.)



Environmental Education: a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action. (UNESCO, Tbilisi Declaration, 1978, see [http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/media/definitions\\_list\\_0107.pdf](http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/media/definitions_list_0107.pdf))

Environmental literacy: a fundamental understanding of the systems of the natural world, the relationships and interactions between the living and non-living environment, and the ability to understand and utilize scientific evidence to make informed decisions regarding environmental problems (Source: NOAA Education Strategic Plan 2009-2029, available at: [http://www.education.noaa.gov/noaa\\_educ.html](http://www.education.noaa.gov/noaa_educ.html)).

Inquiry: a multifaceted activity that involves making observations; posing questions; examining books and other sources of information to see what is already known; planning investigations; reviewing what is already known in light of experimental evidence; using tools to gather, analyze, and interpret data; proposing answers, explanations, and predictions; and communicating the results. Inquiry requires identification of assumptions, use of critical and logical thinking, and consideration of alternative explanations. Students will engage in selected aspects of inquiry as they learn the scientific way of knowing the natural world, but they also should develop the capacity to conduct complete inquiries (Source: National Research Council, 1996).

Interpretation: a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and meanings inherent in the resource. (Source: National Association for Interpretation's Definitions Project, <http://www.definitionsproject.com/definitions/index.cfm>)

NOAA assets: resources, services, or sites that are used to support NOAA's mission and to communicate NOAA research, data, information, and knowledge to the public. These include education materials and programs, data sets and visualizations, subject matter experts, facilities, and managed natural resource areas. Information about NOAA assets can be found at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.htm>, under the "Resources" tab. A summary of NOAA programs and activities sorted by the state or territory in which they are based or focused is available at: <http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/>. NOAA assets incorporated into education materials can be found at [www.education.noaa.gov](http://www.education.noaa.gov).

Outcomes: the changes that show movement toward achieving ultimate goals and objectives - e.g., the number of persons who, as a result of their participation in a project, demonstrate changes in: awareness and knowledge of specific concepts and/or issues; interest in and/or attitudes toward certain issues, careers, or courses of action; and behavior or skills. Outcomes may be changes that occur in the short term (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations); medium term (e.g., practices and behaviors); or long term (e.g., social, economic, and environmental conditions). (Source: adapted from the Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Informal Science Education Projects (p.35, [http://insci.org/resources/Eval\\_Framework.pdf](http://insci.org/resources/Eval_Framework.pdf).)

Outputs: the immediate results of an action (e.g., services, events, and products) that document the extent of implementation of a particular activity. They are typically expressed numerically - e.g., the number of students involved in a service-learning project or the number of professional development workshops held. (Source: adapted from the Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Informal Science Education Projects Report from a National Science Foundation Workshop (p.35, [http://insci.org/resources/Eval\\_Framework.pdf](http://insci.org/resources/Eval_Framework.pdf).)

Stewardship: An ethic whereby citizens value and participate in the careful and responsible management of air, land, water, and biodiversity to ensure healthy ecosystems for present and future generations of all life on Earth. Stewardship of the environment can include conservation, protection, regeneration, and restoration of natural ecosystems and incorporates the use of sustainable practices for human actions that impact these resources. (Source: NOAA Education Strategic Plan, [http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan/09\\_NOAA\\_Educ\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Color.pdf](http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan/09_NOAA_Educ_Strategic_Plan_Color.pdf))

## 9. References Cited:

BEST (Building Engineering and Science Talent). 2004. The Talent Imperative: Diversifying America's Science and Engineering Workforce. San Diego, CA: BEST.

Evans, K., Simms, E., Bader, D., Hunt, B., and Tran, L. (2011). Building Communities of Practice in Informal Science Education. Available at: [http://aquarium.ucsd.edu/Education/Learning\\_Resources/Professional\\_Development/Communities\\_of\\_Practice.pdf](http://aquarium.ucsd.edu/Education/Learning_Resources/Professional_Development/Communities_of_Practice.pdf)

Falk, J., and Yager, R.E., (Eds.). 2008. Exemplary Science in Informal Education Settings: Standards-Based Success Stories. Arlington, VA: NSTA Press.

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Haley Goldman, K., Kessler, C., and Danter, E. 2010. Science On a Sphere?: Cross-Site Summative Evaluation. Edgewater, MD: Institute for Learning Innovation

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National Research Council. 1996. National Science Education Standards. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

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Tran, L.U., and King, H. (2007). The Professionalization of Museum Educators: The Case in Science Museums. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 22(2), 131-149.

