

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Environmental Literacy Grants for Formal K-12 Education

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: SEC-OED-2009-2001282

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

Dates: Preliminary proposals (pre-proposals) are required for submission of a full application and must be received by 5:00 p.m., EST, February 20, 2008. Applicants who submit a pre-proposal will receive notification authorizing submission of a full application on or about April 30, 2008. Please contact Stacey Rudolph if you have not heard from the Office of Education by May 14, 2008. The full applications must be received by 5:00 p.m., EDT, June 25, 2008.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Office of Education (OED) is issuing a request for applications for environmental literacy projects in support of K-12 education. Funded projects will be between one and five years in duration and will promote changes in K-12 education to expand the amount of Earth System Science taught in the classroom and improve student learning of that subject. Successful projects will catalyze change in K-12 education through development of new programs and materials and/or revision of existing programs and materials by supporting transformative methods: those practices (which are not necessarily new) that are likely to increase the environmental literacy of K-12 teachers and their students by increasing the amount of Earth System Science taught in grades K-12. This federal funding opportunity meets NOAA's Mission Goal to understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond. For any questions concerning this funding opportunity, please visit our FAQ website www.oed.noaa.gov/elg_faqs.html before contacting the Office of Education.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Office of Education (OED) is issuing a request for applications for environmental literacy projects in support of K-12 education. Funded projects will be between one and five years in duration and will promote changes in K-12 education to expand the amount of Earth System Science taught in the classroom and improve student learning and application of that subject. Successful projects will catalyze change in K-12 education through development of new programs and materials and/or revision of existing programs and materials and/or by supporting transformative methods that expand or lead to the expansion of the use of Earth System Science in K-12 classrooms. Successful projects will not just increase knowledge of scientific phenomena but will also provide opportunities for the application of that knowledge to environmental issues relevant to the target audience.

Projects are encouraged to incorporate NOAA data, data visualizations, and resources and to further the use of Earth System Science concepts related to NOAA's mission goals, such as the concepts articulated in the Ocean Literacy and Climate Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts. NOAA's mission goals are as follows:

1. Protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management;
2. Understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond;
3. Serve society's needs for weather and water information; and
4. Support the nation's commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation.

Projects are also encouraged to collaborate with NOAA entities as partners or connect to projects previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants. A list of previously funded projects is available at www.oesd.noaa.gov/elg_projects.html. "NOAA entities" include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, 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.

Projects might focus on the education of pre-service teachers or the professional development of in-service teachers where it supports the creation and retention of highly qualified teachers, e.g. creation of an Earth System Science certification program; and/or the development of new, or modification of existing K-12 curricula

and related instructional materials. Projects focusing on pre-service education of teachers should involve colleges of education or other entities that provide pre-service teacher education. Projects focusing on in-service teacher professional development should involve state departments of education and/or school districts as appropriate. Projects focusing on the development of new, or modification of existing, curricula and related instructional materials should be able to demonstrate how they will address the relevant state standards, support state or national assessments, and be disseminated at the state or multi-state level. All projects shall employ the relevant strategies and address at least one of the goals articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). All projects should be implemented at a state or multi-state level and have evaluations that fully assess the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed project.

It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 15, 2008, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than November 1, 2008. For any questions concerning this funding opportunity, please visit our FAQ website www.oesd.noaa.gov/elg_faqs.html before contacting the Office of Education.

B. Program Priorities

Refer to I.A., Program Objective. There are no other program priorities. This federal funding opportunity meets NOAA's Mission Goal to understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the Environmental Literacy Grants for Formal K-12 Education program is provided by the following: 33 USC 892a(a).

D. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as

these are "necessary and reasonable."

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates the availability of approximately \$4,000,000 of Federal financial assistance in FY 2009 and FY2010 for K-12 education projects. Approximately 5 to 7 awards in the form of grants or cooperative agreements will be made. NOAA will only consider projects that have duration of 1 to 5 years. The total Federal amount for all years that may be requested from NOAA for the direct and indirect costs of the proposed project shall not exceed \$750,000. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for all years for the direct and indirect costs is \$200,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than \$200,000 total or more than \$750,000 total for the duration of the project will not be considered for funding.

The amount of funding available through this announcement will be dependent upon the final FY09 and FY10 appropriations. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate all or any part of the available funds. It is likely that there will be no additional solicitation issued for these projects for FY10.

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. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives.

B. Project/Award Period

One- to five-year applications will be accepted for review. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period. The earliest start date of awards will be November 1, 2008.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Awards may be issued through grants or cooperative agreements under the terms of this notice. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the government 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 institutions of higher education, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments in the United States. Among those eligible applicants are K through 12 public and independent schools and school systems, and science centers and museums. Foreign institutions, foreign organizations and foreign government agencies are not eligible to apply. Federal agencies are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners. Individuals not connected to an institution are ineligible to apply for funding under this announcement.

