

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2008 Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan Implementation

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOS-CSC-2008-2001253

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

Dates: Letters of Intent (LOIs) must be received by the Coastal Services Center by 4:00 p.m. ET on January 10, 2008. Full proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. ET, February 8, 2008. An LOI must be submitted to be able to submit a full proposal.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to solicit proposals for cooperative agreements between NOAA and partnering entities from Gulf of Mexico States to implement Action Blueprint Steps identified in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should contribute to the beneficial public outcomes associated with the five priority issues in the NOAA Plan : water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds; wetland and coastal conservation and restoration; environmental education; identification and characterization of Gulf habitats; and nutrient reduction _ as well as Coastal Community Resiliency, a priority issue elevated by the Alliance since release of the Plan. Beneficial public outcomes can include (among many other possibilities) reduced social disruptions and storm resilient economies; improved fisheries production, increased storm damages reduction from wetland buffers, and improved water quality with the natural filtering from wetland processes; less harmful algal blooms and beach closures.

This competition is focused on the geography of the Gulf of Mexico in response to NOAA's development of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance implementation plan and subsequent congressional appropriations. The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission support goal of: Weather and Water _ Serve Society's Needs for Weather and Water Information.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this notice is to solicit proposals for a cooperative agreement between NOAA and partnering entities from Gulf of Mexico States to implement actions identified in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must contribute to the beneficial public outcomes associated with the five priority issues in this Plan – water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds; wetland and coastal conservation and restoration; environmental education; identification and characterization of Gulf habitats; and nutrient reduction – as well as Coastal Community Resiliency, a priority issue elevated by the Alliance since release of the Plan.

This competition is focused on the geography of the Gulf of Mexico in response to NOAA's development of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance implementation plan and subsequent congressional appropriations.

The projects associated with this announcement will directly support the following objectives:

" -Enhance the conservation and management of coastal and marine resources to meet America's economic, social, and environmental needs' under the Department of Commerce strategic goal of "Observe, protect, and manage the Earth's resources to promote environmental needs."

" -Increase number of coastal communities incorporating ecosystem and sustainable development principles into planning and management, and Increase portion of population that is knowledgeable of and acting as stewards for coastal and marine ecosystems under NOAA's Ecosystems Mission Goal.

" Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources Through an Ecosystem Approach to Management. Under NOAA's Weather and Water Mission Goal Serve Society's Needs for Weather and Water Information.

" Increase coordination of weather and water information and services with integration of local, regional, and global observation systems.

" Enhance environmental literacy and improve understanding, value, and use of weather and water information and services.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is a formal partnership, initiated in 2004, of the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, intent on significantly increasing regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. The Alliance worked to identify issues that are regionally significant and can be effectively addressed through increased collaboration at local, state, federal, private and international levels.

The Governors_ Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts outlines 11 actions under the Alliance_s five priority issues (listed below). Each of these actions presents specific 36-month outcomes and an Action Blueprint which describes critical steps to achieve the 36 month outcomes. These commitments are detailed in an associated Implementation Activities Matrix available at < <http://www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org> >.

This funding opportunity is designed to make significant progress towards implementing the following actions to achieve the goals included in the Governors_ Action Plan.

Water quality

To improve water quality, the Alliance proposes to improve the detection and forecasting of harmful algal blooms (HABs) in the Gulf of Mexico and to better understand the public health and socioeconomic effects of bloom events. These efforts will take the form of investments in existing and new technology, on-going research and training. To improve beach water quality management, the Alliance proposes to select two promising bacterial source tracking methodologies for testing and validation in five different Gulf estuaries. Finally, the Gulf States and partner federal agencies will take steps to standardize and coordinate water quality data collection and analysis.

Water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds

- " Improve harmful algal bloom detection and forecasting in the U.S. and Mexican Gulf States (1st action from the Governors_ Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts).
- " Improve beach water quality management (2nd action).
- " Improve government efficiency in water quality monitoring (3rd action).

Wetland restoration

To restore and conserve coastal habitat, the Alliance proposes to streamline coastal conservation and restoration processes. This will be accomplished by convening a Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Restoration Coordination Team and holding a series of workshops to address existing policy, regulatory and funding frameworks that either facilitate or impede conservation and restoration of Gulf habitats.