## B. Program Priorities

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support a collaborative team of aquariums and other institutions to expand or develop professional development and other capacity-building activities for informal science educators and volunteers. A successful project will utilize the resources of multiple institutions to enhance the capacity of informal science educators and volunteers to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or freshwater environments. A successful project will also incorporate NOAA assets through partnerships with NOAA entities. When applicable, project design should be informed by successful capacity-building and professional development activities previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants Program (See the "Awards" tab under <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html>). Project topics should relate to NOAA's mission in the areas of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences and stewardship and focus on one or more of the goals of NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan <http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/goals/>: healthy

oceans; weather-ready nation; climate adaptation and mitigation; and resilient coastal communities and economies.

### C. Program Authority

Authority for this program is provided by the following 33 USC 893a(a), as amended by the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Reauthorization Act of 2010 ("America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010"), Pub. L. 111-358, § 302.

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates the availability of approximately \$1,000,000 of total Federal financial assistance in FY2012 for this solicitation. One single collaborative project, comprising 3 or more awards in the form of cooperative agreements, will be made. Funding will be provided separately by NOAA to each collaborative applicant.

The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA by all collaborative applicants combined shall not exceed \$1,000,000 for all years, including direct and indirect costs. No single institution may request less than \$100,000 or more than \$500,000 for all years of the project. Collaborative teams of applicants requesting Federal support from NOAA of more than \$1,000,000 total for all years, or collaborative teams of applicants in which an individual applicant requests less than \$100,000 or more than \$500,000 total for all years, will not be considered for funding.

The amount of funding available through this announcement will be dependent upon final FY2012 budgetary decisions. Publication of this notice does not obligate 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 his/her own risk of such costs not being included under the award. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives.

We will not be accepting applications for renewal or supplement to existing awards. Multi-year funding may be considered for programs or long-term awards where funding for the subsequent year(s) is anticipated but not provided at the time the award is approved and where the estimated budget for future funding periods can be forecast with some degree of reliability.

### B. Project/Award Period

Applications must cover a project period of two to five years to be eligible for merit review. Start dates can be as early as October 1, 2012. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through cooperative agreements under the terms of this notice. Applications funded through cooperative agreements will include substantial involvement of the Federal government which may include, but is not limited to, liaison activities between the grantee and NOAA personnel who are contributing data or expertise to the project.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are collaborative teams that include at least three 501(c)(3) non-profit aquariums in the United States. At least one applicant in each collaborative team must be an aquarium accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Each individual applicant must submit an application to NOAA as part of the collaborative team. Applications that do not meet these eligibility criteria will not be merit reviewed.

The following types of organizations may also serve as applicants on a collaborative team that meets the eligibility criteria listed above: institutions of higher education; other nonprofits; K-12 public and independent schools and school systems; and state, local and Indian tribal governments in the United States.

There are no eligibility restrictions on institutions that are serving as project partners but are not submitting an application. These partners can receive a portion of the funding through sub-awards. Also, federal employees may not serve as principal investigators (PIs) or co-PIs on any application, although they may be included as key personnel.

An individual may apply only once as a PI through this funding opportunity. However, institutions may submit more than one application and individuals may serve as co-PIs or key personnel on more than one application.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no cost share requirement. However, applications that leverage additional funds or in-kind resources are considered under evaluation criterion (4), "Project Costs".

### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

See sections IV. B. and C. below.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). 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, applicants should register as soon as they decide they intend to apply, even if they are not yet ready to submit their applications. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their central contractor registration may need to be renewed 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 accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the Central Contractor Registration website (<http://www.ccr.gov/>).

Each applicant in the collaborative team must be registered separately in Grants.gov. If any applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov or uploading the application into the Grants.gov system, they should contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

## B. Content and Form of Application

Each individual institution that is part of the collaborative team of applicants must submit a separate application through Grants.gov. Failure of any applicant team member to submit an application before the deadline will result in the entire collaborative project not being merit reviewed. One applicant from the collaborative team must be designated as the lead institution and has different required elements for submission than the other collaborative team applicants (see Section IV.B.1 below).

See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site: [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/faq\\_page.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/faq_page.html) for additional guidance during the preparation of applications.

### 1. Required Elements for Applications

**FORM:** The page margin on standard letter-size paper should be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right. All pages should be numbered. The typeface should 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 full application should be single spaced and consist of the elements described in Section IV.B.1.

Every collaborative applicant must submit its own Standard Forms, title page, budget table, and budget narrative. Failure of any individual applicant to submit these items through Grants.gov before the deadline will result in the entire collaborative project not being merit reviewed. One collaborative applicant must be

designated as the lead institution and is responsible for submitting the abstract, project narrative, references, resumes, current and pending support, and (if applicable) letters of commitment on behalf of the entire team. These application elements should be written jointly by the applicants and will be used as the basis for merit review of the entire collaborative project. Failure of the lead institution to submit these items through Grants.gov before the deadline will result in the entire collaborative project not being merit reviewed.

