

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2005 Coastal Services Center (CSC) Integrated Ocean Observing Systems

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement for the NOAA Coastal Services Center (will now be referred to as the Center throughout this document)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.473, Coastal Services Center

Dates: Proposals must be received by the CSC no later than 5 p.m., local time, October 1, 2004.

Funding Opportunity Descriptions: The Director's Office program, seeks proposals for grant projects that enhance the organization, implementation, and application of regional coastal ocean observing systems. Coastal observing systems are meant to include the sensors, personnel, and data management that obtain, process and apply regular and sustained in-situ and/or remote observations of the physical, chemical, and biological environment of Great Lakes, estuaries, and the near shore ocean of the United States. Of particular interest to the Center is the coordination of such systems for management of coastal and ocean resources and for the benefit of coastal communities. Total available funding is expected to be between \$200,000 and \$1,000,000 depending on congressional appropriation. The DO program has two funding priorities for FY05: (1) projects that facilitate building partnerships and regional organizational structures for regional observing systems; these coordination projects will focus on work in up to four geographies-Pacific Islands, the Northeastern US, the northern Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Islands; and (2) projects that strengthen programmatic linkages between the Center, NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division, National Estuarine Research Reserves (NEER) and the establishment of regional observing.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description for the DO Regional Integrated Ocean Observing Systems (IOOS)

The Center's DO program seeks proposals for projects that enhance the organization, implementation, and application of regional coastal ocean observing systems. For the purposes of this announcement, coastal ocean observing systems are meant to include the sensors, personnel, and data management that obtain, process and apply regular and sustained in-situ and/or remote observations of the physical, chemical, and biological environment of Great Lakes, estuaries, and the near shore ocean of the United States. Of particular interest to the Center is the coordination of

such systems for management of coastal and ocean resources and for the benefit of coastal communities. This program has two funding priorities for FY05: (1) Projects that facilitate building partnerships and regional organizational structures for regional observing systems; these coordination projects will focus on work in up to four geographies ■ the Pacific Islands, the Northeastern US, the northern Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Islands. (2) Projects that **strengthen programmatic linkages between the Center, NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division, National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR) and the establishment of regional observing systems.** Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program.

For first type of project, Regional Observation System Coordination, the Center seeks to fund projects that will engage stakeholders in a given region to develop collaborative partnerships (Regional Associations) among data collectors, data managers, and users of data and information from coastal ocean observing systems. The Center is particularly interested to receive proposals that assist in the development of Regional Associations consistent with the Ocean.US plan for an Integrated Ocean Observing System. Proposals should clearly articulate an approach to identify stakeholders, bring them together in a meaningful way, and develop plans for governance and communication, implementation, data management, and product development. The Center believes that it is important to engage end users in the design and implementation of observing systems to maximize the benefits to science and society.

In addition for the first type of project, the Center particularly encourages projects that develop, sustain or plan a regional association with a defined governance structure. The proposals should identify how they envision working with other developing regional associations to contribute to the national federation of regional associations. The Center also strongly encourages proposals that develop or sustain ocean observing systems to observe and assess the impacts of extreme events on coastal resources and communities.

For the second type of project, **Regional Associations and National Estuarine Research Reserves**, proposals should incorporate plans that foster collaboration at the regional level among NERR sites and between NERR sites and Regional Associations. **Project designs should focus on any one or a combination of the following elements:** (a) delivery of real or near-real time information collected by NERR sites under their System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) in manners consistent with the Ocean.US plan for an Integrated Ocean Observing System; (b) design of education and training programs that foster access and use of SWMP data by coastal managers and educators; (c) joint projects between NERR sites and Regional Associations that develop and test strategies for improved governance in the associations and incorporate programmatic links and communication with NERR sites; and, (d) integration and dissemination of historic and current SWMP data in manners consistent with the Ocean.US plan for an Integrated Ocean Observing System.

Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

Statutory authority for this program is provided under 16 U.S.C. 1456c (Technical Assistance); and 33 U.S.C. 1442 (research program respecting possible long-range

effects of pollution, overfishing, and man-induced changes of ocean ecosystems).

II. Award Information

Total available funding under this announcement is expected to be between \$200,000 and \$1,000,000 dollars depending on congressional appropriation for the two funding priorities. Total anticipated funding for grants for part one of this announcement, Regional Observation System Coordination Projects are between \$200,000 and \$500,000 dollars with awards of up to \$100,000 per year for up to three years; the time period (period of performance) for the award may be 1 to 3 years; and awards will be in the form of a cooperative agreement, which allows NOAA to have substantial involvement in the project. Multiple year awards of up to \$100,000 per year for three years will be considered and the second and third year*s funding will be subject to availability of funding in fiscal years 2006 and 2007. The Center expects to award two to four grants under part one of this announcement.

