

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** Office of Education (OEd), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Science On a Sphere Installation Cooperative Agreements
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** USEC-OED-2006-2000625
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 11.469, Congressionally Identified Awards and Projects
- **Program Authorities:** 15 U.S.C. 1540; P.L. 109-108, Department of Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006
- **Dates:** The deadline for full applications is 5:00 PM, EDT on May 5, 2006.
- **Overview Content:** The NOAA Office of Education (OEd) is issuing a request for applications from informal education institutions with interest in displaying NOAA's Science On a Sphere. Awards will be made as one-year cooperative agreements and will be issued in FY06. Funded projects will support informal education institutions in incorporating this data visualization technology and compatible environmental data products into public exhibits. The goal of this program is to build environmental literacy among the general public through increased use of NOAA or NOAA-related data and data products in informal education institutions. See NOAA's Education Plan for more details on this goal and strategy: (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by June 30, 2006, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2006.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA's Office of Education (OEd) is requesting applications for one-year Science On a Sphere installation cooperative agreements commencing no earlier than October 1, 2006. The purpose of these awards is to support informal education institutions in incorporating this data visualization technology and compatible environmental data products into public exhibits. The goal of this program is to build environmental literacy among the general public through increased use of NOAA data or NOAA-related data and data products in informal education institutions. See NOAA's Education Plan for more details on this goal and strategy: (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)

NOAA's Science On a Sphere (SOS) is a complete data visualization system consisting of a 68" diameter opaque sphere onto which 4 video projectors project seamless "movies" of animated earth system dynamics or other solar system objects. NOAA data and NOAA-related data, models, and near real-time whole-earth satellite imagery are provided with the SOS system. The current version of the standard, turnkey system will be provided to successful applicants. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/sos_faqs.html for more details.

B. Program Priorities

NOAA seeks cooperators in an effort to further the use of NOAA's SOS data visualization technology and NOAA data and NOAA-related data in informal education settings. Ideal cooperators are those that can demonstrate previous success in incorporating this type of technology into public exhibits or demonstrate sufficient technical capability to support this technology; have large visitorship or serve underserved communities; have well-developed partnerships with formal education institutions or community organizations; and can leverage existing funding. Emphasis will be placed on cooperators that will incorporate NOAA data and science themes into the overall exhibit and on those that will evaluate the effectiveness of SOS as an Earth system science learning tool.

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.

Proposed projects should aim to improve environmental literacy among the general public in fields relevant to NOAA-related sciences and to one or more of the following mission goals of the Agency

(http://www.spo.noaa.gov/pdfs/STRATEGIC%20PLANS/Strategic_Plan_2006_FINAL_04282005.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.

Funded projects will receive each of the following: (1) financial support to purchase required and optional hardware for the SOS system, (2) SOS operating software, (3) technical support for the installation of the system, (4) staff training, and (5) existing library of prepared datasets (See <http://sos.noaa.gov/datasets/> for information on the existing datasets). Installation and training will be provided by NOAA personnel at the installation site.

The SOS system uses 4 video projectors to display images onto the sphere. Each projector is driven by a computer. A fifth computer is used to control the operation of the display computers. The computers communicate with each other via a network. Each computer is a relatively powerful PC with dual Pentium processors and a high-end graphics card. The video projectors have native XGA resolution. Additional accessory equipment are required to create a working SOS system.

Funding will be provided to support the purchase of required, commercially available Science On a Sphere hardware. Funding must be used to purchase all required hardware unless the applicant demonstrates alternative acquisition mechanisms or current possession of required hardware. Note: all hardware must be exclusively dedicated to the SOS system.

Required hardware includes the following list of required and optional items. Determination of need for the optional items will be based on facility arrangement and in-kind resources (i.e., these are the “optional” hardware).