The identity of the lead institution should be agreed upon by all collaborative applicants and must be indicated on Page 1 of each title page. Please use the collaborative title page template from this URL: [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding\\_template.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding_template.html). The PI listed on each title page should be affiliated with the institution submitting the application; individuals from collaborating or other partner institutions may be listed as co-PIs.

CONTENT: Applications from the lead institution must include all elements (a) through (g) below; elements (h) and (i) are optional. Applications from other collaborating institutions must include elements (a), (b), and (g), and should not include any additional elements. Failure to provide this information in the required form and within prescribed page limits will result in the application being excluded from further review. Any non-requested elements submitted as part of an application package will be removed from the application prior to merit review.

(a) Required Forms. At the time of full application submission, all applicants shall submit the following forms with signatures of the authorized 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 (only if applicable; see instructions on form)

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

(b) Title Page. Please use the collaborative title page template available at [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding\\_template.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding_template.html). The title page should identify the funding opportunity to which you are applying, the project's title, the names of the lead and collaborating applicants, and the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-PI names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, and fax numbers. The PI listed on the title page should be affiliated with the institution submitting the application; individuals from collaborating or other partner institutions may be listed as co-PIs. The proposed start and end dates for the project

and requested budget should also be included on the title page. The title page should also contain an executive summary of the project that does not exceed 150 words; this summary should be written jointly by the collaborative applicants and should be a concise overview of the objectives of the project, the project activities, the location of the project, the expected outcome(s), and the rationale for the work proposed. Project summaries of applications that receive funding may be posted on program-related websites and/or sent to members of Congress.

(c) 15-page Project Description. The project description section must not exceed 15 pages and must follow the requirements in IV.B.1, Content and Form of Applications. Page limits are inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of title pages, references, budget information, resumes, work plan/milestone chart, and letters of commitment. Each page of the project description should include page numbers and the PI's name in the header or footer. A template for the project description can be found online at [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding\\_template.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding_template.html).

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

(i) The objective(s), expected outcomes (see definition in Section I.A.8), and an explanation for how the activities and expected outcomes support the goal of this funding program described, the outcomes of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan, and the goals of NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan referred to, in section I.A;

(ii) Description of the proposed activities, including: all activities that will be undertaken and products that will be created; the need for those products or activities; and the process that will be used to develop, implement, and evaluate all activities and products. Applications should clearly demonstrate how the proposed project is informed by best practices and should cite appropriate literature references that support the proposed approach;

(iii) A discussion of the project's geographic scale and target audience(s) that specifically identifies whether the audience(s) is (are) informal science educators, volunteers, or some combination of those audience types. If underserved or underrepresented groups will be reached by the project, this should be indicated;

(iv) A discussion of how the proposed project incorporates ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and/or climate sciences and reflects or addresses the Ocean Literacy, Great Lakes Literacy, Climate Literacy, Atmospheric Science Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts, and/or Estuary Principles & Concepts as applicable;

(vii) A description of the management structure and decision-making process of the collaborative team, including the collaborative applicants' roles in the project, the coordination between the applicant team members, and the involvement and roles of additional project partners (including NOAA partners). (NOTE: letters of



commitment articulating project partners' roles should be submitted as a separate section of the application. Letters of commitment from collaborative applicants are not necessary);

(v) A discussion of the institutional profiles and capabilities of the collaborative applicants and other partner institutions;

(vi) A description of how the project will incorporate NOAA assets and partners into the project activities (for a partial listing of NOAA assets, see <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html>, under the "Resources" tab);

(vii) A description of how the project activities will be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting stated project goals and objectives as well as the goal of this funding opportunity. Also discuss who will be carrying out the evaluation. See Section I.A.6 for further guidance on project evaluation;

(viii) A description of the qualifications and capabilities of the personnel that will be involved in the project; and

(ix) A description of how project results will be disseminated beyond the audience immediately involved in the activities of the project and how awareness and use of NOAA resources will increase.

(d) Proposed Work Plan/Milestone Chart. In a chronological fashion, indicate the tasks to be completed by the collaborating applicants and other project partners, including specific project deliverables. Provide a timeline of major tasks and potential outcomes covering the duration of the proposed project, including project evaluation. The tasks should relate both to the budget and to the intended deliverables or activities. There is no page limit for this element.

