

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** Office of Education (OED), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Environmental Literacy Grants for Free-choice Learning
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** SEC-OED-2007-2000859
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 11.469
- **Program Authorities:** 15 U.S.C. 1540
- **Dates:** Preliminary proposals (pre-proposals) are required for submission of a full application and must be received by 5:00 p.m., EST, November 29, 2006. The deadline for full applications is 5:00 p.m., EST, March 21, 2007. Applicants who submit a pre-proposal will receive notification authorizing submission of a full application on or about February 2, 2007.
- **Application Submission:** Pre-proposals are required for all applications. Pre-proposals and full applications must be submitted either through Grants.gov or as a paper application to: ATTN: ELG Competition Manager, NOAA Office of Education, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Ave, N.W. HCHB Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230. **Please note:** Hard copies submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g. Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).
- **Overview Content:** NOAA's Office of Education (OED) is issuing a request for applications for environmental literacy projects in support of free-choice learning¹. Funded projects will be between one and five years in duration and will create new, or capitalize on existing, networks of institutions, agencies and /or organizations to provide common messages about key concepts in Earth System Science.

During FY 2007, Environmental Literacy Grants will address 3 priorities through separate Federal Funding Opportunity announcements. These priorities all have the goal of creating a more environmentally literate citizenry and are:

(1) free-choice learning projects and programs that deliver common messages about key concepts in Earth System Science; (2) formal education projects that promote long-lasting change in K-12 education to improve student understanding of Earth System Science; and (3) projects that use data visualization for educational purposes (including educational programming related to and installation of Science on a Sphere, Magic Planet[®] or other 3-D display tools). The short titles of these

¹ "Free-choice learning" is the most common type of learning that people engage in. It takes place outside of schools and the workplace, through museums, the internet, media, and other venues. It is self-directed, voluntary, and guided by an individual's needs and interests (Institute for Learning Innovation, <http://www.ilinet.org/freechoicelearning.html>).

Environmental Literacy Grant priorities and their corresponding Federal Funding Opportunity Announcements will be:

1. Environmental Literacy Grants for Free-choice Learning (ELG Free-choice Learning)
2. Environmental Literacy Grants for Formal K-12 Education (ELG Formal Ed)
3. Environmental Literacy Grants for Data Visualizations for Education (ELG Data Vis)

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA's Office of Education (OED) is requesting applications for environmental literacy projects in support of free-choice learning². Funded projects will be between one and five years in duration and will create new, or capitalize on existing, networks of institutions, agencies and /or organizations to provide common messages about key concepts in Earth System Science, for example the Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts

(http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf).

The proposed mechanisms for delivery of these messages may include public literacy campaigns, kiosks or traveling exhibits, and/or the revision of existing programs that would be made available at multiple venues. The proposed projects should support NOAA's vision which is: an informed society that uses a comprehensive understanding of the role of the ocean, coasts, and atmosphere in the global ecosystem to make the best social and economic decisions. Successful projects should reach significant segments of the U.S. population at a state, multi-state or national level. The environmental literacy messages should clearly convey how the Earth system influences a project's target audience, how the target audience is influencing the Earth system and how an environmentally literate public can make informed decisions. The goal of these projects should be to provide adequate information to move the audience's knowledge beyond basic awareness while reaching audiences sufficient in size with a message that promotes such a change. **Note:** applications for exhibits involving construction of part or all of a building are not eligible for funding under this announcement. Formal education projects and projects that focus on development of new data visualizations and platforms will not be considered for funding through this announcement. Please visit www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html for information on these additional funding opportunities.

² "Free-choice learning" is the most common type of learning that people engage in. It takes place outside of schools and the workplace, through museums, the internet, media, and other venues. It is self-directed, voluntary, and guided by an individual's needs and interests (Institute for Learning Innovation, <http://www.ilinet.org/freechoicelearning.html>).

All projects shall employ the relevant strategies articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf). All projects should be implemented at a state, multi-state or national 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 June 30, 2007, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than September 15, 2007.

