**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Ocean Education Grants for AZA Aquariums

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Funding Opportunity Number:** NOAA-SEC-OED-2009-2001842

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.469, Congressionally Identified Awards and Projects

**Dates:** The deadline for applications is 5:00 PM EDT on June 9, 2009. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically date/time stamped when they are validated and submitted to the Agency. Paper applications must be provided to an expedited shipping service by the deadline and proof of this must be provided by the applicant. **PLEASE NOTE:** When submitting through Grants.gov, you will receive 2 emails.  An initial email will be sent to confirm your attempt to submit a proposal.  This is NOT a confirmation of acceptance of your application.  It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application and send you a second email.  Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

**Funding Opportunity Description:** The NOAA Office of Education (OEd) is issuing a request for applications to support education projects designed to engage the public in activities that increase ocean and/or climate literacy and the adoption of a stewardship ethic.  Funded projects will be between one and five years in duration and will support ocean education projects led by eligible applicants. Eligible applicants are only 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are either (1) aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) or (2) have a legally sanctioned affiliation with an AZA-accredited aquarium. There is a required 50% non-Federal cost-share of the total Federal request, e.g., if the Federal request is $1,000,000, the applicant is required to submit a non-Federal match equal to $500,000.

This FFO meets NOAA's mission goal to protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management.

It is anticipated that recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by August 30, 2009 and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2009.  **Note:** a PDF version of this announcement is available at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html.

<div align="center">**FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT**</div>

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

### A. Program Objective

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provides support to improve environmental literacy among our Nation's citizens and promote a diverse workforce in ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences in order to encourage stewardship and increase informed decision making for the Nation. NOAA defines an environmentally literate person as someone who has a fundamental understanding of the systems of the natural world, the relationships and interactions between the living and non-living environment, and the ability to understand and utilize scientific evidence to make informed decisions regarding environmental issues. Improving environmental literacy and the public's understanding of how our Nation's natural resources are managed and the importance of these resources is critical to meeting the Agency's stewardship mission. To address this mission, NOAA engages in informal science education activities at local, state, regional, and national levels, with particular emphasis on reaching communities that are underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

The goal of this funding program is to support projects that engage the public in educational activities that increase ocean and/or climate literacy and the adoption of a stewardship ethic. This program supports Goal 1 of NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan), specifically focusing on:

- **Outcome 1.2:** Educators understand and use environmental literacy principles.
- **Outcome 1.3:** Educators, students, and/or the public collect and use ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate data in inquiry and evidence-based activities.
- **Outcome 1.4:** Lifelong learners are provided with informal science education opportunities focused on ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate topics.

This program also supports the President's priorities to create a transparent and connected democracy and improve America's competitiveness by preparing our Nation's children for the 21st Century economy by: making math and science education a national priority; increasing the number of science and math graduates; expanding the number of high-quality afterschool opportunities; and investing in climate-friendly energy development and deployment (http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/).

In keeping with Outcome 1.1 of NOAA's Education Strategic Plan, highly successful projects will employ effective educational methods that promote stewardship and associated environmental problem-solving.  Project activities should be based on established best practices. In particular, the four key recommendations in the National Research Council

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report on "Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits" (Bell, et al., 2009), excerpted below, incorporate such practices and should be utilized as appropriate:

**Recommendation 1:** Exhibit and program designers should create informal environments for science learning according to the following principles. Informal environments should:

- Be designed with specific learning goals in mind (e.g., the strands of science learning).
- Be interactive.
- Provide multiple ways for learners to engage with concepts, practices, and phenomena within a particular setting.
- Facilitate science learning across multiple settings.
- Prompt and support participants to interpret their learning experiences in light of relevant prior knowledge, experiences, and interests.
- Support and encourage learners to extend their learning over time.

**Recommendation 2:** From their inception, informal environments for science learning should be developed through community-educator partnerships and whenever possible should be rooted in scientific problems and ideas that are consequential for community members.

**Recommendation 3:** Educational tools and materials should be developed through iterative processes involving learners, educators, designers, and experts in science, including the sciences of human learning and development.

**Recommendation 4:** Front-line staff should actively integrate questions, everyday language, ideas, concerns, worldviews, and histories, both their own and those of diverse learners. To do so they will need support opportunities to develop cultural competence, and to learn with and about the groups they want to serve.

