

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Joint Hydrographic Center

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCS-2015-2004393

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.400, Geodetic Surveys and Services (Applications of the National Geodetic Ref System)

Dates: Letters of Intent must be received by the Office of Coast Survey no later than 4:00 p.m. ET on March 25, 2015. Full proposals must be received by the Office of Coast Survey no later than 4:00 p.m. ET on May 11, 2015.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to solicit proposals for a single cooperative agreement between NOAA and an institution of higher learning to operate and maintain a Joint Hydrographic Center as authorized in the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act and the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should advance the purposes of the Acts including research and development of hydrographic technologies necessary to ensure safe and efficient navigation; research and development of innovative ocean and coastal mapping technologies, equipment, and data products; mapping of the United States Outer Continental Shelf and other regions; data processing for nontraditional data and uses; advancing the use of remote sensing technologies, for related issues, including mapping and assessment of essential fish habitat and of coral resources, ocean observations, and ocean exploration; and providing graduate education and training in ocean and coastal mapping sciences.

The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission goal of: "Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies" and the objective of "Safe, efficient and environmentally sound marine transportation."

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Through the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act, the Congress has authorized the creation, support, and maintenance of such joint centers as the Administrator of NOAA deems appropriate or necessary to carry out the purposes of the Act, and through the Coastal and Ocean Mapping Integration Act has authorized NOAA to operate up to 3 joint ocean and coastal mapping centers, including a joint hydrographic center, co-located with an institution of higher education. NOAA desires to competitively award funds to continue the operation of a Joint Hydrographic Center, originally created in 1999 through Congressional direction. The purpose of this notice is to solicit proposals for a cooperative agreement between NOAA and an institution of higher education to operate a Joint Hydrographic Center as authorized in the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act and the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act.

Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should advance the purposes of the Acts including development of hydrographic technologies necessary to ensure safe and efficient navigation; research and development of innovative ocean and coastal mapping technologies, equipment, and data products; mapping of the United States Outer Continental Shelf and other regions; data processing for nontraditional ocean mapping data and uses; advancing the use of remote sensing technologies, for related issues, including mapping and assessment of essential fish habitat and of coral resources, ocean observations, and ocean exploration; and providing graduate education and training in ocean and coastal mapping sciences.

The program objectives for this opportunity primarily support NOAA's mission goal of: "Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies" and the objective of "Safe, efficient and environmentally sound marine transportation."

B. Program Priorities

This funding opportunity is designed to provide for the advancement of technology for hydrographic surveying, nautical charting, and integrated ocean and coastal mapping and to provide a program of advanced education and technological training in the hydrographic and ocean mapping sciences and engineering.

Proposals submitted should address the following programmatic priorities:

1. Innovate Hydrography:

Improvement in the effectiveness, efficiency, and data quality of acoustic and LIDAR bathymetry systems, their associated vertical and horizontal positioning and orientation systems, and other sensor technology for hydrographic surveying and ocean and coastal mapping, including autonomous data acquisition systems and technology for unmanned vehicles, vessels of opportunity, and trusted partner organizations,

Improvement in technology and methods for more efficient data processing, quality control, and quality assurance, including the determination and application of measurement uncertainty, of hydrographic and ocean and coastal mapping sensor and ancillary sensor data and data supporting the identification and mapping of fixed and transient features of the seafloor and in the water column,

Adaption and improvement of hydrographic survey and ocean mapping technologies for improved coastal resilience and the location, characterization, and management of critical marine habitat and coastal and continental shelf marine resources,

Development of improved tools and processes for assessment and efficient application to nautical charts and other hydrographic and ocean and coastal mapping products of data from both authoritative and non-traditional sources.

2. Transform Charting and Change Navigation:

Development of improved methods for managing hydrographic data and transforming hydrographic data and data in enterprise GIS databases to electronic navigational charts and other operational navigation products.

New approaches for the application of GIS and spatial data technology to hydrographic, ocean and coastal mapping, and nautical charting processes and products.

Development of innovative approaches and concepts for electronic navigation charts and for other tools and techniques supporting marine navigation situational awareness, such as prototypes that are real-time and predictive, are comprehensive of all navigation information (e.g., charts, bathymetry, models, currents, wind, vessel traffic, etc.), and support the decision process (e.g., under-keel clearance management).

