

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** Office of Education and Sustainable Development (OESD), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Environmental Literacy
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** USEC-OESD-2005-2000118
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 11.469, Congressionally Identified Awards and Projects
- **Program Authorities:** 15 U.S.C. 1540
- **Dates:** The deadline for receipt of proposals is 5:00 p.m., EDT on May 12, 2005
- **Overview Content:** This notice announces that OESD is soliciting 1- to 3-year proposals for environmental literacy projects. Funded projects will further NOAA's education goals articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). Funding is available to encourage the development of partnerships and to support existing, or foster growth of new, environmental literacy projects. This program has two funding priorities for FY05: (1) Partnerships that promote systemic change in NOAA-related science education, and (2) Innovative presentation of NOAA science and earth observing data through educational data visualizations and other educational tools. Within priority two, NOAA has committed to funding the installation of up to four "Science on a Sphere" (SOS) data systems at informal education venues. These "Science on a Sphere" installations will be funded by way of one- to three-year cooperative agreements. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made in mid-Calendar Year 2005, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than September 30, 2005.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA/OESD is soliciting 1- to 3-year proposals for environmental literacy projects commencing no earlier than September 30, 2005. The purpose of these awards will be to support formal and informal/nonformal education projects aimed at building environmental literacy in the general public, teachers, and students in fields directly related to NOAA sciences and to one or more of NOAA's mission goals. Funded projects will further NOAA's education goals articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). Funding is available to encourage the development of partnerships and to support existing, or foster growth of new, environmental literacy projects.

B. Program Priorities

Funded projects will further NOAA's education goals articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). The goals of the NOAA Education Program are to:

- Promote environmental literacy by increasing understanding and use of NOAA data, information and programs;
- Engage audiences and enable informed decision making; and
- Increase the number of people, particularly in underrepresented groups, who choose education and careers supporting NOAA's mission.

Funded projects will address one or more of the strategies from the NOAA Education Plan:

1. Integrate NOAA-related sciences into high-quality educational materials.
2. Improve access to NOAA educational resources.
3. Support educator professional development programs to improve understanding of NOAA-related sciences.
4. Promote participation in NOAA-related sciences and careers, particularly by members of underrepresented groups.
5. Leverage partnerships to enhance formal and informal environmental science education.

Proposed education projects should improve environmental literacy in the public in fields directly related to NOAA-related sciences and to one or more of the following mission goals of the Agency (http://www.spo.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA_Strategic_Plan.pdf):

- Protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management;
- Understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond;
- Serve society's needs for weather and water information; and

- Support the nation’s commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation.

This program has two funding priorities for FY05: (1) Partnerships that promote systemic change in NOAA-related science education, and (2) Innovative presentation of NOAA science and earth observing data through educational data visualizations and other educational tools. As one subcomponent of priority two, NOAA has committed to funding the installation of up to four “Science on a Sphere” (SOS) data systems at informal education venues. See (<http://www.fsl.noaa.gov/sos/>) for further information on SOS. These “Science on a Sphere” installations will be funded by way of one- to three-year cooperative agreements. The cooperators and NOAA will jointly develop the scientific programming appropriate for the informal education setting that uses NOAA datasets and visualization capabilities. NOAA will provide the technical support associated with the installation and use of NOAA data, as well as the software associated with the system. Selection of informal education venues will be on a competitive basis. Review and selection of cooperators will follow the stated criteria in this announcement. Cooperators should request funds from NOAA to cover the costs of necessary (commercially available) hardware for installation of an SOS system. Additional information can be found on the OESD website (<http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/>). The total funding available for these four SOS installations shall not exceed \$280,000. Further, principal investigators of the cooperative agreement proposals may also submit grant proposals requesting funds for project costs that are not directly related to SOS installation costs. These projects may address FY05 funding priority one or two. Cooperative agreements for the SOS installations are deemed necessary due to the fact that substantial involvement by NOAA is needed to setup and install SOS. Additionally, NOAA will consider proposals that address priority two but do not relate to Science on a Sphere.