(e) Brief Resumes. For all principal investigators and co-principal investigators listed on the title pages of the collaborative applicants, provide resumes of no more than 3 pages per person that include a list of professional and academic credentials. Resumes of key personnel from applicant institutions and project partners may also be optionally included.

(f) Current and Pending Support. Describe all current and pending Federal and non-Federal funding for all principal investigators (PIs) and co-PIs listed on the title pages of the collaborative applicants. The capability of the applicants (PIs and co-PIs) to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects must be assessable. Therefore, please list the percentage of time the individuals have committed to other Federal or non-Federal grant-funded projects. If any PI or Co-PI has no current or pending funding beyond this application, this must be clearly indicated on a separate page under a heading "Current and Pending Support". There is no page limit for this element. A template for summarizing Current and Pending Support can be found online at [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding\\_template.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding_template.html).

(g) Budget. Applications from each collaborative applicant must include a

budget for their particular institution that contains both a detailed table and a narrative, in addition to 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 Office of Education staff and the review panel to evaluate the level of effort proposed by investigators and staff on a specific project. The overall budget must include all collaborative applicants' and NOAA expenses anticipated in order to realistically describe for reviewers what resources will be necessary to carry out the project. No awards funds for NOAA project costs will be given to any collaborative applicant; the anticipated NOAA project costs will be transferred directly within NOAA. When appropriate, the narrative and table must provide details on:

- Personnel salaries and fringe benefits (specifying the percent time and/or 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. Funding should also be requested to allow the PI(s) to attend PI conferences every year during the life of the award. All NOAA-related project costs should be in the "Other" section, below.

- Equipment and supplies, if applicable.

- Contractual costs, such as anticipated sub-awards. If sub-contracts or sub-awards will be made to project partners or others, the same amount of budget detail provided for the applicant institution's activities (broken down by the categories shown on the SF-424A form) should be provided for each sub-award.

- Other costs, including printing, publications, evaluations, and communication expenses. Also, any funds included in the budget for NOAA programs and offices contributing directly to the project, including travel costs for NOAA personnel, should be listed year-by-year in this section rather than in the above sections. (Please note: Funding that will be provided to NOAA must be included in the entire project budget, which should not exceed \$1,000,000. NOAA will remove the NOAA-specific project costs from the total funding and the anticipated NOAA project costs will be transferred directly within NOAA. Although NOAA programs and offices can contribute to the project, the principal benefit of the project cannot be to support NOAA.)

- Indirect costs, if applicable. If indirect costs are requested, indirect-cost-rate agreements should be included for the applicant organization. Documentation is not required for sub-awardees.

Funding should also be requested for project evaluation. Although a range of budgets for the project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10-20% of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project.

If appropriate, 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 sought or obtained that will be leveraged to complement this project.

See [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding\\_template.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding_template.html) for a budget narrative template and model and a budget table model. For additional guidance on providing adequate budget justifications, visit [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding\\_template.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/funding_template.html) and click on "NOAA Standard Budget Guidelines".

There is no page limit for this element.

(h) References Cited. If literature references are cited in the project narrative, then a References Cited section should be included. Each reference should 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 must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside the 15-page project description.

(i) 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 concrete involvement of project partners and are reviewed as part of the application. Partner institutions that will be participating in professional development and other capacity-building activities are strongly encouraged to submit letters of commitment indicating their interest in the topic and format of the proposed program and their willingness to participate. Letters of commitment from institutions that are submitting applications as part of the collaborative team are not necessary.

(j) 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 11:59:59 pm EDT on May 7, 2012 (note that Office of Education staff will only be available to answer questions until 5 PM EDT). Applications must be submitted online through [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov); no hard copy or email applications will be accepted. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered for funding. Full applications submitted through [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. For applications submitted through [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov), there will be two automated email receipts sent to the application submitter with 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](mailto:Grants.gov Help Desk) and [oed.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:oed.grants@noaa.gov). PLEASE NOTE: It may take [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep

this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required elements have been appropriately submitted and that all collaborative applicants have submitted their applications before the deadline. Additional instructions for Grants.gov can be found at [www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/faq\\_page.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/faq_page.html).

#### 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 funding restrictions.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

Please refer to important information in Submission Dates and Times above to help ensure your application is received on time.

Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov **APPLY** (<http://www.grants.gov>). Hard copy and/or email application submissions will not be accepted.