Total anticipated funding for grants for part two of this announcement, **Regional Associations and National Estuarine Research Reserves**, are between \$200,000 and \$500,000 dollars with awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000; the time period (period of performance) for the award may be 1 to 3 years; and awards will be in the form of a cooperative agreement, which allows NOAA to have substantial involvement in the project. The Center expects to award one to four grants under part two of this announcement.

In this case substantial involvement means assistance of Center project staff that are contributing professional expertise to issues with Regional Associations or the Research Reserves System.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profit and for-profit organizations, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Organizations are encouraged to collaborate in development of multi-institutional proposals, however, funding for such a proposal must be awarded to a single (lead) entity that then has responsibility for administration and execution of any subawards. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners. Note: Federal agencies or institutions who are project partners must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from outside sources in excess of their appropriation.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no requirement for cost sharing in response to this program announcement.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

All applicants are required to submit a NOAA grants application package, budget

narrative, curriculum vitae for each principal investigator, and project proposal. The proposal must clearly identify the project geography whether the applicant is applying for the Regional Observation System Coordination project or the **Regional Associations and National Estuarine Research Reserves** project. The standard NOAA application package includes the SF-424 (Rev.7-03), Application for Federal Assistance, SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, SF-424B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs, and CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters; Drug Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying, SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, should only be submitted to the government if applicant is actually reporting lobbying activities. The CD-512, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Transactions, is a form that remains in the applicant's file. Applicants should not submit CD-512 to the government. The CD-346, Applicant for Funding Assistance should only be submitted to the government if the applicant is a non-profit entity. All of these forms can be obtained from the NOAA grants website at < <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html> > or from the Center's website < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/CSCgrant.html> >. If for some reason the applicant has difficulty downloading the required forms, he or she should contact Violet Legette at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413 or phone her at 843-740-1222 or email her at < Violet.Legette@noaa.gov >.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

This announcement is a call for proposals for work under the Center's Regional Observation System Coordination program. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has a long-standing responsibility to observe, assess and predict conditions in the Nation's oceans and atmosphere. NOAA has a number of operational programs that routinely and systematically measures environmental variables in the atmosphere, open and coastal ocean, estuaries, and the Great Lakes. In addition to its own operational programs, NOAA develops collaborative partnerships with states, universities and for profit and non-profit organizations to increase the scope of its environmental data collection and assessment.

Congress has directed the interagency National Ocean Research Leadership Council to develop a plan by which the nation can achieve an Integrated Ocean Observing System. Responsibility for development of this plan has been given to the Ocean.US Office < www.ocean.us >. The Integrated Ocean Observing System is envisioned to consist of a national backbone of federally-maintained observations integrated with regional systems that contribute to and benefit from the national backbone and also focus on interests of a local/regional nature. Integration of regional and national components into a national coastal observing system will rely on common data management standards that allow data integration to create products that benefit a broad community of users. The fundamental building block for this system will be developing regional associations that will form the governance structure for the national integrated ocean observing system.

The Center has a strong interest in working with regional associations, observing systems and partners to achieve integration into a national system. The Center is particularly interested in regional systems that provide timely and appropriate information to public mission agencies. Therefore, the Center anticipates offering grant funds to projects that help achieve these goals.

Proposal Format: The guidelines for proposal preparation provided below are mandatory. Failure to heed these guidelines will result in proposals not being considered. All proposals must include the following sections:

a. Signed Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include, at a minimum, proposal title (indicate the type of project that is being submitted, Regional Observation System Coordination or **Regional Associations and National Estuarine Research Reserves**), complete contact information for Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, duration of proposed project, and funding request by year as appropriate.

b. Background. Provide sufficient background information for reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem to be addressed and the status of your ongoing efforts to address the problem. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to other regional or national association efforts to develop an Integrated Ocean Observing System.

c. Benefits. Identify specific potential users of the information derived from this work and the benefits that will be achieved to those users as well as society as a whole. Describe how this information from this project will be delivered to those users.

d. Goal(s) and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Describe how these project goals support the broader goals of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

e. Approach. Provide a general work plan that identifies specific tasks to be accomplished, explains the technical approach (including quality control protocols) needed to accomplish the tasks, identifies the roles of partners and cooperators, and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. Describe how potential users are involved in the planning and design process.

f. Milestone Schedule. Display time lines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes.

g. Project Budget. Provide a detailed budget description that follow the categories and formats in the NOAA grants package and a brief narrative justification of the budget. Budget (both budget within proposal as well as paperwork) and milestones (within proposal) should include outyears if project is expected to be more than one year.

h. Resumes. Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and for other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please include a statement of existing and requested funding for similar efforts. Please limit to two pages for each investigator.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due by 5 p.m. EDT, October 1, 2004.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the Center's DO program are subject to Executive Order 12372, **Intergovernmental Review of Federal programs**. It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and address of the SPOCs is listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: < <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html> >.