Finally, all proposed projects should be regional or national in scope, and influence environmental education systemically, or pilot a program that can be expanded to a larger scale.

C. Program Authorities

Authority for the Environmental Literacy program is provided by the following: 15 U.S.C. 1540.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability for 2005

NOAA announces the availability of approximately \$2,500,000 of Federal financial assistance in FY 2005 for Environmental Literacy projects. Approximately 5 to 10 awards in the form of grants or cooperative agreements with a regional to national focus will be made. Projects of 1 to 3 years in duration will be considered. The total budget for any single project shall not exceed \$500,000 and must have a minimum annual budget of \$100,000, except for “Science on a Sphere” installations, which can have total project budgets of no less than \$10,000. Of the approximately \$2,500,000 of Federal financial assistance available in FY

2005, no more than \$280,000 is available for the four SOS installations. The success of all projects will be based on merit review and selection factors (Section V). Applications with project budgets of less than \$100,000 or more than \$500,000 will not be considered for review, except for “Science on a Sphere” installations, which can have total project budgets of no less than \$10,000.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant would do so solely at one’s own risk of such costs not being included under the award.

B. Project/Award Period

Full Proposals should cover a project period of 12 to 36 months, with a start date no earlier than September 30, 2005.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Project grants or cooperative agreements will be awarded to fund the successful projects. Cooperative agreements will be used to fund “Science on a Sphere” installations. These “Science on a Sphere” installations will be funded by way of one- to three-year cooperative agreements. The cooperators and NOAA will jointly develop the scientific programming appropriate for the informal education setting that uses NOAA datasets and visualization capabilities. NOAA will provide the technical support associated with the installation and use of NOAA data, as well as the software associated with the system.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners.

Among those eligible applicants are K through 12 public and independent schools and school systems, and science centers and museums.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved communities. Proposals are encouraged that involve any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

There are no cost-sharing requirements.

C. Other

Applications with project budgets of less than \$100,000 or more than \$500,000 will not be considered for review, except for “Science on a Sphere” installations, which can have total project budgets of no less than \$10,000.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application kits may be requested from Sarah Schoedinger at 202-482-2893 or Beth Day at 301-713-2431 x 148.

The required forms are as follows:

1. Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424
2. Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424A
3. Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B
4. Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

1. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
2. Applicant for Federal Assistance: CD-346 (Required for the following individuals- Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations, Joint Venture, Non-profit Organizations)

If the applicant has problems downloading forms, they may contact Sarah Schoedinger at sarah.schoedinger@noaa.gov or 202-482-2893 or Beth Day at elizabeth.day@noaa.gov or 301-713-2431 x 148.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

This document requests full proposals only. The provisions for proposal preparation provided here are mandatory. Proposals received after the published deadline (refer to IV.C, Submission Dates and Times) or proposals that deviate from the prescribed format (refer to IV.B.3, Proposal Format) will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Information regarding this announcement, additional background information, and required Federal forms are available at Grants.gov APPLY.

1. Full Proposals

Color or high-resolution graphics, unusually sized materials, or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the proposal are not acceptable, nor are facsimile transmissions.

2. Required Elements

Each proposal must also include the following nine elements and comply with the described proposal format or it will not be considered further:

(a) Standard Form 424. At time of proposal submission, all applicants anticipating direct funding shall submit the Standard Form, SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for the whole project period. Multi-institutional proposals must include signed SF-424 forms from all institutions requesting funding.

(b) Summary Title Page. The title page should be signed by the Institutional Representative if a hard copy is submitted. The Summary title page identifies the project's title, starting with: Environmental Literacy 2005, a short title (less than 50 characters), and the PI's name and affiliation, complete address, telephone, fax, and e-mail information. The requested budget for each fiscal year should be included on the summary title page. Multi-institution proposals must also identify the lead investigator for each fiscal year from each institution and the requested funding for each fiscal year for each institution on the title page, but no signatures are required on the title page from the additional institutions. Lead investigator and separate budget information are not requested on the title page for institutions that are proposed to receive funds through a subaward. For further details on budget information, please see Section (g) Budget.