Improvement in the visualization, presentation, and display of hydrographic and ocean and coastal mapping data, including 4-dimensional high resolution visualization, real-time display of mapping data, and mapping and charting products for marine navigation as well as coastal and ocean resource management and coastal resilience.

3. Explore and Map the Continental Shelf

Advancements in planning, acquisition, understanding, and interpretation of continental shelf, slope, and rise seafloor mapping data, particularly for the purpose of delimiting the U.S. Extended Continental Shelf.

Development of new technologies and approaches for integrated ocean and coastal mapping, including technology for creating new products for non-traditional applications and uses of ocean and coastal mapping.

Improvements in technology for integration of ocean mapping with other deep ocean and littoral zone technologies such as remotely operated vehicles and tele-presence-enhanced exploration missions at sea.

4. Develop and Advance Hydrographic and Nautical Charting Expertise:

Development, maintenance, and delivery of advanced curricula and short courses in hydrographic and ocean mapping science and engineering at the graduate education level – leveraging to the maximum extent the proposed research program, and interacting with national and international professional bodies--to bring the latest innovations and standards into the graduate educational experience for both full-time education and continuing professional development,

Development, evaluation, and dissemination of improved models and visualizations for describing and delineating the propagation and levels of sound from acoustic devices including echo sounders, and for modeling the exposure of marine animals to propagated echo sounder energy.

Effective delivery of research and development results through scientific and technical journals and forums and transition of research and development results to an operational status through direct and indirect mechanisms including partnerships with public and private entities.

Public education and outreach to convey the aims and enhance the application of hydrography, nautical charting, and ocean and coastal mapping to safe and efficient marine navigation and coastal resilience.

The single selected proposal, written as a cooperative agreement, will:

Provide for co-direction of the Center by a university employee and a NOAA employee, and indicate the availability of suitable space for the co-location of up to 10 NOAA employees, including the NOAA Co-Director.

Demonstrate the availability of suitable support facilities and infrastructure, including:

Office and research space and facilities

Educational infrastructure and space

Information technology (IT) infrastructure

Ocean mapping technology laboratory facilities and infrastructure

Suitably outfitted and staffed vessels for hydrographic and ocean mapping research, development, and education

Pier and waterfront facilities for berthing and supporting survey vessels

Support the objectives and priorities outlined in this announcement in order to improve the technology and practice of hydrographic surveying and coastal and ocean mapping in the United States.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under 33 U.S.C. 883a and 883d, 33 U.S.C. 3504c.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This will be a 5-year, multiyear award. The intent is to make a single 5-year award. Total anticipated funding for this award is approximately \$31,000,000 with approximately \$6,200,000 to be released in FY 2015 and each subsequent year of the 5 years. This award and the subsequent annual releases of funds are subject to the availability of FY 2015 appropriations and the appropriations of each subsequent FY. The initial award and subsequent annual release of funds will be adjusted based on available funding.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA awards in order to receive funds.

B. Project/Award Period

This is a multi-year funding opportunity. Proposals should request funding for five years. This multi-year award may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but, once the cooperative agreement is awarded, the recipient will not compete for funding in the subsequent four years.

When the successful multi-year proposal is approved, funding initially will be provided for only the first year of the program. Funding in years two, three, four, and five is contingent upon availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications should be written as cooperative agreements and the proposal should clearly identify this funding instrument in the proposal abstract and cover sheet. Applicants should clearly articulate the federal roles and responsibilities in the proposal and, subsequently, discuss prospective roles in the project after notification that the proposal is successful. Examples of federal involvement include federal co-direction, federal research collaboration, co-location of federal employees, federal participation in educational activities, and joint use of federal vessels and equipment.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible funding applicants are institutions of higher education in the United States. Federal agencies are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement but may serve as collaborative project partners and may contribute services in kind.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no requirement for cost sharing

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Applicants requesting indirect costs are required to submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package.

If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency

they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer

NOAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway

9th Floor

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

lamar.revis@noaa.gov

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for proposals are available through [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages can be requested from Andrew Armstrong at the NOAA Joint Hydrographic Center, 24 Colovos Road, Durham, NH 03824, or contact him at 603-862-4559 or via e-mail at andy.armstrong@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants must follow the LOI and full proposal application requirements stated in this announcement or LOIs and full proposal applications will not be considered.