Description	Brand Name & Model or Equivalent*		Category	Qty	Estimated Unit Cost
Required					
Sphere	BW Color Prints	68" sphere	Required	1	\$8,000
Sphere shipping crate	BW Color Prints		Required	1	\$1,300
Sphere freight charge - domestic	BW Color Prints		Required	1	\$700
Computer Systems	Dell	Dell 470N	Required	5	\$4,000
Dell Precision Workstation 470N (See Quotes, 2 x 3.4GHz Xeon 64 CPU's w/2Mb L2 cache, 2GB RAM, 1x 160GB & 1x 500GB SATA disks, DVD-ROM, NVIDIA Quadro 3450 Dual VGA video card)					
Video Projectors		Eiki LC-X60	Required	4	\$4,000

Video Splitter/Extender	Extron	P/2 DA2 Plus	Required	4	\$120
ATI Remote Wonder II PC RF Remote Control & USB Receiver	NewEgg	ATI 151-V01150	Required	1	\$40
Intel Pro/1000 GT Ethernet cards	Intel	PWLA8391GT	Required	2	\$40
8 Port Gigabit Network Switch	ZipZoomFly.com	Netgear GS108	Required	1	\$100
8 Port PS/2 KVM Switch W/cables	NewEgg	IOGear GCS138KIT	Required	1	\$250
19 inch LCD flat panel monitor	Dell	Dell E193FP	Required	2	\$319
Audio system	Anchor Audio, Inc		Optional		\$1,018
Mini mixer, 2-way powered monitor speaker, 2-way companion monitor speaker, 16 channel UHF Receiver, cables, and a wireless microphone					
Misc. audio cables	Cables To Go		Suggested		\$183
Headset Audio system	Shure		Optional	1	\$439
Network Cables	Any	CAT - 6	Optional	8	\$10
Sphere suspension Materials and supplies	Various		Required	1	\$3,411
Computer shipping charges from NOAA to site - domestic			Required	1	\$1,000
<u>Optional</u>					
UPS	APC	APC BE725BB	Suggested	4	\$64
UPS	APC	BR1500	Suggested	3	\$169
Deluxe geared head Projector Mounts	Unique Photo, Inc	Bogen BG3263	Optional	4	\$555
Projector mounting plate	Unique Photo, Inc	Gitzo G065	Optional	4	\$80
Projector tripods	Bogen	SuperPro	Optional	4	\$350
<u>Spares</u>					
Computer system	Dell	Dell 470N	Required	1	\$4,000
Video Projectors		Eiki LC-X60	Required	1	\$4,000

* Note: We are not requiring the purchase of these exact brand names and parts, however we have only tested the listed brand names and models listed and therefore, can guarantee the system will work only with the listed models above.

See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/SOS_hardware.xls for additional details. NOAA personnel are available for consultation on required and optional hardware list.

A fully functional SOS system with all required and optional equipment purchased totals approximately \$66,500.

C. Program Authorities

Authority for this program is provided by the following: 15 U.S.C. 1540; P.L. 109-108, Department of Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability for FY 2006

NOAA announces the availability of approximately \$200,000 of Federal financial assistance in FY 2006 for Science On a Sphere Installation Cooperative Agreements. Approximately 2 to 4 awards in the form of cooperative agreements will be made. NOAA will only consider projects that have duration of one year. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$100,000 including direct and indirect costs. **Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of more than \$100,000 total will not be considered for funding.**

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

B. Project/Award Period

Full Applications should cover a project period of 12 months, with a start date no earlier than October 1, 2006.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Cooperative agreements will be awarded to fund the successful projects. Cooperative agreements will be used as the funding instrument because the installation project requires substantial involvement of and coordination with NOAA personnel. The cooperators/awardees will provide a suitable informal education venue for SOS and display NOAA data products on the system with prominent attribution to NOAA within the exhibit. 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 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 Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities. Applications are encouraged that involve any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

There are no cost-sharing requirements.

C. Other

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

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

Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed.

Individual applicants (i.e., principal investigators) and institutions may only apply once through this funding opportunity.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. To Request an Application Package

The full application is available through Grants.gov APPLY. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application kits **must** be requested from Carrie McDougall at (202) 482-0875. Printed forms from Grants.gov are not acceptable if submitting an application in hard copy format.

If an applicant has problems downloading the application package from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

B. Content and Format of Application Submission

This document requests full applications. **The provisions for proposal preparation are mandatory. Applications received after the published deadline (refer to IV.C, Submission Dates and Times) or applications that deviate from the prescribed format (refer to IV.B.1, Required Elements of Full Applications and IV.B.2, Application Format) will not be reviewed.** Additional information on completing an application, including frequently asked questions (FAQs) can be found at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/sos_faqs.html.