(c) One-page Abstract/Project Summary. The Project Summary (Abstract), which is to be submitted at time of application, shall include an introduction describing the project activities, the project partners involved, and the expected outcome(s).

The summary should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost, and budget period. It should be written in the third person. The summary is used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize the key points of the proposal.

(d) Project Description. The project description section must not exceed fifteen pages and must follow the requirements in IV.B.3, Proposal Format. Page limits are inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of references and the milestone chart. The proposed 1- to 3-year project must be completely described. Specifically, this section should clearly identify project implementation and management with a description of the functions of each applicant. It should provide a full justification for and explanation of the project, rather than simply reiterating justifications presented in this document. This section should also include:

(i) The objective(s) for the period of proposed work, expected outcomes, and the NOAA-related science(s) and Mission Goal(s) supported by this project;

(ii) The relationship to other ongoing environmental education activities and/or programs that are conducted by NOAA, NOAA partners, or support NOAA-related sciences and Mission Goals;

(iii) A discussion of how the proposed project reflects or addresses components of the stated NOAA Education Plan and standards;

(iv) Potential coordination with other investigators, programs, departments, institutions, agencies, or organizations;

(v) A description of how project results will be disseminated beyond the audience immediately involved in the activities of the project;

(vi) A description of how the project activities will be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting stated project goals and objectives as well as the goals of the NOAA Education Plan. Although a range of budgets for the project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10% of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project.

(e) References Cited. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication, the article title, publication or publication title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. While there is no established page limit, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside the 15-page project description.

(f) Milestone Chart. Provide time lines of major tasks and deliverables covering the duration of the proposed project, including project evaluation.

(g) Budget. All applications must include a budget narrative and a justification to support all proposed budget categories. This narrative and justification will provide enough detail to allow OESD staff and the review panel to evaluate the level of effort proposed by investigators and staff on a specific project. Specifically, the narrative must provide details on: salary and benefits (broken out by percent time and number of months devoted to the project for each individual to be paid by project); per person and per trip costs for travel, room and board; equipment; printing and publications; communication costs and anticipated subawards.

(h) Biographical Sketch. All principal and co-investigators must provide summaries of up to 2 pages that include the following:

(i) A listing of professional and academic credentials and contact information (mailing address, email address, phone, fax);

(ii) A list of all persons (including their organizational affiliation) in alphabetical order, with whom the investigator has collaborated on a project or publication within the last 48 months, including collaborators on this proposal and persons listed in the publications. If no collaborators exist, this should be so indicated;

(iii) A list of persons (including their organizational affiliation) with whom the individual has had a professional association (e.g., serving as thesis advisor or postdoctoral scholar sponsor);

(iv) A list of the names and institutions of the individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors.

The material presented in (h)(ii), (h)(iii), and (h)(iv) is used to assist in identifying potential conflicts or bias in the selection of reviewers.

(i) Current and Pending Support. Describe all current and pending Federal funding for all principal investigators (PIs) and co-PIs, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The capability of the applicants (PIs and co-PIs) and their collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects must be assessable. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time the applicant and collaborators have committed to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be committed to the project solicited under this notice.

3. Proposal Format

The page margin on standard letter size paper must be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right. The typeface must be standard 12-point size and must be clear and easily legible. Proposals should be single spaced and follow the requirements in 2(d) of this section.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received on or before 5 p.m. EDT, May 12, 2005. Applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY will be accompanied by a date and time receipt indication on them. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copy proposals will be accepted and date and time stamped when they are received in the Office of Education and Sustainable Development (OESD). Electronic or hard copies received after the deadline will not be considered and hard copy applications will be returned to the sender.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

There are no special restrictions.