Proposed projects may include (but are not limited to) the following types of activities:

- Outdoor/Hands-on Experiential Learning
- Citizen science programs
- Civic engagement programs (as discussed below)
- Integration of emerging and advanced educational technologies (as discussed below)
- Demonstration projects promoting conservation of energy and other natural resources
- Educational games
- Youth and community programs
- Professional development of informal science education staff

In addition, this program supports the development of permanent and traveling exhibitions

and films, television and radio series. These categories of activities (exhibitions, films, television, and radio series) should play a supporting role in the proposed educational projects, rather than be the sole focus of the project.

## Civic Engagement Projects

NOAA is specifically interested in experimental programs involving civic engagement activities surrounding locally significant environmental change and hazard resilience. Because aquariums are recognized as places where visitors are prompted "to reconsider their role in environmental problems and conservation action, and to see themselves as part of the solution," (Falk et al., 2007), aquariums provide a unique learning setting that allows them to serve as a connector between their communities and NOAA resources. Civic engagement programs supported by this grant opportunity should enable aquariums to "seek out issues related to science and society where the voices of citizens should be heard and ensure that dialogue occurs" (Toronto Declaration, 2008). Successful projects will engage local citizens in public deliberations of major environmental issues affecting their lives and empower them to find solutions for those issues as well as contribute to future deliberations occurring on those issues at regional, state, national and even global levels (see recommendations in "Americans and Climate Change: Closing the Gap Between Science and Action: A Synthesis of Insights and Recommendations from the 2005 Yale Conference on Climate Change," Abbasi, 2006). These projects will build local capacity for sustained civic engagement on these issues beyond the duration of the project. Specific emphasis should be placed on involving traditionally under-represented communities in civic engagement projects and employing innovative collaborations with other aquariums, other institutions and/or networks of institutions.

## Emerging and Advanced Technologies

Projects may focus on the use of alternative, emerging or advanced technologies or digital interactive media to reach new audiences, e.g., virtual worlds, You-Tube, social networking tools (Twitter, MySpace, Facebook), webcams, kiosks, and Earth-viewing platforms. Earth-viewing platforms include, but are not limited to, the following: NOAA's Science On a Sphere, Magic Planet, Omniglobe, PufferSphere, and immersive cave or dome technologies, or virtual globes, such as Google Earth and NASA's World Wind. Projects involving installations of Science On a Sphere require consultation with John McLaughlin (john.mclaughlin@noaa.gov, 202-482-2893) prior to submission.

Successful projects will exhibit as many of the following characteristics as is relevant and/or feasible:
- Increasing public understanding and appreciation of the interconnectedness of people

and the environment, especially with reference to climate change;

- Involving collaborations/partnerships with other aquariums, other types of institutions and/or networks of institutions. Partnerships with science institutions that will be able to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to inform the development of exhibits and/or program content are strongly encouraged. Partnerships with NOAA programs are also encouraged whenever possible. (A summary of NOAA programs and activities sorted by the state or territory in which they are based or focused is available at: http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS0107/noaainyourstate.html);
- Extending the learning experience beyond a single visit to an aquarium or the simple acquisition of knowledge;
- Assisting participants in increasing their conservation behaviors;
- Employ the strategies of the Citizen Science Tool Kit (see http://www.citizenscience.org);
- Engaging members of populations traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields and provide appropriate cultural contexts for their learning;
- Addressing, as appropriate, recent findings of the Ocean Project's 2009 public literacy survey (http://www.theoceanproject.org/ocean_education_grant_program);
- Aligning activities to the principles in "Ocean Literacy: Essential Principles of Ocean Sciences" (http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf) and/or "Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Science" (http://www.noaa.gov/climateliteracy.html);
- Having clearly stated outcomes/objectives that are measurable and appropriate to the target audience(s) (see Evaluation below for further guidance); and/or
- Sharing information on project impacts and design with NOAA and the broader environmental education community.

**Target Audiences:**
- Public audiences: including youth, families, adult learners, and community groups; and
- Professional audiences: informal education professionals.

NOAA is supportive of informal education projects that complement formal K-16 education. Toward that end, projects funded through this opportunity shall focus on activities that will occur outside of school.