1. Required Elements of Full Applications

Each application must include the following nine elements. **Failure to comply with the prescribed application format as described in this section and in section IV.B.2 will result in an application not being reviewed.**

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

- (i) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- (ii) SF-424-A, Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs
- (iii) SF-424-B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs
- (iv) CD-511, Certifications Regarding Lobbying
- (v) SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

Only the versions of these forms available in Grants.gov or sent to prospective applicants by the federal program officer will be acceptable.

NOTE: the CD-346, Applicant for Federal Assistance, is required to be submitted by individuals applying on behalf of organizations that are non-profit, sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, and joint ventures prior to award, if the application is selected for award, *not* with the initial application. This form is available at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/forms/pdf/cd346fl.pdf>.

(b) Title Page. The title page identifies the project's title, the PI's and co-PI's names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers and fax numbers. The requested budget must also be included on the title page. Title page templates are available at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html.

(c) One-page Abstract. The abstract is used to assist in comparing applications quickly. The abstract shall summarize the key points of the proposal including an

introduction describing the project activities, the project partners involved, and the expected outcome(s).

The abstract should appear **on a separate page**, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost, and budget period.

(d) Project Description. The project description section must not exceed 15 pages and must follow the requirements in IV.B.2, Proposal Format. Page limits are inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of references, and the proposed SOS work plan. Each page of the project description should include page numbers and the PI's name in the header or footer.

The proposed 1-year project must be completely described. The project description should clearly describe project implementation and management. It should provide a full justification for and explanation of the project. This section should also include:

- (i) The objective(s), expected outcomes, and an explanation for how the activity and outcomes support the priorities of this funding program (refer to I.B);
- (ii) A description of how SOS will be incorporated into public exhibits, visitor interaction with the sphere (i.e., if facilitators will be used to explain SOS data, or if a kiosk will allow users to interact with SOS, or if automated play sequences will run), the key messages associated with this exhibit, and the datasets or other media that are planned for display. Specifically, describe how NOAA science themes or mission goals will be incorporated into the overall exhibit, and how NOAA's contribution will be attributed;
- (iii) A discussion of how the proposed project reflects or addresses components of the NOAA Education Plan;
- (iv) A discussion of the institution's capability to meet the requirements of SOS installation (see the SOS Proposed Work Plan for Installation in IV.B.1.f) with details on technical capabilities of the facility and staff. Include a description of any previous experience with incorporating this type of technology into public exhibits and any in-house or contracted technical support or data visualization/media content creation capability the applicant possesses;
- (v) A description of the visitorship to the institution and any existing partnerships with community groups or formal education institutions;
- (vi) A description of how partners or partnership programs may benefit from the incorporation of this technology (if letters of support are supplied, they should be uploaded as separate attachments);
- (vii) A description of any in-kind resources or equipment that will be provided;
- (viii) A description of any other funding that is being sought or has been obtained that could be leveraged to complement this project;
- (ix) A description of the capabilities of the personnel that will be involved in the project;
- (x) A description of how project results will be disseminated beyond the audience immediately involved in the activities of the project;

(xi) A description of how the project activities will be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting stated project goals and objectives as well as against the goal of improving the understanding of SOS as an effective Earth system science learning tool. 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. **If there are no references to cite, applicants must indicate that this is the case.**

(f) Proposed SOS Work Plan and Milestone Chart. Describe the involvement of your facility including deliverables. Provide time lines of major tasks and potential outcomes covering the duration of the proposed project, including project evaluation. Indicate a preferred installation schedule. (See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for template.)

(g) Budget. All applications must include a budget narrative and a justification to support all proposed budget categories. The budget narrative should include detail provided in the list of required and optional hardware supplies and equipment and their associated costs or a reduced list of required hardware with an explanation as to how the other required equipment will be supplied. See <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/SOSHardware.xls> for hardware list. Applicants should modify this hardware list to reflect those items required for their site's installation needs and use this as the basis of the budget request. If the applicant is able to offset the retail costs of the required hardware due to existing agreements with certain vendors or because the hardware is already owned by the applicant or will be secured by another means, then that should be clearly stated. Funds may also be requested to cover costs associated with necessary site preparation such as room setup, facilities setup, labor charges, personnel salary, and associated educational programming, exhibit design and fabrication, and program evaluation.