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 types of institutions.

An applicant may serve only once as principal investigator (PI) through this funding opportunity. However institutions may submit more than one application and individuals may serve as co-PIs or key personnel on more than one application.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no cost-sharing requirements.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Pre-proposal and full application forms are available through <http://www.grants.gov>. For those applicants without Internet access, federal application forms for pre-proposal and full applications may be requested from NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Stacey Rudolph at 202.482.3739 or sending a letter to Stacey Rudolph, DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230. Printed forms from Grants.gov are not acceptable if submitting a pre-proposal or full application in hard copy.

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 proposal. 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. 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 Form of Application

Applicants must submit pre-proposals for review to prevent the expenditure of effort on full applications that are not likely to be successful. All applicants will receive a response to their pre-proposal via email or letter indicating whether they are authorized to submit a full application. Only those who submit pre-proposals are eligible to submit a full application. The provisions for pre-proposal and full application preparation are mandatory. Applications that deviate from the prescribed format (refer to IV.B.1, Required Elements for Pre-proposals and IV.B.2, Required Elements of Full Applications) will not be reviewed. These guidelines will be strictly followed. Additional guidance, including a section on frequently asked questions (FAQ), is available online at www.oesd.noaa.gov/elg_faqs.html. Please consult this website before contacting the Office of Education.

1. Required Elements for Pre-proposals

FORMAT: All pre-proposals must be typewritten on 8.5 x 11 inch paper in 11-point or greater font. If submitting a hard copy, you must send one copy of the complete pre-proposal with the original ink signature on the required form (blue ink is recommended).

CONTENT: Each pre-proposal must contain the following 4 elements:

- (i) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. Hard copy submissions must have the original ink signature (blue ink is recommended).

(ii) 3-page project description. This description must state the project's title and Principle Investigator's name; explain how the project will address NOAA's education goals; summarize the proposed project, expected output or product, project goals or impact; and identify the project's partners.

(iii) 2-page budget. This should describe general costs associated with project implementation for each year of the 5 years in cost categories consistent with the SF424A (i.e., Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, Indirect Costs). For a pre-proposal budget template, visit http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html.

(iv) 1-page of biographical information about key personnel including principal investigator.

Failure to submit a pre-proposal by the deadline will result in an applicant being ineligible to submit a full application for this funding opportunity.

2. Required Elements of Full Applications

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 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 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.2. Failure to comply with the application format as described in this section may result in proposal exclusion from review.

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

(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. Hard copy submissions must have the original ink signature (blue ink is recommended).):

- (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

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

Only the versions of these forms available in Grants.gov are acceptable for electronic submission. If submitting a paper application, you must contact the program office

staff (see section VI.D) for paper versions of these forms.

(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 total budget and start and end dates for the project must also be included on the title page. One-page maximum. Title page templates are available at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html.

(c) 1-page Project Abstract. Describe the essential elements of the proposed project. Include: 1) Title; 2) List of names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project; 3) Funding request for each year of the project as well as total funding requested; and 4) Concise statement of the objectives of the project, description of the project activities, the expected outcome and the rationale for the work proposed. The abstract is used to help compare proposals 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. One-page maximum.

(d) 15-page Project Description. The project description section must not exceed fifteen pages and must follow the formatting requirements in IV.B.2, Full Application Format. Page limits are inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of references, the milestone chart, budget information, resumes, and letters of commitment. Each page of the project description should include page numbers and the Principal Investigator_s name in the header or footer.

The proposed 1- to 5-year project must be completely described. The project description should clearly identify project implementation and management with an explanation of the functions of each project team member. It should provide a full justification for and explanation of the project. This section should also include:

(i) The objective(s) and scope of work for the period of proposed activity, expected outcomes, and an explanation for how the activity and outcomes supports the Environmental Literacy Grants program objective (refer to I.A);

(ii) The relationship to other ongoing environmental education activities and/or programs that are funded by NOAA, conducted by NOAA, or conducted by NOAA partners;

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

(iv) A discussion of how the proposed project reflects or addresses the Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts or the Climate Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts (<http://www.climate.noaa.gov/education/>) if applicable;

(v) A discussion of how the proposed project addresses state standards, state or national assessments;

(vi) Coordination with project partners, particularly those funded by NOAA or NOAA entities. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, 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);

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

(viii) A description of how the project activities will be evaluated for effectiveness in meeting (1) the stated project goals and objectives; (2) the goals of the NOAA Education Plan; and (3) the objectives of this funding opportunity (i.e., to expand the amount of Earth System Science related to NOAA's mission that is taught in K-12 classrooms and improve student learning and application of the subject). Evaluation should be handled by an external professional evaluator or by internal staff with significant experience in conducting evaluations. The evaluation should include assessment of changes in participants' attitudes, knowledge, awareness and/or behaviors as a result of the proposed project. Although a range of budgets for project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10% or more of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project. The recipient may be asked to participate in a program-wide evaluation. A small portion of the budget devoted to evaluation should be planned to accommodate this participation.