**Project Evaluation**

Project activities should be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting proposed project goals and objectives as well as the goal of the program, which is to engage the public in educational activities that increase ocean and climate literacy and facilitate the adoption of a stewardship ethic.  Projects should be based on an existing front-end evaluation/needs assessment and there should be some discussion in the project description of that needs assessment.  Plans for formative and summative project evaluations should be well constructed and specific to the project type.  For example, projects involving the design of new or modification of existing digital interactive media should consider evaluating the interface design as well as the educational impacts of the proposed project. Discussion of front-end, formative and summative evaluations should be included in both the project description and budget sections.  Lastly, potential impact of the project beyond the award period should also be described.

Overall, project evaluation should be handled by external professional evaluators or by internal staff who have significant experience with evaluation and are not otherwise substantively involved with the project. Additionally, some projects may require specialized evaluation expertise, for example, in the evaluation of the interface of digital interactive media. Project evaluation should include assessment of changes in the target audiences' attitudes, knowledge, awareness, and/or behaviors as a result of the activities undertaken.

Principal Investigators should consider sharing evaluation results and project impacts through presentations and peer-reviewed publications of relevant professional organizations such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Association of Science Technology Centers (ASTC), North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE), National Marine Educators Association (NMEA), etc. Also, summative evaluation reports should be posted to http://www.informalscience.org to further inform the broad field of informal science education about what was learned from the project.

It is anticipated that recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 30, 2009 and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than October 1, 2009. Funded projects will be one to five years in duration.

This FFO meets NOAA's Mission Goal to Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through an Ecosystem Approach to Management (http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/PPI_Capabilities/Documents/Strategic_Plans/FY09-14_NOAA_Strategic_Plan.pdf).

**References Cited**

Abbasi, D., 2006. Americans and Climate Change: Closing the Gap Between Science and Action: A Synthesis of Insights and Recommendations from the 2005 Yale Conference on Climate Change. Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. (http://environment.yale.edu/climate/americans_and_climate_change.pdf)

Falk, J.H.; Reinhard, E.M.; Vernon, C.L.; Bronnenkant, K.; Deans, N.L.; Heimlich, J.E., 2007. Why Zoos & Aquariums Matter: Assessing the Impact of a Visit. Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Silver Spring, MD. (http://www.aza.org/ConEd/MIRP/index.html)

The Toronto Declaration of the 5th Science Centre World Congress, 2008. (http://www.5scwc.org/TheTorontoDeclaration/tabid/133/Default.aspx)

Bell, P, Lewenstein, B, Shouse, A.W., Feder, M.A. (eds), 2009.  Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits. Committee on Learning Science in Informal Environments, A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES, The National Academies Press, Washington, D.C.

**B.  Program Priorities**

It is anticipated that projects will involve a variety of educational methods and project types. Collaborations among aquariums and other organizations and or networks of organizations are also encouraged.  This program has two funding priorities.  Priority 1 is for larger-scale projects.  Priority 2 is for smaller-scale projects.  Each priority will be reviewed separately and by independent review panels. Both priorities will be evaluated with the same evaluation criteria.

**C.  Program Authority**

Authority for this program is provided by the following 33 USC 893a(a).

**II.  Award Information**

**A.  Funding Availability**

Approximately $7,500,000 of total Federal financial assistance is available for Ocean Education Grants for AZA Aquariums. Funding for these projects is provided by P.L. 111-8 FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act. There will be no funding from the P.L. 111-5 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Approximately 5 to 10 awards in the form of grants or cooperative agreements will be made.

For Priority 1, the total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed $3,000,000 for all years including direct and indirect costs. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for all years for the direct and indirect costs for this priority is $1,000,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of more than $3,000,000 total for all years will not be considered for funding.

For Priority 2, the total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed $1,000,000 for all years including direct and indirect costs. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for all years for the direct and indirect costs for this priority is $300,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than $300,000 total for all years will not be considered for funding.

Up to two applications total per institution may be submitted through this funding opportunity, either one application to each priority or two applications to the same priority.