Wetland and coastal conservation and restoration

- " Streamline coastal restoration and conservation efforts (4th plan).

Environmental education

To increase awareness about the Gulf of Mexico, the Alliance proposes a comprehensive multi-year public awareness campaign to create a _sense of place_ among Gulf residents and firmly establish the link between the health of the Gulf and the quality of life of residents. The Alliance also proposes to convene a bi-national Gulf of Mexico Alliance Education and Outreach Network to better coordinate existing education efforts. Supported by a full-time coordinator, the Network will

consist of existing staff and facilities engaged in translating research and management activities into stewardship. Finally, the Alliance recommends expanding the existing Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center network so that one facility exists in each of the five U.S. Gulf States and the Mexican Gulf State of Veracruz and developing an environmental education pilot program targeted toward underrepresented and underserved communities in the Gulf region.

Environmental education

- " Galvanize local communities to protect the Gulf of Mexico through targeted education (5th action).
- " Conduct a public awareness campaign for the Gulf of Mexico (6th action).

Characterization of Gulf habitats

To improve the management of Gulf habitats, the Alliance proposes to provide public access to a prototype distributed, meta-data driven data management platform and Internet portal that provides a geospatial data viewer and facilitates data downloads of local, state and federal habitat data in the Gulf region, beginning with seagrass beds. This effort will involve an inventory and gap analysis of existing habitat data in the region and Alliance partners working together to standardize and integrate local, state and federal habitat data, including metadata and to make these data available through a single regional data management portal.

Identification and characterization of Gulf habitats

- " Create and provide access to interactive habitat maps for priority Gulf of Mexico habitats (7th action).

Reduction of nutrient inputs

To reduce nutrient inputs to coastal watersheds in the Gulf, the Alliance proposes increasing regional coordination in the development of nutrient criteria by the Gulf States. In light of the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts in response to the 2005 hurricane season, the Alliance also proposes to find and act upon opportunities to implement nutrient prevention and reduction projects during the rebuilding of coastal infrastructure. Finally, the Alliance proposes to assert a unified position shared by all Gulf States to advocate actions _ by all 31 states in the Mississippi River Watershed _ to reduce Gulf hypoxia.

Reduction of nutrient inputs to coastal ecosystems

- " Increase regional coordination in the development of nutrient criteria (8th action).
- " Implement nutrient reduction activities during Gulf recovery and rebuilding (9th action).
- " Assert an aligned five Gulf State position on the need to address Gulf of Mexico hypoxia (10th action).

Coastal Resiliency

The Alliance aims to increase the Gulf States' scientific understanding of the implications and risks of localized sea level rise, storm surge and subsidence through development of tools that integrate these processes, such as integrated models. The Alliance proposes to develop a prototype decision-support tool that allows Gulf resource managers to integrate storm surge, localized sea level rise and subsidence information and develop a pilot Community Resiliency Index for Gulf coastal communities.

" Increase the safety of Gulf communities by better understanding the risks of localized sea level rise, storm surge and subsidence (11th action).

Proposals submitted should address the following programmatic priorities:

- " Coordination among the states and federal government to implement priority issues associated with the Governors' Action Plan (e.g., personnel that will be available coordinate Gulf of Mexico Alliance engagement and activities within each Gulf State).
- " Successful regional collaboration and coordination is dependent on personnel being able to attend 'all hands' and priority issue team Alliance meetings, workshops, and conference calls.
- " Flexibility to rapidly respond and the ability to adequately address dynamic and emerging issues related to the six Governors' Action Plan priorities. This will allow for funding discretion for smaller projects where there is obvious and immediate need, and that advance regional collaboration and communication, but which are not specifically called for in the Action Blueprint Steps in the Governors' Action Plan. This strategy would be not intended for basic research or routine monitoring projects, rather for smaller, unforeseen efforts that emerge as critical to advancing the scope and intent of the Action Blueprint Steps in the Governors' Action Plan. For example, following a major landfalling hurricane in the Gulf region, unforeseen technical and educational opportunities may emerge.
- " A strategy (e.g., a technical grants program) to fund discrete projects with measurable outcomes that will implement specific Action Blueprint Steps outlined in the Governors Action Plan. Coordination among other state, regional, non-profit, private and federal efforts to implement the Action Blueprint Steps in the Governors' Action Plan will be important for successful implementation.
- " Successful proposals, written as cooperative agreements, will support objectives outlined in this announcement and subsequently enhance the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. NOAA will continue to support to larger Gulf of Mexico Alliance after this competition closes. Support will include federal co-leadership of the Alliance, federal leadership on the priority task teams, and staff support to the Alliance Management Team.