F. Other Submission Requirements - Address

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY (<http://www.grants.gov>). If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copies should be sent to Sarah Schoedinger,

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25 points): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA's Federal, regional, or local activities. The proposal should address how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and the innovativeness of the project approach in meeting these objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How the project addresses the FY05 funding priorities;
- How well aligned the project is with NOAA education goals, strategies, and standards, and advances environmental literacy in NOAA sciences;
- How well aligned the project is with one or more of NOAA's mission goals; and
- The extent to which the project is aligned with appropriate national, state, or local learning standards;

(2) Technical/scientific merit (40 points): 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 environmental literacy goals and measurable objectives;
- The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is educationally and technically sound and uses appropriate methods to achieve project outcomes;
- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time proposed;
- How proposed activities will be accomplished within the grant period;
- Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes; and
- The innovativeness of the project approach.

(3) Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The qualifications and demonstrated ability of the applicants within their area of expertise;
- The ability of the applicant(s) to complete the proposed project successfully;
- Whether partnerships exist (including partnerships with NOAA programs, e.g. National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Sea Grant College Program, Office of Ocean Exploration, National Marine Sanctuary Program) and are these partnerships articulated in letters of support;
- The level of collaboration with other programs, minority-serving institutions (MSIs), or other educational, research, or management institutions;

- The extent to which all partners are contributing meaningfully to the project;
- The applicant's previous experience in managing or designing educational programs; and
- The likelihood that the participating institution(s) have the appropriate resources to carry out the proposed activities.

(4) Project Costs (10 points): 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;
- The appropriateness of the requested funding with respect to the total available funds through this funding opportunity;
- The likelihood of the project to result in appropriate outcomes for the proposed cost;
- If funds are requested for partial support of a project, how does the overall project budget allow an informed determination of the project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio; and
- How well justified are all costs associated with the project.

(5) Outreach and Education (15 points): This criterion ascertains whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How the outcomes and results of the proposed project will be disseminated to audiences beyond those participating directly in the project. These may include publications, conferences, community events, media, etc.; and
- How feedback from these activities will be communicated back to NOAA.

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a completed application by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All proposals that meet the minimum eligibility requirements and that are ascertained to be complete will be evaluated and scored by independent review panel. The review panel will comprise 3 to 15 individuals (who may be Federal or non-Federal experts) with each having expertise in a separate area so that the panel as a whole covers the spectrum of environmental education relevant to NOAA-related sciences. The reviewers will score each proposal using the evaluation criteria provided above. The individual review panelist ratings shall be averaged for each application to establish rank order and presented to the Program Officers. The Program Officers will neither vote nor score proposals as part of the review panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of any proposal. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel.

The Program Officers will make their recommendations for funding based on rank order and the selection factors listed in the next paragraph to the Selecting Official, the Director of OESD, for the final funding decision.

Proposals that are not funded in the current fiscal period may be considered for funding in the next fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive review process.

C. Selection Factors

The panel review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors, EXCEPT 4.:

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, work plans 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), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the proposer.

In anticipation of additional funding, declined applications scoring may be retained for up to 1 year and then destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during April, May and June 2005. September 30, 2005, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

Successful applicants will receive notification (either hard copy or electronically) 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, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications may be issued electronically or through postal mail to the Authorizing Official of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected (declined) for recommendation.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) is applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: (<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>), including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, (http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, (http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm).

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying 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.

C. Reporting

Recipients will be required to submit the following financial and performance (technical) reports. These reports are to be submitted electronically unless the recipient does not have Internet access, in which case hard copy submissions will be accepted.

Financial Status Reports (SF-269 and SF-272) are required to be submitted to the Grants Officer semi-annually.

Performance or progress reports are required to be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer semi-annually. These reports will be due 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.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the OESD website for further information at <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov> or contact either Sarah Schoedinger, 202-482-2893, Sarah.Schoedinger@noaa.gov or Beth Day, 301-713-2431 ext. 148, Elizabeth.Day@noaa.gov.