The budget narrative and justification should provide enough detail to allow OED staff and the review panel to evaluate the level of effort proposed by investigators and staff on a specific project. When appropriate, the narrative must provide details on: personnel salaries and fringe benefits (broken out by percent time and number of months devoted to the project for each individual to be paid by project); travel including per person and per trip costs for transportation, lodging and meals; equipment; supplies; contractual costs, such as anticipated sub-awards; and other costs, including printing, publications and communication costs. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for a budget template. Documentation regarding indirect-cost-rate agreements must also be included. For additional guidance

on providing adequate budget justifications, visit <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/BUDGTGUD.PDF>

(h) Brief Resumes. All principal investigators, co-principal investigators, and/or key personnel of project partners must provide summaries of no more than 3 pages per person that include the following:

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

Failure to provide this information in the required format and within the prescribed page limits will result in the proposal not being reviewed.

(i) Current and Pending Support. Describe all current and pending Federal and non-Federal funding for all principal investigators (PIs) and co-PIs. The capability of the applicants (PIs and co-PIs) and their collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects must be assessable. Therefore, please 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.

Also, provide the name and telephone contact for three references (federal or state program officers or COTRs) on contracts or grants that the PIs have held over the last one to three years. **If the applicants have no current or pending funding beyond this application, this must be clearly indicated under a heading “Current and Pending Support.”**

(j) Letters of Support or other supplemental materials. If substantive partnerships are described in the project description, letters of support should be provided. These letters should be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov or submitted along with the hard copy application. Only letters of support that arrive before the due date will be provided for reviewers to consider. Any other supplemental material should also be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov.

2. Application 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. Color or high-resolution graphics, unusually sized materials, or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the proposal are allowed, but should be employed only when necessary for adequate description of the proposed project. Applications should be single spaced and follow the requirements described in Section IV.B.1. **Failure to comply with the application format as described in this section or in section IV.B.1 will result in a proposal not being reviewed.**

The following table is provided as a checklist of required application elements.

Application Elements	Formatting Restrictions	Suggested File Naming Convention	Page Limit
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Forms			
SF-424	Provided Form	Automated within Grants.gov	N/A
SF-424-A	Provided Form	Automated within Grants.gov	N/A
SF-424-B	Provided Form	Automated within Grants.gov	N/A
CD-511	Provided Form	Automated within Grants.gov	N/A
SF-LLL*	Provided Form	Automated within Grants.gov	N/A
Narratives			
Title Page	See Template	Title_pg.doc/pdf	1 pg
Abstract	yes, see IV. B. 2	Abstract.doc/pdf	1 pg
Project Description	yes, see IV. B. 2	Proj_desc.doc/pdf	15 pgs
References Cited	yes, see IV. B. 2	Refs.doc/pdf	none
SOS Work Plan/Milestone Chart	none	Workplan.doc/pdf/xls	none
Budget Narrative	See Template	Budg_narr.xls/doc/pdf	none
Budget Justification	See Template	Budg_just.xls/doc/pdf	none
Brief Resumes	yes, see IV. B. 2	Res_[lastname].doc/pdf	3 pgs/individual
Current & Pending Support	none	CP_[lastname].doc/pdf/xls	none
Letters of Support/Other Supplemental Materials*	none	Ltr_1.doc/pdf	none

*Not a Required Element, depends on applicant's status

C. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for full applications is 5:00 PM, EDT on May 5, 2006.

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

Note: The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to 48 hours to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only "validated" applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application is submitted 48 hours prior to the submission deadline.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copies of the application will be accepted and date and time stamped **when they are received** in the Office of Education (OEd). Facsimile or e-mail transmissions of applications will *not* be accepted. **Electronic or hard copies of the application received after the deadline will not be considered for review and will be destroyed.** If submitting a hard copy, applicants are requested to

provide a CD-ROM of the application, including scanned signed forms or forms with electronic signatures. Please note: Hard copies submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program **are not** subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs (refer to item 16 on SF-424).

E. Funding Restrictions

There are no special restrictions.