B. Program Priorities

Through this funding announcement NOAA desires to assist the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in advancing regional coastal resource priorities defined collaboratively by the five Gulf States in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance's March 2006 regional action plan, the Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts. Through this plan, the five Gulf State Governors have outlined 11 focused, short-term actions that address key regional deficiencies; integrate ongoing state, local, and federal efforts; and maximize the impact of resources applied to six priority regional issues in the Gulf of Mexico – hazard resilient coastal communities; healthy beaches and shellfish beds; wetland and coastal restoration; environmental education; identification and characterization of Gulf habitats; and reducing nutrient inputs to coastal ecosystems.

In accordance with the President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan (OAP), CEQ directed NOAA and EPA to coordinate federal support for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. The socioeconomic need for a regional, ecosystem-based, collaborative approach – as devised by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance – is compelling, and is strongly linked to NOAA mission goals to –Protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management– and to –Serve society's needs for weather and water information.– As demonstrated by the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, coastal communities need improved, robust products and services to help them plan for, respond to, and recover from coastal storms. Faced with increasing vulnerability of coastal communities, coastal and emergency managers have expressed a need for comprehensive, timely and accessible information to aid in making decisions at critical times.

The regional approach put forth by the five Gulf State Governors will greatly increase coordination at the state and federal level, resulting in more efficient and effective government. All actions in the Governors' Action Plan directly support Gulf Coast recovery and contribute to more resilient coastal communities that protect lives and livelihoods. By working together, the five Gulf State Governors are building regional political strength, and are providing a working model of regional ocean governance called for in the President's OAP and in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy report.

This funding opportunity will directly support the objective, –Enhance the conservation and management of coastal and marine resources to meet America's economic, social, and environmental needs– under the Department of Commerce strategic goal of –Observe, protect, and manage the Earth's resources to promote environmental needs.– It also directly supports the performance objectives –Increase number of coastal communities incorporating ecosystem and sustainable development principles into planning and management,– and –Increase portion of population that is knowledgeable of and acting as stewards for coastal and marine ecosystems– under NOAA's Ecosystems Mission Goal –Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources Through an Ecosystem Approach to Management.–

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1456c (Technical Assistance); 33 U.S.C. 883d; and 33 U.S.C. 1442 (Research program investigating possible long-range effects of pollution, overfishing, and anthropogenically-induced changes of ocean ecosystems).

D. Cost Principles

N.A.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately \$4,500,000 and is subject to the availability of FY 2008 appropriations. Multiple awards are anticipated from this announcement. The anticipated federal funding per award (min-max) is approximately \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 per year. The anticipated number of awards ranges from five (5) to seven (7), approximately, and will be adjusted based on available funding. The intent is to award a minimum of one grant to each Gulf coast state.

B. Project/Award Period

This is a multi-year funding opportunity. Proposed projects may request funding for one to three years. Multi-year awards may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but, once awarded, those awards will not compete for funding in subsequent years.

When a multi-year proposal is approved, funding initially will be provided for only the first year of the program. Funding in years two and three is contingent upon availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

Projects funded in FY 2008 may have a performance period of one to three years.