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 from 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

Applications should cover a project period of one to five years to be eligible for merit review. Start dates can be as early as October 1, 2009.  Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

## C.  Type of Funding Instrument

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

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are only 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are either (1) aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) or (2) have a legally sanctioned affiliation with an AZA-accredited aquarium. AZA accreditation must be current at the time of submission. Note: Non-AZA-accredited aquariums, non-US institutions, and for-profit entities may be partners on applications but cannot be the lead institution.

An eligible applicant may submit up to two applications through this funding opportunity, either one application to each priority or two applications to the same priority.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is a 50% required non-Federal cost-share of the total Federal request, e.g., if the Federal request is $1,000,000, the applicant is required to submit a non-Federal match equal to $500,000. Applicants are instructed to review the guidance provided in 15 CFR Sec. 24.24 related to cost-sharing (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/fundingopportunities/15CFR_Sec_24_24_match_costshare.pdf) and the related circular pertaining to cost principles (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a122/a122.html).

Cost-share or match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Federal sources cannot be considered for matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-Federal partners in order to meet the 50% match requirement, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds.

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Applications with budgets in which the total Federal share requested from NOAA for all years of the project is more than $3,000,000 or less than $300,000 for the direct and indirect costs of the proposed project will not be considered for merit review.

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

Applications received after the deadline will not be merit reviewed. See additional details in

Section IV. C.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

The application package is available through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov).  If an applicant does not have Internet access, please contact one of the Program Officers, Carrie McDougall or Sarah Schoedinger, for information on how to submit an application.  See Section VII. Agency Contacts for the Program Officers' contact information.

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps.  In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide you intend to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your application.  If submitting a collaborative project (see section B.1. below) each submitting institution has to be registered in Grants.gov. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

### B. Content and Form of Application

The provisions for application preparation are mandatory. Failure to comply with the stated form and content requirements will result in the application not being reviewed.  See the Office of Education's frequently asked questions site, http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/fundingopportunities/aquarium_grant_program_faqs.html.

**1. FORM:** The page margin on standard letter-size paper must be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right. All pages should be numbered. The typeface must be standard 11-point size or larger and must be clear and easily legible. Color or high-resolution graphics, unusually sized materials, or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the application are allowed, but should be employed only when necessary for adequate description of the proposed project. All narrative sections of the application should be single spaced and consist of the sections described in Section IV.B.2. Failure to comply with the required form and within the prescribed page limits will result in the application not being reviewed.

Applicants may submit an application wherein the applicant is the lead institution and project partners are funded through sub-awards, and/or a collaborative application, where no single institution is the lead and each project partner submits an application on behalf of their

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institution.

For collaborative projects in which there is no single lead institution and funding will be provided directly by NOAA to each collaborative partner, each collaborating partner should submit a separate application. Each application that is part of a collaborative submission should use the same project description and supporting documentation (milestones, references cited, etc.) with exception of the Standard Forms and budget details, which are specific to each applicant. For collaborative projects, please use the collaborative title page template from this URL: [http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html).  **Note:** all applicants must meet the eligibility requirements (see Section III) and the budget limits are the same regardless of whether a single application or a collaborative application is submitted.  Collaborative submissions will be reviewed as one single project.

**2. CONTENT:** Applications must include the elements (a) through (i) below; element (j) is optional. Failure to provide this information in the required form and within prescribed page limits will result in the application being excluded from further review.

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

**(i)** SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance

**(ii)** SF-424-A, Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs

**(iii)** SF-424-B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs

**(iv)** CD-511, Certifications Regarding Lobbying

**(v)** SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable, see instructions on form)

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

(b) **Title Page.** The title page identifies the funding opportunity to which you are applying, the project's title, the Principal Investigator's (PI) and co-PI's names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers and fax numbers. There should be an executive summary of the project that does not exceed 150 words. The proposed start and end dates for the project and requested budget, and non-federal match must also be included on the title page. For collaborative projects, please use the collaborative title page template. Title page templates are available at [http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html).

**(c) One-page Abstract.** Describe the essential elements of the proposed project. Include: (1) Project Title; (2) List of names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project; (3) Total funding requested from NOAA; and total match amount, and (4) Concise statement of the objectives of the project, description of the project activities, the location of the project, the expected outcome(s) and the rationale for the work proposed. The abstract is used to help compare applications quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words. Project summaries of applications that receive funding may be posted on program-related websites. The abstract should appear on a separate page, and not exceed one page in length.