1. Letters of Intent: The Letter of Intent (LOI) process is intended to provide potential

funding applicants with information regarding the relevance of their project idea to the program objectives in advance of preparing a full proposal. The LOI should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to program objectives. An applicant may submit a full proposal without submitting an LOI.

(a) The LOI must be no more than three pages, in length, not counting the cover page, using an 11- or 12-point font.

(b) The LOI must include the following information on a cover page: Identification of the NOAA Joint Hydrographic Center as the target of the LOI, proposal title, names and institutions of all principal investigators (PI), and specification of the Lead PI and contact information for that person.

(c) The LOI must contain a brief description of the intended effort and the benefits expected.

(d) The LOI must contain a brief description of the infrastructure and facilities available for support of the intended research and educational effort.

(e) The LOI must include a brief budget which summarizes how resources will be allocated [e.g., salaries, computing and communications, equipment, supplies, indirect charges, and travel].

All PIs will be notified whether a full proposal is encouraged or discouraged based on the review of their LOI. Even though a full proposal may be discouraged, a PI will not be precluded from submitting a full proposal.

2. Full Proposal: Full proposal applications must total no more than 60 pages (single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font and exclusive of appendices). The 60-page limit does not include the proposal title page, a table of contents if one is included, the project summary referenced below under item (2), and any appendices. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., detailed budget information, NEPA information, support letters, resumes, references, letters of collaboration, lists of data sources, sample curricula, equipment lists, and maps). Applicants should paginate their proposal and any appendices. Appendices may be paginated as stand-alone documents (individually) or collectively.

In addition to the required forms, all funding application packages must contain the following components:

(a) Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include proposal title, recipient institution, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, start and end dates of proposed project, funding type (cooperative agreement), funding

request by year, and identification of the NOAA Joint Hydrographic Center as its aim.

(b) Project Summary. Provide a one to three-page summary of the proposed project. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:

1. Project Name/Title
2. Primary Contact (name, address, phone, fax, e-mail)
3. Proposed funding over each year of the project
4. Recipient Institution
5. Principal Investigator and if applicable, Co-Principal Investigator, and other lead investigators (names and affiliated institutions or organizations)
6. Brief Project Summary including objectives and intended benefits
7. Partners (if any)

(c) Project Description. All project descriptions (proposals) must include the following sections:

1. Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals to be addressed and objectives to be achieved. Where practicable, goals and objectives should be specific for each year of the work plan presented. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.

2. Background. Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and/or non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the relevance of the proposed effort. Summarize the problem(s) to be addressed and the status of ongoing efforts to address the identified needs. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to previous efforts and to NOAA hydrographic and ocean mapping missions.

3. Personnel. List the program personnel and briefly relate their background to their role in the proposed effort.

4. Equipment and Facilities. Describe the equipment and facilities available for carrying out the proposed work.

5. Proposed Research and Development Effort. Formulation of the proposed effort into subject area themes is encouraged. For each theme or work area, describe the research and development efforts to be carried out, and the approach to the effort. List the key

investigators, partners and staff and describe their roles, Summarize work leading up to the proposed effort. Identify potential obstacles to successful completion, and describe how those obstacles would be addressed. Describe the benefits of proposed effort in terms of societal goals and identify the beneficiaries of the proposed efforts. Explain how the benefits will reach the intended beneficiaries.

6. Data Management and Data Sharing. Clearly address data management and data sharing requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archive that is compliant with federal regulations. Data sharing requirements are addressed in Section VI. B. of this Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement.

7. Education. Outline the goals and objectives of the educational component. Describe the proposed educational effort, summarizing the proposed curricula, listing the key individuals in the development and delivery of the educational program, and the role of the educational offering in the context of the Joint Hydrographic Center.

8. Benefits. Identify the users of the information derived from the work, and the benefits that will be achieved for those users, as well as society as a whole. Document how user needs are guiding the proposed work. Describe how the information from the project will be delivered to those users, and any special considerations or requirements for ensuring or improving the delivery of information.

9. Project Budget. Provide a budget description that follows the categories and formats in the NOAA grants package (Standard Form 424-A) and a brief narrative justification of the budget. Detailed budget information, such as a repeat of the information in Form SF-424A along with more details should be included in an appendix. In this appendix, the budget narrative also shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work.

(d) Appendices?