F. Other Submission Requirements - Address

Full applications should be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY (<http://www.grants.gov>). It is strongly suggested that Grants.gov be accessed using Internet Explorer for maximum compatibility. Because registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks, it is strongly recommended that this registration process is completed as soon as possible. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired. It is recommended that submission through Grants.gov be attempted 2 days prior to the deadline to avoid electronic submission errors. See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/sos_faqs.html for more details.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, application kits *must* be requested from Carrie McDougall, completed, signed, and one hard copy should be sent to Carrie McDougall, DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230. If submitting a hard copy, applicants are requested to provide a CD-ROM of the application, including scanned signed forms or forms with electronic signatures. Printed forms from Grants.gov submitted in hard copy will *not* be accepted. Please note: Hard copies submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS). See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/sos_faqs.html for more details.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30 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 priorities. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well the project addresses the program priorities (refer to Section I.B) (6 points);
- How well aligned the project is with NOAA education goals and strategies (6 points);
- The extent to which NOAA mission goal topics or NOAA-related science themes are incorporated into the exhibit, and how well incorporated is NOAA data or NOAA-related data. (6 points);
- The likelihood that project will impact environmental literacy in any of NOAA's mission goal areas (6 points); and
- The likelihood that existing partnerships with formal education institutions and community organizations will benefit from SOS (6 points).

(2) Technical/scientific merit (30 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 goals and measurable objectives (4 points);
- 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, and specifically, is the plan for incorporation of SOS into existing exhibits appropriate (8 points);
- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time proposed (4 points);
- Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes (5 points);
- The innovativeness of the project approach (4 points); and
- If the institution serves a sufficiently large and diverse audience or serves an underserved audience (5 points).

(3) Overall Qualifications of Applicants (15 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 within their areas of expertise of the applicants, of key personnel who would receive funds from this program, and of key personnel of project's partners (2 points);
- The applicant's previous experience in implementing a similar technical project (3 points);
- The level of collaboration with other programs, minority-serving institutions (MSIs), or other educational, research, or management institutions (2 points);
- The adequacy of the facility and computer/IT support to house and display SOS (4 points); and
- The technical capability of the personnel involved, including the ability to provide technical support for SOS and create content or new data visualizations for display on SOS (4 points).

(4) Project Costs (15 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, specifically have all required hardware costs been covered either through requested funds or through in-kind support (3 points);
- If other funding is being leveraged to complement requested funds (3 points);
- Adequacy of in-kind resources and equipment being provided (3 points);
- 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 (3 points); and
- How well justified are all costs associated with the project (3 points).

(5) Outreach and Education (10 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.

- How well NOAA will be attributed in the exhibit (5 points); and
- The likelihood that the project will increase awareness of NOAA and NOAA-related sciences (5 points).

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a completed application by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All applications that meet the minimum eligibility requirements and that are ascertained to be complete will be evaluated and scored by independent reviewers. The reviews will be conducted by mail and panel review. Reviewers may be Federal or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in a separate area so that the reviewers as a whole covers the spectrum of environmental and informal education relevant to NOAA-related sciences. The reviewers will score each proposal using the evaluation criteria provided above. The individual review ratings shall be averaged for each application to establish rank order and presented to the Program Officer. No consensus advice will be given by the reviewers.

The Program Officer will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review process nor participate in discussion of the merits of any proposal.

The Program Officer will make his/her recommendations for funding based on rank order and the selection factors listed in the next paragraph to the Selecting Official, the Director of NOAA Education, for the final funding decision.

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.

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups;
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

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

In anticipation of additional funding, declined applications will be retained for up to 1 year and may be funded if additional FY06 funds become available or from newly appropriated FY07 funds. After one year all applications will be destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of applications will occur during spring 2006. October 1, 2006, should be used as the proposed start date on applications, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

Successful applicants will receive notification (either hard copy or electronically) from OED that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. 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 reviewed application was not recommended for funding (declined) or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements prescribed in Sections IV.B and IV.C.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The 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 funding opportunity.

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 feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

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.

A Federal Cash Transaction Report (SF-272) is required semi-annually in April and October. A final Financial Status Report (SF-269) and a final SF-272 is required within 90 days of the end of the grant.

Performance or progress reports are required to be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer in accordance with the conditions stated in the terms and conditions of the award. Progress reports should detail activities conducted during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information including expenditures to date.

VII. Agency Contacts

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

For those applicants without Internet access, hard copies of referenced documents may be requested from NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Carrie McDougall at (202) 482-0875 or sending a letter to Carrie McDougall, DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230.