B. Program Priorities

Please refer to I.A., Program Objective. There are no other program priorities. This FFO meets NOAA's Mission Goal to protect restore and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystems-based management.

C. Program Authorities

Authority for the Environmental Literacy Grants for Free-choice Learning program is provided by the following: 15 U.S.C. 1540.

II Award Information

A. Funding Availability for FY 2007

NOAA anticipates the availability of approximately \$1,500,000 of Federal financial assistance in FY 2007 for free-choice learning projects. Approximately 2 to 5 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 will not be considered for funding.

The amount of funding available through this announcement will be dependent upon the final FY07 appropriation. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate all or any part of the available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA Grants Officer, the applicant would do so solely at one's own risk of such costs not being included under the award. 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 proposals will be accepted for program review. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period. The earliest start date for awards will be approximately September 15, 2007.

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, other nonprofits, 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. For-profit organizations, 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.

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 individual may apply 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 Requirements

There are no cost-sharing requirements.

IV Application and Submission Information

A. To Request an Application Package

Pre-proposal and full application packages are available through <http://www.grants.gov>. For those applicants without Internet access, pre-proposal and full application packages may be requested from NOAA's Office of Education by contacting Alyssa Gundersen at 202.482.3739 or sending a letter to Alyssa Gundersen, 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, involving 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 package from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

B. Content and Format of Application Submission

Applicants must submit pre-proposals for review to prevent the expenditure of effort on proposals that may not 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. Additional guidance, including frequently asked questions (FAQ), is available online at www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html.

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 three copies of the complete pre-proposal including one with wet signatures on the required forms.

CONTENT: Pre-proposals will be received by this office through Grants.gov or in hard copy via mail carrier (Note: expedited mail carriers, such as Fed Ex are strongly recommended for hard copy submissions.). Neither email nor fax submissions will be accepted. Each pre-proposal must contain the following 4 elements:

- (i) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance (9/2003 version). Hard copy submissions must have a wet signature on one of the three copies.
- (ii) 2-page project description. This description must summarize the proposed project, expected output or product, project goals or impact, identify the project's partners, and explain how the project will address NOAA's education goals.
- (iii) 1-page budget. This should describe general costs associated with project implementation. For additional guidance on NOAA budget descriptions, visit <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/BUDGTGUD.PDF>
- (iv) 1-page resume of Principal Investigator.

Failure to submit pre-proposals by the deadline will result in applicant ineligibility to submit full applications 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 (i) below; element (j) 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) OMB 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 a wet signature.):
- (i) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance (9/2003 version)
 - (ii) SF-424-A, Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (7/1997 version)
 - (iii) SF-424-B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs (7/1997 version)
 - (iv) CD-511, Certifications Regarding Lobbying (1/2005 version)

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

- (v) SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable) (7/1997 version)

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

- (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 should 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, if applicable;
 - (v) Coordination with project partners (Note: letters of commitment articulating partners' role should be submitted as a separate section of the application);
 - (vi) A description of how project results will be disseminated beyond the audience immediately involved in the activities of the project;
 - (vii) A description of how the project activities will be evaluated for effectiveness in meeting stated project goals and objectives as well as the goals of the NOAA Education Plan. 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.
- (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. See http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html for the budget justification narrative template and 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.
- (h) 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.
- (i) Current and Pending Support. Describe all current and pending Federal and non-Federal funding for all principal investigators (PIs) and co-PIs. The capability of the applicants (PIs and co-PIs) and their collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects must be assessable. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time the applicant and collaborators have committed to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be committed to the project solicited under this notice. Provide the name and telephone contact for three references for 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.”**
- (j) 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 separate attachments 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.