### V. Application Review Information

#### A. Evaluation Criteria

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): 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 describe how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well the project addresses the goals and objectives of this funding program described in section I.A;

- How effectively the project will increase informal science educators' and volunteers' ability to engage visitors and promote public understanding and stewardship of coastal, marine, and/or freshwater environments;

- How well the project is aligned with NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (<http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan>) and the goals of NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (<http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/goals/>);

- The extent to which ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather and/or climate science topics are incorporated into the project activities and products;

- The extent to which the project utilizes NOAA assets and NOAA partnerships to

accomplish its goals; and

-The extent to which the project will infuse the Ocean Literacy, Great Lakes Literacy, Climate Literacy, Atmospheric Science Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts, and/or Estuary Principles & Concepts, if applicable.

(2) Technical/scientific merit (35%): 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 extent to which the project is based on a needs assessment and has clearly stated outcomes and objectives that are measurable and appropriate to the target audience(s);

-The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is educationally and technically sound, is based on best practices, and (if applicable) is informed by successful professional development and capacity-building activities previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants Program;

-The extent to which the project incorporates current scientific research, data, and models related to ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences;

-The likelihood that the project will be successfully implemented within the time proposed and on a scale that spans multiple U.S. states;

-The extent to which all collaborative applicants and partners are working together and contributing meaningfully to the project, including articulation of activities in letters of commitment;

-Whether there is a clear delineation of responsibilities of the project's key personnel and whether there are adequate communication and decision-making mechanisms in place for coordinating among all collaborating institutions and project partners;

-The likelihood the impacts of the project on the target audience will be long-lasting; and

-Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes.

(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:

- How well the project utilizes the resources of institutions from multiple U.S. states, including aquariums representing a wide range of annual operating budgets, total visitorship numbers, and/or physical sizes;

- The qualifications and demonstrated ability within their areas of expertise of the PIs, co-PIs, and key personnel;

- The applicants' previous experience in managing, designing, and implementing this type of educational program;

- The evaluators' previous experience in managing, designing and implementing evaluations appropriate for the target audiences and proposed activities; and

- The likelihood that the applicants and partners have the appropriate resources to carry out the proposed activities and have the ability to complete the proposed project successfully;

(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;

- Whether the budget is sufficient for the scope of the evaluation planned;

- If there are additional funds or in-kind resources that provide additional leverage; and

- The adequacy of detail in the budget table and narrative to allow an informed determination of how well all costs associated with the project are justified.

(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;

- The extent to which the project reaches groups traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented in STEM fields through a focus on Earth System science;

- The likelihood that the project will increase awareness and use of NOAA resources among target audiences.

## 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. Minimum requirements, among other elements, include all of the following:

- All collaborating applicants are eligible to apply;
- Applications from all collaborating institutions were received on time;
- All required elements of the applications are present and follow format guidance;
- The sum of the requested budgets of all collaborative applicants is no more than \$1,000,000 for all years of the project (including any anticipated funding to support a NOAA partnership, if applicable), with no single institution requesting less than \$100,000 or more than \$500,000 for all years of the project; and
- Project duration is 2 to 5 years

Applications that do not meet all of these minimum requirements are neither reviewed nor considered for funding.

### Applications

All applications that meet the eligibility and minimum requirements 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, who is responsible for making final recommendations to the NOAA Grants Officer.

## C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will select applications in the rank order established by each panel unless an 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, and/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.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Review of applications will occur from May - August, 2012. It is anticipated that recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 28, 2012 and that the collaborative project funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2012

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification (either hard copy or electronically) from the Office of Education by September 28, 2012, that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. 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 Authorized Representative of the project.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl), [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl).

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification (either hard copy or electronically) from the Office of Education by September 30, 2012, 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.

#### 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 applications 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.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). 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.

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

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements: Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in 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). A copy of the notice may be obtained at . <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

#### Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs. 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 SF-LLL 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.

### C. Reporting

Progress reports are due every 6- months from the start date of the project. Progress reports must 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-425, 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 thereof 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-425, is a comprehensive financial report that is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000.

### VII. Agency Contacts

Contact the Program Officers: Stacey Rudolph, Carrie McDougall, Sarah Schoedinger, or John McLaughlin at 202-482-0793 or [oed.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:oed.grants@noaa.gov). Please visit the OED website at <http://www.oed.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html> for further information about the NOAA Office of Education.

### VIII. Other Information

Two informational webinars with the program officers will occur on March 28, 2012 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM EDT and March 29, 2012, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM EDT. By noon EDT on March 27, 2012, interested applicants should register by contacting [oed.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:oed.grants@noaa.gov) and include in the Subject line of the email: "Register for

Aquarium Professional Development FFO Webinar" and provide the interested party's name, institution, telephone number, email address and preferred date in the body of the email. You will receive an email response from [oed.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:oed.grants@noaa.gov) with the log-in information and date for the webinar. Whenever possible, individuals from the same institution should try to join the webinar from the same computer/phone line.