(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 this.

(f) Milestone Chart. Provide time lines of major tasks and potential outcomes covering the duration of the proposed project, including project evaluation. There is no page limit for this element.

(g) Budget Narrative. All applications must include a detailed description of cost justification to support all proposed budget categories. The budget justification narrative 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. Although a range of budgets for project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10% or more of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for the budget justification narrative 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>. There is no page limit for this element.

(h) Budget Table. In addition to the budget narrative, all applications must include a table showing the numeric breakdown of expenses. Figures delineated in the budget table must match exactly with the figures described in the budget justification narrative. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for a detailed budget table 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>. There is no page limit for this element.

(i) Brief Resumes. Each Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, and other key personnel involved in carrying out the proposal must provide a resume which includes relevant publication references, a list of professional and academic credentials and contact information (mailing address, email address, phone, fax). There is a 3-page maximum per resume. Failure to provide this information in the required format and within the prescribed page limits will result in the proposal not being reviewed.

(j) 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. Provide the name and telephone contact for three administrative references (federal or state program officers or COTRs) on contracts or grants that the PIs have held over the last 1 to 3 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."

(k) Letters of Commitment or other supplemental materials. If substantive partnerships are described in the project description, letters of commitment should be provided as well. These letters should be submitted as a separate attachment in Grants.gov or submitted along with the hard copy application. Any other

supplemental material should also be submitted as separate attachments in Grants.gov. Letters of commitment and other supplemental materials that arrive after the due date will not be provided for reviewers to consider.

(l) 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

Pre-Proposals

Pre-proposals are required for all applications and must be received by 5:00 p.m., EST, February 20, 2008. Pre-proposals submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. It is strongly suggested that Grants.gov be accessed using a PC and 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.

Hard copy pre-proposals will be hand stamped with time and date when received. (Note that late-arriving hard copy pre-proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EST February 20, 2008 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the pre-proposal was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time, and if the pre-proposal is received in Office of Education by 5 p.m., EDT, no later than 2 business days following the closing date.)

Pre-proposals are a prerequisite for submission of a full application. Applicants who submit a pre-proposal by this deadline will receive notification authorizing or not authorizing a full application on or about April 30, 2008. Please contact Stacey Rudolph if you have not heard from the Office of Education by May 14, 2008.

Full Applications

The deadline for full applications is 5:00 p.m. EDT, June 25, 2008. Full applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the Office of Education. (Note that late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EDT June 25, 2008 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 proposals are received in Office of Education by 5 p.m., EDT, no later than 2

business days following the closing date.)

No email and/or facsimile pre-proposals and/or full applications will be accepted. Pre-proposals and full applications that are late or are received by fax or email will not be considered for review.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs (refer to item 19 on the grants.gov version of the SF-424).

E. Funding Restrictions

There are no special restrictions.

F. Other Submission Requirements

N/A

Pre-proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). It is strongly suggested that Grants.gov be accessed using a PC and Internet Explorer for maximum compatibility. If an applicant does not have Internet access, one hard copy must be mailed to ATTN: ELG Competition Manager, DOC/NOAA, Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230; Telephone: 202-482-3384.

Full applications must be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If an applicant does not have Internet access, one hard copy should be sent to ATTN: ELG Competition Manager, DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230; Telephone: 202-482-3384. If submitting a hard copy, applicants are also requested to provide a CD-ROM of the full application, including scanned signed forms or forms with electronic signatures. Facsimile or e-mail transmissions of full applications will not be accepted.

Please note: Hard copies of pre-applications or full applications 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, FedEx, UPS, etc.). Facsimile or e-mail transmissions of pre-proposals will not be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

a. Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The Office of Education will decide to authorize or not authorize full application submission based on the following factors:

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (50%): 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 describe how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities. Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well aligned the project is with NOAA's Strategic Plan and education goals, strategies, and standards as defined in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf);

- The likelihood that the project will increase knowledge of NOAA-related sciences in the context of Earth System Science;

- How well the project will promote changes in K-12 education to expand the amount of Earth System Science taught in the classroom and improve student learning and application of that subject;

- The scale at which the project is likely to have an impact;

- Whether the project will be aligned with appropriate national, state, or local learning standards;

- For projects focusing on the ocean and/or climate as a part of the Earth system, whether the project will infuse Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts (http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf) and/or Climate Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts (<http://www.climate.noaa.gov/education/>) into the K-12 curriculum; and

- The extent to which NOAA entities will be involved in the project. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, 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.