**(d) 15-page Project Description.** The project description section must not exceed 15 pages and must follow the requirements in IV.B, Content and Form of Application. Page limits are inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of references, budget information, resumes, milestone charts, proposed work plans, and letters of commitment. Each page of the project description should include page numbers and the PI's name in the header or footer. A template for the project description can be found online at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html.

The proposed project must be described completely, including aspects of the project that will be supported by the 50% non-Federal match. The project description should clearly describe the project's goals, implementation and management. It should provide a full justification for the project. This section should also include:

**(i)** The objective(s), expected outcomes, and an explanation for how the activities and expected outcomes support the objective of this funding program and the outcomes of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan referred to in section I.A;

**(ii)** Description of the proposed activities. This should include a description of all products that will be created or activities that will be undertaken. Descriptions should include the key messages associated with any planned exhibitions or program content and best practices that will be employed. Applications must clearly demonstrate how the proposed project builds upon prior practice and related work and cite appropriate literature references that support the proposed approach;

**(iii)** A discussion of how the proposed project reflects or addresses the Ocean Literacy and/or Climate Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts if applicable;

**(iv)** A discussion of the project's target audience(s) that specifically identifies whether the audience(s) is (are) public, professional, or both;

**(v)** A discussion of the institution's capability to complete the proposed activities;

**(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 goal of this program to engage the public in educational activities that increase ocean and/or climate literacy and the adoption of a stewardship ethic as well as a description of who will be carrying out the evaluation.  See Section I.A for guidance on evaluation;

**(vii)**  A description of the project partners' roles and the coordination among project partners; specifically, highlight any partnerships with NOAA or NOAA entities. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuaries, National Sea Grant College Program, National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, NOAA Cooperative Institutes, and Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System. (**Note:** letters of commitment articulating partners' roles should be submitted as a separate section of the application.);

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

**(ix)**  A description of how project results will be disseminated beyond the audience immediately involved in the activities of the project. Specifically, PIs should consider presenting evaluation results and project impacts at the annual meetings of relevant professional organizations such as AZA, ASTC, NAAEE, NMEA, etc. and posting evaluation reports to www.informalscience.org.

**(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, this must be clearly indicated under a heading "References Cited".

**(f) Proposed Work Plan and Milestone Chart.** Describe the involvement of your institution and partners including deliverables. Provide timelines of major tasks and potential outcomes covering the duration of the proposed project, including project evaluation. The tasks should relate to the both the budget and the intended deliverables or milestones. There is no page limit for this element.

**(g) Budget.** All applications must include a budget section that contains both a table and a narrative, as well as the required official budget form (SF-424A). Both the table and the narrative should use the same categories as shown on the SF-424A form.

The Budget Section should provide enough detail to allow 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 and table 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 the 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, evaluations, and communication costs. Funding should also be requested to provide for the PI(s) to attend one or more conferences in which project and evaluation results will be presented. Appropriate conferences include the annual meetings of AZA, ASTC, NAAEE, NMEA, etc.

The same level of detail must be provided for the 50% non-Federal match. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost-sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the names of participating volunteers and the overall number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to education and outreach. Letters of commitment for any secured resources expected to be used as match for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the application.

If sub-contracts or awards will be made to project partners or others, the same amount of budget detail provided for the lead institution's activities should be provided for all partners and any planned subcontracts associated with the grant. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for a budget narrative template and model and a budget table model. Documentation regarding indirect-cost-rate agreements must also be included. For additional guidance on providing adequate budget justifications, visit http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html and click on "NOAA Standard Budget Guidelines".

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

There is no page limit for this element.

**(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 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 application 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 list 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. 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 commitment or other supplemental materials.** If substantive partnerships are described in the project description, letters of commitment should be provided. Letters of commitment are important for demonstrating the commitment of project partners. Letters of commitment should be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov, or if after deadline emailed to the Program Officer. Any other supplemental material should also be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov.

**(k) NEPA Questionnaire.** The Office of Education has determined that applicants do not need to provide answers to the NOAA NEPA Questionnaire at this time.