The same performance period would apply to projects from FY 2009 funds if available at that time.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications should be written as cooperative agreements and the proposal should clearly identify this funding instrument in the proposal abstract and cover sheet. Applicants should clearly articulate the federal roles and responsibilities in the proposal and, subsequently, discuss prospective roles in the project after notification that the proposal is successful. Examples of federal involvement include federal co-leadership of the Alliance, federal leadership on the priority task teams, and staff support to the Alliance Management Team.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Because this competition is focused on the geography of the Gulf of Mexico in response to NOAA's development of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance implementation plan and subsequent congressional appropriations, eligible funding applicants are institutions of higher education, regional or watershed authorities, nonprofit organizations, and state and Indian tribal governments from the Gulf States (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas).

Federal agencies are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement but may serve as collaborative project partners and may contribute services in kind.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

N.A.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

N.A.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for full proposals are available through Grants.gov APPLY. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages can be requested from James Lewis Free at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413; or contact him at 843-740-1185 or via e-mail < James.L.Free@noaa.gov >.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants must follow the LOI and full proposal application requirements stated in this announcement or LOIs and full proposal applications will not be considered.

The Letter of Intent (LOI) process is intended to provide potential funding applicants with information regarding the relevance of their project idea to the program objectives in advance of preparing a full proposal. A LOI is required prior to submitting a full proposal.

The LOI should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to program objectives. The LOI should include the components listed below. If these components are not included, the funding applicant will not be encouraged to submit a full proposal application. The LOI should include the following information on a cover page:

1. Identification of the NOAA Coastal Services Center as the target of the LOI .
2. Project title.
3. Names and institutions of all principal investigators (PI), and specification of the Lead PI and contact information for that person.

The body of the LOI should be no more than 2 pages, single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font, and should include the following components:

1. Statement of the Purpose - state the intent, goal, and output of proposed work.
2. Summary of how funding will be allocated to a coordinator position (including where the coordinator will be housed, the salary and benefits, travel allocation, etc.) and the project to be completed, including the methodology, products, and approximate cost.
3. Description of intended benefits to the Gulf of Mexico community.
4. Description of the partnerships to be employed in the development and completion of the proposed work.

Full proposal applications must total no more than 10 pages (single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font and exclusive of appendices). The 10-page limit does not include the

proposal title page, a table of contents if one is included, the project summary referenced below under item two (2), and any appendices. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., detailed budget information, support letters, resumes, references, lists of data sources, and maps).

Applicants should paginate their proposal and any appendices. Appendices may be paginated as stand alone documents (individually) or collectively.

All funding application packages must contain the following components:

1. Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include proposal title, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, duration of proposed project, funding type (grant or cooperative agreement), funding request by year (as appropriate), and identification of the NOAA Cooperative Institute if submitted on its behalf.

2. Project Summary. Provide a one to two-page summary of the proposed project. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:

- a. Project Name/Title
 - b. Primary Contact (name, address, phone, fax, e-mail)
 - c. Recipient Institution
 - d. Other Investigators (name, affiliated institution or agency)
 - e. Brief Project Summary including objectives and intended benefits
 - f. Partners
3. Project Description.

All project descriptions (proposals) must include the following sections:

- a. Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Goals and objectives should be specific for each year of the work plan presented. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.
- b. Background. Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem to be addressed and the status of ongoing efforts to address the identified needs. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to other regional efforts.
- c. Audience. Identify specific users of the results of the project, describe how they will use the results, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the results.
- d. Approach. Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) 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 users are involved in the planning and design process. The work plan must clearly address data management requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archive that is compliant with federal

regulations. If the project includes federal partners, the roles and responsibilities of the federal partners must be clearly identified.

e. Benefits. Identify, with a high degree of specificity, the users of the information derived from the work, and the benefits that will be achieved for those users, as well as society as a whole. Document how valid user requirements are guiding the proposed work. Describe how the information from the project will be delivered to those users, and any special considerations or requirements for ensuring or improving the delivery of information.

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 budget description that follows the categories and formats in the NOAA grants package (Standard Form 424-A) and a brief narrative justification of the budget.

Detailed budget information, such as a repeat of the information in Form SF-424A along with more details should be included in an appendix. In this appendix, the budget narrative also shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work and shall identify the elements of the project that the cooperator would recommend for revision or elimination in the event that sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities. Applicants must itemize and describe the intended use of equipment greater than \$5,000 in value to be purchased under the award. The budget narrative must also provide the cost and description of anticipated travel. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. Foreign travel must receive prior approval and should be anticipated in the proposal to the extent possible.