5. Funding Restrictions

There are no funding restrictions under this program. This program is seeking applications for non-construction projects.

6. Other Submission Requirements

In addition to the proposal(s), the applicant must submit a complete NOAA grant application package (with signed originals). No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted. All project proposals must total no more than 20 pages (double spaced, 12-point font, and exclusive of appendices). Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., support letters, resumes, lists of data sources, maps). Letters of support may be mailed separately, but must be received by the October 1, 2004, deadline. All appendix material must be unbound.

Applicants should submit applications to the attention of Paul M. Scholz, Room 137, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413. Applications received after that time will not be reviewed. The applicant must submit one original and two copies of the proposal(s).

V. Application Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria (With Weights)

a. Importance/relevance and Applicability of proposal to the program goals (30%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this program it includes:

How well does the proposal demonstrate that the project will directly or indirectly address critical national, regional, state or local management needs? Are the goals and objectives clearly articulated and relevant to the stated management or science need? How well does the proposal demonstrate that the proposed project enhances the development of a regional association or NERR sites to be part of the integrated coastal observing system? Is the user community clearly identified and are members of the identified user community engaged in the design and execution of the project or its products? Does the proposal demonstrate that it will significantly address relevant science and management issues?

b. Technical/scientific merit (25%). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the DO program this includes: Is the technical approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Are the goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposed approach follow a logical work plan with clearly defined and measurable milestones? Do the proposed approaches incorporate innovative or state of the art methodologies? Does the proposal explicitly address data management practices that meet or exceed FGDC standards and promote interoperability with other components of a national ocean observing system?

c. Overall qualifications of applicants (15%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the DO program this includes: Does the proposal demonstrate institutional support for the project? Are the principal investigators and the organizational framework and personnel qualified to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed?

d. Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the DO

program this includes: Does the proposal demonstrate that the budget is commensurate with project needs? Is the duplication of effort reduced through strategic partnerships?

e. Outreach and education (15%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the DO program this includes: Does the proposal include outreach and education components that will ensure the results are effectively applied to address the identified issues? Does the proposed project engage external partners to make effective use of complimentary capabilities and competencies beneficial to this project? Does the proposal demonstrate that information generated by the project will reach its target audience and have a positive impact on the users ability to perform their responsibilities?

2. Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. A review panel will be established to evaluate proposals on the basis of the evaluation criteria listed above. The panelists will provide individual evaluations on proposals, thus there will be no consensus recommendation. All proposals reviewed will be ranked according to the average score and the selecting official (the Center's Director) will award in rank order, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon (1), (2), (3), (5) and (6) of the below factors: Thus proposals with the highest scores may not necessarily be selected for an award. The Selecting Official makes the final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

3. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon (1), (2), (3), (5) and (6) 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) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
- (4) Program priorities and policy factors
- (5) Applicant's prior award performance
- (6) Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

4. Start Dates

March 1, 2005 or later should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the DO's Program Manager.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notice

Applications recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded

to the GMD by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office, either by email or letter, that their application was forwarded to GMD. The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office is NOT the official award notice. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice through the postal mail, signed by a Grants Officer.

Unsuccessful applications for all Center programs will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Requirements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109) is applicable to this solicitation.

Geospatial data. The recipients must comply with EO 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.

Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

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 assistance opportunities including special fishing privileges. 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 and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

3. Reporting

Upon official notification of an award, the applicant will be required to submit the following reports:

Financial Status Reports (SF-269 and SF-272) are required semi-annually. These reports should be mailed directly to Grants Management Division, 1325 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20190.

Performance or progress reports are required semi-annually. These reports are submitted directly to the program office, no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of an award. The final report is due 90 days after the award expiration. These reports can be emailed to the program officer or they can be mailed to the attention of the program officer at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

For administrative issues contact Violet Legette at 843-740-1222 (phone) or 843-740-1232 (fax) or email her at < Violet.Legette@noaa.gov >.

For technical questions for the DO program, contact Paul Scholz at 843-740-1208 (phone) or 843-740-1315 (fax) or email him at < Paul.Scholz@noaa.gov >.

VIII. Other Information

Applicants can refer to the Center's website for specific information about the history of the Coastal Services Center. Also, available on this website are specific instructions on filling out the NOAA standard forms for grants/cooperative agreement applications. The Center's website is < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/CSCgrant.html> >.

Applicants also need to remember that official notification of an award notice is provided by the Grants Management Division, not the program office. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.