1. Mandatory Detailed Budget Information, including budgets of subawards and contracts. Information should include the name of the entity receiving funds, the location of the entity receiving the funds (e.g., city, state, and Congressional district), the location of the entity receiving funds (city, state, and Congressional district), and the location of the primary place of performance under the contract/subaward.

Applicants must list, and describe the intended use of, equipment costing \$5,000 or greater that will be purchased under the award. Specific information is required for year 1. When detailed information cannot reasonably be provided, more general information is acceptable for subsequent years. Applicants must provide a lease versus purchase analysis for any equipment \$5,000 or greater. The applicant, to the extent possible, should state who will be requested to retain ownership of any equipment purchased through grant funds after

the project ends. Decisions about equipment disposition are at the sole discretion of NOAA.

The budget narrative must also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants must state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Foreign travel must receive prior approval, and therefore, particularly for year 1, wherever practicable should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in a NOAA Grants Management Division workshop for recipients as well as for meeting with NOAA staff and/or key project personnel, for relevant outreach activity, and for presenting research results and educational developments at national and international technical fora.

2. Resumes. Provide curriculum vitae (CV) for the Principal Investigator and any Co-Principal Investigator, and abbreviated CVs for other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that CVs address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. For other than the Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator, publication, presentation, and cruise listings should be limited to those in the last five years with up to five other relevant publications.

3. Letters of Collaboration. All supporting letters from partner organizations that are instrumental to the project shall be included in the application package. Letters must clearly indicate the level of commitment and/or collaboration. Letters of collaboration do not need original signatures.

4. 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.

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).

Applicants are required to complete part of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (OMB Approval No.: 0648-0538, Expires: 11/30/2015) found on the NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>.

Answer all the questions in sections A, B, C, D, E, and F (except F14.) for this

Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Applicants should answer the NEPA questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible. If the applicant does not answer all of the questions indicated in the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity the application will be considered incomplete and not reviewed.

Some of the questions may overlap with material provided in other parts of the application. This overlap occurs because the answers to the questionnaire are provided to NOAA staff members who do not review the other parts of the application. If appropriate, the applicant may copy the information from other parts of the application and paste it into the answers to the questionnaire. Many questions have a "yes" or "no" response. If the response is "no" the applicant does not need to elaborate on their answer. If the response is "yes" the question will have a second part asking the applicant to provide more information.

A Paperwork Reduction Act Statement is found at the end of the NEPA questionnaire.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application. 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.

Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> including 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.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html.

C. Submission Dates and Times

LOIs. The deadline for receipt of LOIs is no later than 4:00 p.m. ET on March 25, 2015. For LOIs submitted by e-mail, the date and time indication of the receiving server will be the basis of determining timeliness. Note that receipt may be delayed if e-mail servers are not functioning efficiently. For hard copy submission of LOIs, they will be date and time stamped when they are received. LOIs will not be considered and will not be reviewed if received by the Office of Coast Survey after the deadline.

Full Proposals. Full proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. ET on May 11, 2015. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication by Grants.gov will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy applications will be date- and time-stamped when they are received. Full proposals received after the submission deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

Funding for the first year will be dependent on availability of funds, and funding beyond the first year will be dependent upon satisfactory performance and the continued availability of funds.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Letters of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to <lorraine.robidoux@noaa.gov >. Insert "FY 2015 Joint Hydrographic Center LOI" as the subject line of the e-mail. If hard-copy LOIs are submitted, an original and 3 copies should be sent to the attention of Lorraine Robidoux at the Office of Coast Survey, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3 Station 6214, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282, tel. 301-713-2777 ext. 153.

Full proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration, shall be submitted through the apply function on Grants.gov. The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov. Potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and an electronic copy (on CD or DVD) of the proposals and related forms shall be mailed to the attention of Lorraine Robidoux at the Office of Coast Survey, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3 Station 6214, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282, tel. 301-713-2777 ext. 153. No

e-mail or fax copies of the full proposal will be accepted. Full proposal application packages, including any letters of support, should be submitted together in one package.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Evaluation Criteria for LOIs

a. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the program goals (35%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposed effort address the program objective(s)? Does the proposed effort focus on program priorities?

b. Technical and scientific merit (35 percent): This criterion assesses whether the research approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear research goals and objectives. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Does the proposed approach build upon the most relevant and current scientific, engineering, and/or technical advancements in the field of ocean mapping? Does the proposal effectively employ the substantial involvement of NOAA personnel and equipment?

c. Overall Qualifications of the Funding Applicant: (30 percent): This criterion assesses whether the applicant has suitable facilities and infrastructure to carry out the intended research and education effort. Are suitable office, laboratory, IT, communications, waterfront and vessel facilities and infrastructure available?