4. Appendices

a. Mandatory Detailed Budget Information, including budgets of subawards.

b. Resumes. Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit resumes to a maximum of two pages for each key investigator.

c. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site: < <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).

NOAA may require follow-up information after the application process has been completed. 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 not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Applicants are required to answer the questions indicated in this Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Applicants should answer the NEPA questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible. If the applicant does not answer all of the questions indicated in the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity the application may be considered incomplete.

Some of the questions may overlap with material provided in other parts of the application. This overlap occurs because the answers to the questionnaire are provided to NOAA staff who do not review the other parts of the application. If appropriate, the applicant may copy the information from other parts of the application and paste it into the answers to the questionnaire. Many questions have a _yes_ or _no_ response. If the response is _no_ the applicant does not need to elaborate on their answer. If the response is _yes_ the question will have a second part asking the applicant to provide more information.

Applicant NEPA questions are as follows:

Question C1. Is the proposed activity going to be conducted in partnership with NOAA or would the proposed activity require NOAA_s direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, describe NOAA_s involvement, activity, or oversight, including the name of the office or program that is involved.

Question C2. Would the proposed activity involve any other federal agency(ies) partnership, direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, provide the name(s) of the agency(ies) and describe its involvement, activity, or oversight.

Question D1. Provide a brief description of the location of the proposed activity.

Question E1. List any federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, or waivers that would be required to complete the proposed activity. Provide the date the permit, authorization, or waiver was obtained or will be obtained. Provide copies of the

permit, authorization, or waiver as appropriate. Was a NEPA analysis prepared for the permit, authorization, or waiver? If yes, state the title of the NEPA analysis and provide copies of the NEPA analysis.

Question F1. Is there the potential for the proposed activity to cause changes that would be different from normal ambient conditions (e.g., temperature, light, turbidity, noise, other human activity levels, etc.)? If yes, describe the changes and the circumstances that would cause these changes.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Public reporting burden for this collection of NEPA information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to Ms. Shelby Mendez, NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration, SSMC 3, Room 15718, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The information collection does not request any proprietary or confidential information. No confidentiality is provided.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. The valid OMB Control Number is 0648-0538, which expires on June 30, 2009.

C. Submission Dates and Times

LOIs. The deadline for receipt of LOIs is 4:00 p.m. ET on January 10, 2008. For LOIs submitted by e-mail, the date and time indication of the receiving server will be the basis of determining timeliness. Note that receipt may be delayed if e-mail servers are not functioning efficiently. Applicants submitting multiple LOIs must use a unique project title for each LOI and may send all LOIs in one e-mail or in multiple e-mails. For hard copy submission of LOIs, they will be date and time stamped when they are received. LOIs may not be considered if received by the Coastal Services Center after 4:00 p.m. ET on January 10, 2008.

Full Proposals. Full proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. ET, February 8, 2008. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication by Grants.gov will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received. Full proposals received after the submission deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

Applicants may not submit full proposals unless they submitted an LOI. The final decision to submit a full proposal will be made by the investigator.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications under the Center are subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's web site at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

N.A.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Letters of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to <GOMA.fy2008@noaa.gov>. Insert 'FY 2008 Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan Implementation' as the subject line of the e-mail. If hard copy LOIs are submitted, an original and two copies should be sent to the attention of James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413.

Full proposal application packages, including any letters of support, should be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY. The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov. Please be advised that potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the proposals and related forms should be mailed to the attention of James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413. No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted. Full proposal application packages, including any letters of support, should be submitted together in one package.

Letters of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to GOMA.fy2008@noaa.gov. Insert

'FY 2008 Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors_ Action Plan Implementation' as the subject line of the e-mail. If hard copy LOIs are submitted, an original and two copies should be sent to the attention of James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413.

Full proposal application packages, including any letters of support, should be submitted through Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the proposals and related forms should be mailed to the attention of James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413. No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

A. Evaluation Criteria for LOIs

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (50 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. Question related to this criterion includes: does the proposed project enhance regional collaboration and implementation of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors_ Action Plan? Proposals will be evaluated on how well the proposed project will achieve the goals of the announcement.
2. Technical and scientific merit (50 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Does the proposed approach incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work? Does the proposal promote interoperability with other components of regional and national geospatial systems?