## C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 5:00 PM, EDT on June 9, 2009. Hard copy applications may be accepted after the deadline if the application was provided to an expedited delivery service on or before 5:00 PM EDT on June 9, 2009, and the applicant has proof of this, and they are received within two days following the deadline by the Office of Education.

Late applications will not be merit reviewed.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY are automatically stamped with the date and time of submission and will be the basis of determining timeliness. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, there will be two automated email receipts sent to the application submitter with the date and time of submission (the first email confirms receipt, the second email confirms that there are no errors with your application submission and it has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If both email confirmation receipts are not

provided within two (2) days of application submission, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk and oed.grants@noaa.gov. **PLEASE NOTE:** It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required elements have been appropriately submitted. Additional instructions for Grants.gov can be found at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/fundingopportunities/aquarium_grant_program_faqs.html.

Paper applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the Office of Education. (**Note that late-arriving paper applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EDT June 9, 2009 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time, and if the applications are received in the Office of Education no later than 5 p.m. EDT 2 business days following the closing date.**) Please note: paper applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; therefore applicants are advised to send paper applications via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS). See Section F (below) for additional guidance.

**Important:** All applicants, both electronic and paper, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov is currently extremely heavy, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in paper form. Paper applicants should allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

## D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted to this funding opportunity are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

## E. Funding Restrictions

There are no funding restrictions.

## F. Other Submission Requirements

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

    **b.** Address to submit applications:

        Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY (http://www.grants.gov). However, if an applicant does not have Internet access or Grants.gov is overwhelmed

with traffic, paper applications will be accepted and should be delivered to: Carrie McDougall, Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230; Telephone: 202-482-0875.  Please note: paper applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; therefore applicants are advised to send paper applications via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).

**c.**  Additional information about Grants.gov submissions

Because first-time registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks, it is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their central contractor registration may need to be renewed prior to submitting to Grants.gov.  Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions.  For further information please visit the Central Contractor Registration website (http://www.ccr.gov/).

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.

**d.**  Additional information about paper submissions.

If an applicant does not have Internet access or if Grants.gov is overwhelmed with traffic or inaccessible, paper applications will be accepted.  Paper applications must be submitted with completed forms containing the original signature of the submitting institution's authorized representative and an electronic copy of the entire application on CD, including scanned signed forms.  If the applicant has completed the entire application in Grants.gov but is unable to submit it via Grants.gov, then this application package should be provided via CD along with printed and signed versions of forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. The authorized representative should sign and date these forms over the printed signature that will appear in the signature box.

Paper applications should be delivered to: Carrie McDougall, Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230.

Paper applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; therefore applicants are recommended to send paper applications 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/fundingopportunities/aquarium_grant_program_faqs.html for more details.

See Section IV.F, Other Submission Requirements, for complete information for submitting an application.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. EvaluationCriteria

**(1)     Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%):** This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA's Federal, regional, or local activities. The application should describe how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well the project addresses the goals and objectives of this funding program;
- How well the project is aligned with NOAA education goals and strategies as described in the NOAA Education Strategic Plan (http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan);
- For projects focusing on the ocean as a part of the Earth system, the extent to which the project will infuse the "Ocean Literacy: the Essential Principles of Ocean Sciences" (http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf) into the project activities;
- For projects focusing on climate change, the extent to which the project will infuse "Climate Literacy: the Essential Principles of Climate Science" (http://climate.noaa.gov/climateliteracy) into the project activities; and
- The extent to which members of traditionally underrepresented groups in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields are involved. A listing of groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields can be found in the 2008 NSF Science and Engineering Indicators Report at http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind08/c3/c3s1.htm#c3s116.

**(2)     Technical/scientific merit (30%):** This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project

goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description including clearly stated goals and measurable objectives;
- The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is educationally and technically sound, is based on best practices and/or needs assessments, uses appropriate methods to achieve project outcomes and is likely to be implemented on the scale described;
- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time proposed;
- The appropriateness of the identified target audience(s) and proposed methods to impact the stated audience(s);
- Whether there is a clear delineation of responsibilities of the project's key personnel and whether there are adequate communication mechanisms in place for coordinating among project partners;
- The value and appropriateness of proposed collaborations;
- The extent to which the project leverages other resources or investments to achieve its objectives;
- The likelihood the project can be sustained beyond the duration of the grant;
- The likelihood the impacts of the project on the target audience will be long-lasting; and
- Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes.