2. Evaluation Criteria for Full Applications:

a. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Questions related to this criterion include: Does the proposed research and education enhance the technology and practice of hydrography and coastal and ocean mapping in the United States? Does the proposed research and education focus on the stated program priorities? Does the proposed research work demonstrate potential for successful transition from research to operations? Does the proposed data sharing plan meet the requirements of Section VI. B.7. of this Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement?

b. Technical and scientific merit (25 percent): This criterion assesses whether the

approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Does the proposed approach build upon the most relevant and current scientific, engineering, and/or technical advancements in the field of ocean mapping? Are innovative approaches present in the proposal? Is there an effective mechanism for delivery of the research results into operational use? Is the education program assessed and validated by independent accreditation, recognition, or evaluation bodies?

c. Overall qualifications of the funding applicants (25 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal demonstrate institutional support for both the research and development and the educational aspects of the program? Are the investigators well qualified and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed? Are suitable office, laboratory, communications, waterfront and vessel facilities and infrastructure available? Is there provision for co-location of NOAA employees? Does the proposal demonstrate that a capable and mature IT infrastructure, including management, data storage, security, and physical plant is in place?

d. Project costs (15 percent). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal demonstrate that the budget is commensurate with project needs? Is the cost effectiveness of the project optimized through effective partnerships with collaborating institutions, agencies, or private sector partners?

e. Outreach and education (10 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal demonstrate a commitment to public outreach and education? Does the outreach program demonstrate local, regional, and national scope? Does the outreach program include activity designed and targeted toward the stated program outreach priority?

B. Review and Selection Process

LOI Review Process: All LOIs will be evaluated by federal program staff in accordance with the assigned weights of the above LOI evaluation to determine whether the proposed project is responsive to the goals as advertised in this notice. The Office of Coast Survey will respond to each LOI by e-mail informing the applicant (i.e., the lead PI) whether or not they are encouraged to submit a full proposal. We anticipate sending responses

within 1 week of the LOI deadline.

Full Proposal Review and Selection Process: An initial administrative screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals will be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by at least three expert merit reviewers through a panel merit review process. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. Appropriate mechanisms will be established to avoid conflicts of interest during the proposal review process. The Selection Official, after considering the reviews, ratings, and other selection factors, will make the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

C. Selection Factors

The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. 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 area
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/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.

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The start date on proposals should be January 1, 2016.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The application recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by e-mail that their application was recommended for funding. The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office is NOT the official award notice. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail once the recommended awards are made. Unsuccessful applications for the Joint Hydrographic Center cooperative agreement will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. System Award Management. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any applicant awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM). The link is below:

<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>

2. Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25. The link is below:

[http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.t
pl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl)

3. 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, 2014

(79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at:
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/>

-30297.pdf

4. Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

5. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). See the NEPA information in Section IV, B, of this announcement.

6. Unpaid or delinquent tax liability. In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

7. Data Sharing Requirement. Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

a. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

b. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

c. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

C. Reporting

1. Financial and progress reporting requirements shall be semi-annually. Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports on a semi-annual basis electronically through the NOAA Grants On-Line System. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by NOAA Grants Management Division.

2. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

3. Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. Applicants in their final progress report will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and on hydrographic and ocean mapping technology; and b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative and technical questions, contact Andrew Armstrong at NOAA Joint Hydrographic Center, 24 Colovos Road, Durham, NH 03824, or contact him at 603-862-4559 or via e-mail <andy.armstrong@noaa.gov>

VIII. Other Information

A. Official Receipt and Award Notice

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

Official notification of an award notice is provided by the Grants Management Division, not the program office. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, the applicant would do so solely at the applicant's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

B. Freedom of Information Act

In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

C. Grants.gov

1. Potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.)

2. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.483). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.

D. Omni-Circular

Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements (OMB Uniform Guidance) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>), which streamlines the

language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A 122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A 110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. The OMB Uniform Guidance has been adopted and supersedes DOC's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24 as of December 26, 2014. This means the OMB Uniform Guidance applies to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>.