B. Evaluation Criteria for Full Applications

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities: Question related to this criterion includes: does the proposed project enhance regional collaboration and implementation of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors_ Action Plan? Proposals will be evaluated on how well the proposed project will achieve the specific goals of the announcement.
2. Technical and scientific merit (25 percent): 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. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposed approach incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work? Does the proposal promote interoperability with other components of regional and national geospatial systems?

3. Overall qualifications of the funding applicants (20 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal demonstrate regional and institutional support for the project? Are the investigators qualified and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed? Are investigators from other agencies and institutions within the region included as key personnel on the project to capitalize on available expertise and promote a regional approach?

4. Project costs (20 percent). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal demonstrate that the budget is commensurate with project needs? Is the cost effectiveness of the project optimized through strategic partnerships with collaborating institutions, agencies, or private sector partners?

5. Outreach and education (10 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal demonstrate that the target user community has been engaged in development of the desired project outcomes? Does the proposal demonstrate that information generated by the project will reach its target audience and have a positive impact on the Gulf of Mexico region?

B. Review and Selection Process

LOI Review Process: All LOIs will be evaluated by federal and state program staff in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation to determine whether the proposed project is responsive to the goals as advertised in this notice. It is NOAA's intent to invite a minimum of one state representative per Gulf state to assist with the process. Appropriate mechanism will be established to avoid conflict of interest. The Coastal Services Center will respond to each LOI by e-mail informing the applicant (i.e., the lead PI) whether or not they are encouraged to submit a full proposal. We anticipate sending responses by January 18, 2008.

Full Proposal Review and Selection Process: An initial administrative screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. Applicants may

not submit full proposals unless they submitted an LOI. The final decision to submit a full proposal will be made by the investigator. All proposals will be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by at least three independent peer reviewers through a full merit review process (i.e., a mail and panel review process). The merit reviewer's ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. It is NOAA's intent to invite a minimum of one state representative per Gulf coast state to assist with the merit review process. Appropriate mechanisms will be established to avoid conflicts of interest during the proposal merit review process. The intent is to award a minimum of one grant from each Gulf coast state. NOAA will distribute the awards to ensure each governor's delegate will have balanced representation across all priority issue areas in coordination with other states. The Selecting Official will make the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the Grants Officer. The Selecting Official will award in the rank order unless proposals are justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors provided below. The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award according to rank order unless the proposal 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. 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

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.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The start date on proposals should be on October 1, 2008; or the first day of any proceeding month after October 1, 2008, but no later than January 1, 2009.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Applications recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by e-mail that their application was recommended for funding. 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 from the Grants Officer either by postal mail or electronically.

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. 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 December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). A copy of the notice may be obtained at < <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html> >.

2. 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.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). See the NEPA information in Section IV, B, of this announcement.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports electronically through the NOAA Grants On-Line System. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by NOAA Grants Management Division.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative questions, contact James Lewis Free, NOAA CSC; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Room B-119; Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413, or by phone at 843-740-1185, or by fax 843-740-1224, or via e-mail at James.L.Free@noaa.gov.

For technical questions regarding this announcement, contact Todd Davison, NOAA CSC; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413, or by phone at 770-486-0028 Extension 214, or by fax 770-486-0930, or via e-mail at Todd.Davison@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

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 from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

The Coastal Services Center will not release the names of applicants submitting LOIs or proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards < <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do;jsessionid=GbZDVT7JqmXqNlm84y2DBn5CpmGR2vJvQKfnX5CLd94YvywZQTZq!-1742093309> > or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is on-line at <

<http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/> >.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. Applicants in their final progress report will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and products in the coastal management community; and b) certify that Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP).

Please be advised that potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.)

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.473). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. After electronic submission of the application, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

References:

Gulf of Mexico Alliance, 2006. Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts. Gulf of Mexico Alliance. 32 pp. < <http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/> >.