(2) Technical/scientific merit (25%): 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.

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

- Qualifications of PI to lead the project; and
- The presence of collaboration with other programs, NOAA, entities, minority-serving institutions (MSIs), or other educational or research institutions/organizations.

(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:

- Reasonableness of the project costs given the availability of program funds; and
- The adequacy of the proposed resources to accomplish the proposed work within the indicated time-frame.

(5) Outreach and Education (0%): 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. This announcement does not use this criterion.

b. Full Application Evaluation Criteria

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (35%): 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 will promote changes in K-12 education to expand the amount of Earth System Science taught in the classroom and improve student learning of that subject;
- How well aligned the project is with NOAA's Strategic Plan and education goals, strategies, and standards as defined in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf);
- The likelihood that the project will increase knowledge the NOAA-related

sciences in the context of Earth System Science;

- Whether the project directly or indirectly achieves significant scale, i.e., project directly or indirectly impacts large numbers of target audience or impacts organizations that individually or collectively reach large numbers of the target audience;

- The extent to which the project is aligned with appropriate national, state, or local learning standards;

- For projects focusing on the ocean as a part of the Earth system, the extent to which the project will infuse Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts

(http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf) and/or Climate Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts

(<http://www.climate.noaa.gov/education/>) into the K-12 curriculum into the K-12 curriculum;

- The extent to which the project is connected to and/or aligned with other environmental literacy projects or programs funded by NOAA or conducted by NOAA partners; and

- The extent to which NOAA entities are partners of the project and whether or not these partnerships are articulated in letters of support. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, 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.

(2) Technical/scientific merit (40%): 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, 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;

- Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes;

- 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; and

- Whether the project's approach is transformative, i.e., likely to expand the amount of Earth System Science taught in K-12 classrooms and improve student learning and application of that subject.

(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 project's partners;
- The applicant's previous experience in managing or designing educational programs;
- 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 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 (10%): 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; and
- The adequacy of detail in the budget narrative in allowing an informed determination of how well justified all costs associated with the project are.

(5) Outreach and Education (0%): 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. This announcement does not use this criterion.

B. Review and Selection Process

Pre-proposal

Pre-proposals meeting the requirements listed in section IV.B and IV.C will be evaluated by Federal and/or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in a separate area so that the reviewers as a whole cover the spectrum of pre-proposals received. The reviewers will score each pre-proposal using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual reviewers' ratings shall be averaged for each application to establish rank order for the Office of Education (OED) Program Officer. The review panel will provide no consensus advice. The Program Officer will neither vote nor score pre-proposals as part of the review panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of any pre-proposal. Decisions on whether to authorize or not authorize a full application will be based on the rank order of the pre-proposals, unless choosing out of rank order is justified by the selection factors below (section V.D). The Office of Education anticipates asking up to 30 applicants to submit full

applications. Full applications from applicants who were not asked to submit them will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

Full Application

Upon receipt of a full application by NOAA, an initial administrative review will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All applications that meet the minimum eligibility requirements will be evaluated and scored by a panel of independent reviewers. 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 proposal using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual reviewers' ratings will 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 panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of any application. The Program Officer will make his/her recommendations for funding based on rank order and the selection factors listed below to the Selecting Official 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 may be retained for up to 1 year and then destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 15, 2008, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than November 1, 2008. For any questions concerning this funding opportunity, please visit our FAQ website www.oesd.noaa.gov/elg_faqs.html before contacting the Office of Education.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive electronic notification that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification will be sent by e-mail from Grants Online to the institution's Authorizing Official. The official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin.

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NOAA Office of Education staff. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of

Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

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

Progress reports are due every six months from the start date of the project. Progress reports are due electronically through Grants Online for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final 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 and correspond with the goals, objectives and milestones identified in the project narrative.

Federal Cash Transaction reports, Form SF-272, should be submitted electronically through Grants Online. These reports are due semiannually on October 30th and April 30th for the preceding 6-month period (April 1st - September 30th and October 1st to March 30th) or portion there of if the project start- or end-date falls in the middle of one of these intervals. Financial reports are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month period.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the OEd website for further information at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html or contact Sarah Schoedinger at 704.370.3528 or Sarah.Schoedinger@noaa.gov or Stacey Rudolph at 202.482.3739 or Stacey.Rudolph@noaa.gov.

For those applicants without Internet access, hard copies of referenced documents may be requested from NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Stacey Rudolph at 202.482.3739 or sending a letter to Stacey Rudolph, DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230.

VIII. Other Information

none