**(3)     Overall Qualifications of Applicants (15%):** This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will evaluate:

- 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 the project partners;
- The applicant's previous experience in managing, designing, and implementing educational programs;
- The evaluators' previous experience in managing, designing and implementing evaluations appropriate for the target audiences and proposed activities;
- The likelihood that the participating institution(s) have the appropriate resources to carry out the proposed activities and that applicant(s) have the ability to complete the proposed project successfully;
- The level of collaboration with other programs, minority-serving institutions (MSIs),

NOAA entities, or other educational or research institutions; and

- The extent to which all partners are contributing meaningfully to the project, including articulation of activities in letters of commitment.

**(4)    Project Costs (15%):** The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The adequacy of the proposed resources to accomplish the proposed work within the indicated time-frame;
- If there are additional funds that provide additional leverage; and
- The adequacy of detail in the budget narrative to allow an informed determination of how well all costs associated with the project are justified.

**(5)    Outreach and Education (10%):** This criterion ascertains whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How the outcomes and results of the proposed project will be disseminated to audiences beyond those participating directly in the project. These may include publications, conferences, community events, media, etc. associated with professional organizations such as AZA, ASTC, NAAEE and NMEA; and
- The likelihood that the project will increase awareness and use of NOAA resources among target audiences.

## B.  Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a completed application by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Minimum requirements include all of the following:

- Applicant is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are either (1) aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) or (2) have a legally sanctioned affiliation with an AZA-accredited aquarium.
- Application was received on time;
- All required elements of the application are present and follow format guidance;
- Requested budget is no less than $300,000 and no more than $3,000,000 for all years of the project;
- 50% non-Federal match is included in project budget; and
- Project duration is 1 to 5 years.

All applications that meet the eligibility and minimum requirements and that are ascertained to be complete will be evaluated and scored by a panel of independent reviewers. The reviews will be conducted by panel review. Reviewers may be Federal or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in a separate area so that the reviewers as a whole cover the spectrum of applications received. The reviewers will score each application using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual review ratings shall be averaged for each application to establish rank order. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel. The Program Officer will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review process. The Program Officer will make his/her recommendations for funding based on rank order and the selection factors listed in the next paragraph to the Selecting Official, the Director of NOAA Education, for the selection of applications.

## 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 will select applications based on the evaluation criteria and rank order established by each panel unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

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

Selected applicants may be asked to modify objectives, project plans, time lines, or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of reviews and

summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant.

### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Review of applications will occur during July 2009. Recommendations for funding will be made in August 2009. Awards will be made approximately in September 2009. Start dates should be no earlier than October 1, 2009.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

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 in September 2009. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, authorized by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be made by e-mail from Grants Online to the Authorized Representative of the project.

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 by September 2009.

### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data. The Program uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or applications which are seeking NOAA Federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, 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 application. 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.

**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 February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

**Limitation of Liability**

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application 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. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

**Paperwork Reduction Act**

This notification involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040 and 0348-0046 and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Executive Order 12866**

It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

**Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)**

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

**Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act**

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comments are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

## C. Reporting

Progress reports are due every six months from the start date of the project. Progress reports should be submitted electronically through the NOAA Grants Online system and are due for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final comprehensive report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports should detail the accomplishments that have occurred during the reporting period, correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the project narrative and provide specific, project-related information. A suggested template for project reports will be provided to grantees.

Federal Cash Transaction reports, form SF-425, should be submitted electronically through the NOAA Grants Online system and are due semi-annually on October 30th and April 30th for the preceding 6-month period (April 1st to September 30th and October 1st to March 30th) or portion thereof if the project start- or end-date falls in the middle of one of these intervals. Financial reports are due for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month period. The Final Financial Status report, form SF-425A, is a comprehensive financial report that is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

## VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the OEd website for further information at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html or contact the Program Officers: Carrie McDougall at 202-482-0875 or carrie.mcdougall@noaa.gov; or Sarah Schoedinger at 704-370-3528 or sarah.schoedinger@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 Sarah Schoedinger at 704-370-3528 or sending a letter to: Carrie McDougall, Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230; Telephone: 202-482-0875.

## VIII.  Other Information

None.