The following table is provided as a checklist of required elements for full applications

| Application Elements | Formatting Restrictions | Suggested File Naming Convention | Page Limit |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Forms | | | |
| SF-424 | Provided Form | Automated within Grants.gov; wet signature required for paper submission | N/A |
| SF-424-A | Provided Form | Automated within Grants.gov | N/A |
| SF-424-B | Provided Form | Automated within Grants.gov | N/A |
| CD-511 | Provided Form | Automated within Grants.gov | N/A |
| SF-LLL* | Provided Form | Automated within Grants.gov | N/A |
| Narratives | | | |
| Title Page | See Template | Title_pg.doc/pdf | 1 pg |
| Abstract | yes, see IV. B. 2 | Abstract.doc/pdf | 1 pg |
| Project Description | yes, see IV. B. 2 | Proj_desc.doc/pdf | 15 pgs |
| References Cited | yes, see IV. B. 2 | Refs.doc/pdf | none |
| Budget Justification Narrative | See Template | Budg_narr.xls/doc/pdf | none |
| Detailed Budget Table | See Template | Budg_just.xls/doc/pdf | none |
| Brief Resumes | yes, see IV. B. 2 | Res_[lastname].doc/pdf | 3 pages per individual |
| Current & Pending Support | none | CP_[lastname].doc/pdf/xls | none |
| Letters of Commitment/ Other Supplemental Materials* | none | Ltr_1.doc/pdf | None – please submit all letters in 1 document. |

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

C. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-Proposals

Pre-proposals are required for all applications and must be received by 5:00 p.m., EST, November 29, 2006. 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 February 2, 2007.

Full Applications

The deadline for full applications is 5:00 p.m., EST March 21, 2007. 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. (Note that late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EST March 21, 2007 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service for delivery to the address listed below by the specified closing date and time, and if the proposals are received in Office of Education by 5 p.m., EST, 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 16a on the SF-424).

E. Funding Restrictions

There are no special restrictions.

F. Addresses for Application Submission

Pre-proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If an applicant does not have Internet access, three copies must be mailed to ATTN: ELG Competition Manager, DOC/NOAA, Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230. **Please note:** Hard copies submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g, Airborne Express, DHL, Fed Ex, UPS).

Full applications should 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. 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.

V Application Review Information

Please note: there are differences in the evaluation criteria for the pre-proposals and full applications with regard to their details and relative weights.

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 pre-proposal should describe how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities. Reviewers will evaluate:
 - If the project creates new, or capitalizes on existing, networks of institutions, agencies and /or organizations to provide common messages about key concepts in Earth System Science;
 - The scale at which the proposed project is likely to be implemented;
 - If the project is aligned with NOAA education goals, strategies, and standards as defined in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oeds.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf);
 - For projects focusing on the ocean 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) into common messages about the Earth 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 describe how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities.

Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well the project creates new, or capitalizes on existing, networks of institutions, agencies and /or organizations to provide common messages about key concepts in Earth System Science;
- How well the project is aligned with NOAA education goals, strategies, and standards as defined in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oeds.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf);
- The likelihood that the project will increase knowledge of NOAA and the NOAA-related sciences in the context of Earth System Science; and
- 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) into free-choice learning.

- (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;
- The innovativeness of the project approach;
- 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 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 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 to allow an informed determination of how well all costs associated with the project are justified.

(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.

C. Review and Selection Process

Pre-proposal

Pre-proposals meeting the requirements listed in section IV.B and IV.C will be evaluated by government and/or non-government representatives, each having relevant expertise. 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. 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 and that are ascertained to be complete will be evaluated and scored by independent reviewers. The reviews will be conducted by a panel of individuals, who may be government or non-government representatives, each having relevant expertise. 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 proposal.

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.

D. 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 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 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.

VI Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

Successful applicants will receive notification (either hard copy or electronically) that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be by e-mail from Grants Online to the Authorizing Official.

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, 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 thereof if the project start- or end-date falls in the middle of one of these intervals. Financial reports are due via fax to the NOAA Grants Management Division for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month period.

D. 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 Alyssa Gundersen at 202.482.3739 or Alyssa.Gundersen@noaa.gov.

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