

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAAs National Height Modernization Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOS-NGS-2009-2001475

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

Dates: Letters of Intent (LOIs) must be received by the National Ocean Service by 4:00 p.m. ET on August 1, 2008. Full proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. ET, September 2, 2008.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to solicit proposals for cooperative agreements and/or grants between NOAA and partnering entities in the United States, implementing NOAA's National Height Modernization Program (NHMP) Plan. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should contribute to the beneficial public outcomes associated with the five priority issues in this plan which consists of enhancing the vertical component of the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS); enabling users to access the vertical component of the NSRS; outreach and education regarding geospatial issues and activities as they relate to NHMP; capacity building and technology transfer as they relate to NHMP; coordination, cooperation, and collaboration with other entities to accomplish common goals as they relate to NHMP.

This competition is focused on the geography of the United States and its territories in response to NOAA's NHMP Regional Implementation Plan and subsequent congressional appropriations. The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission support goal of: Commerce and Transportation, Enable safe, secure, and seamless movement of goods and people in the United States transportation system. Priorities addressing this mission goal also frequently are found to support NOAA's other mission goals: Improve protection, restoration, and management of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management; increase understanding of climate variability and change; and improve accuracy and timeliness of weather and water information.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this notice is to solicit proposals for cooperative agreements and/or grants between NOAA and eligible partnering entities from United States and its territories to implement actions identified in NOAA's NHMP Regional Implementation Plan. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must contribute to the beneficial public outcomes associated with the five priority issues in this Plan enhancing the vertical component of the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS); enabling users to access the vertical component of the NSRS; outreach and education regarding geospatial issues and activities as they relate to NHMP; capacity building and technology transfer to support NHMP techniques; coordination, cooperation, and collaboration with other entities to accomplish common goals associated with NHMP.

This competition is focused on the addressing deficiencies in the vertical component of the NSRS in response to the development of NOAA's NHMP Regional Implementation Plan and subsequent congressional appropriations. The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission support goal of: Commerce and Transportation, Enable safe, secure, and seamless movement of goods and people in the United States transportation system. Priorities addressing this mission goal also support NOAA's other mission goals: Ecosystems: improve protection, restoration, and management of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management; Climate: increase understanding of climate variability and change; and Weather and Water: improve accuracy and timeliness of weather and water information.

The projects associated with this announcement will directly support the following objectives under NOAA's Commerce and Transportation Goal:

- Enhance navigational safety and efficiency by improving information products and services.
- Realize national economic, safety, and environmental benefits of improved, accurate positioning capabilities.
- Reduce weather related transportation crashes and delays.
- Reduce human risk, environmental, and economic consequently resulting from natural or human-induced emergencies.
- Increase total government procurements from NOAA-licensed commercial firms operating remote sensing systems.

Projects associated with this announcement should address concerns including, but not limited to, NOAA strategies to accomplish the Commerce and Transportation goal:

-Expand and enhance advanced technology monitoring and observing systems, such as weather and oceanographic observations, ice forecasts and nowcasts, hydrographic surveys, and precise positioning coordinates, to provide accurate, up-to-date information.

-Develop and apply new technologies, methods, and models to increase the capabilities, efficiencies, and accuracy of transportation-related products and services.

-Develop and implement sophisticated assessment and prediction techniques, products, and services to support decisions on aviation, marine, and surface navigation efficiencies; coastal resource management; and transportation system management, operations, and planning.

-Build public understanding of the science and technology involved and the role of the environment in commerce and transportation through outreach, education, and industry collaboration.

This funding opportunity is designed to make significant progress towards implementing the following actions to achieve the goals included in the NOAA's NHMP Regional Implementation Plan.

B. Program Priorities

The NHMP goal is to enable users to obtain accurate elevation data across the nation. In order to accomplish this, users need an infrastructure of geodetic control, and models, tools, and guidelines to access that control and manipulate and analyze geodetic data. Education, capacity building, and technology transfer will be critical NHMP as products and services are made available to the public. To ensure that the resulting products and services are consistent across the country, NHMP activities must be coordinated through partnerships with local users (state and local governments, universities, and the public sector) and other partners across the country. Activities to support these goals are as follows:

Enhance the vertical component of the NSRS

Expand Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) as needed to support NHMP locally (must conform to the NGS Guidelines for New and Existing Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS):

http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/PUBS_LIB/CORS_guidelines.pdf)

Evaluate and identify user requirements for vertical control to enable access to the NSRS

Perform field observations, such as Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), geodetic leveling, and gravity, as required to support NHMP.

Enable users to access components of the NSRS

Manage a database of geospatial information

Develop and provide access to geospatial products such as: Geographic Information Systems (GIS), flood maps, aerial photography, and Light Detection and

Ranging (LIDAR) measurements

- Develop software applications for access to and manipulation of geospatial data. These models and tools should address local requirements when appropriate

 - Develop web access to data and tools not held at the national level

- Pilot projects and studies to test methodologies to achieve heights at required levels of accuracy.

 - Provide liaison service between users and NOAA to support the NHMP.

Service can be through a Spatial Reference Center or existing entity and will include transferring knowledge to NOAA regarding user needs and requirements. This entity will also serve as a conduit from NOAA to the users to inform them of changes in procedures implemented in response to their concerns.

Outreach and education regarding geospatial issues and activities as they relate to NHMP

- Hold forums and meetings in states/regions to educate users and solicit input regarding NHMP plans and activities.

 - Participate in forums in other regions to promote NHMP

 - Prepare education and outreach materials describing NHMP goals and activities

 - Participate in local, regional, and national conferences to promote NHMP

Capacity building and technology transfer to support NHMP techniques

- Develop NOAA approved workshops to instruct contractors and other interested users in NHMP practices

- Participate in workshops held by current NHMP Partners and interested parties including NOAA

Coordination, cooperation, and collaboration with other entities to accomplish common goals Associated with NHMP

 - Participate in lessons learned meetings held by NOAA and other partners.

 - Hold regular meetings with users of NHMP.

 - Where SRCs exists, encourage full participation in the SRC

- Identify users in other states and encourage collaboration of NHMP discussions and activities

- Work within a region to develop a needs assessment and strategic plan for regional implementation

C. Program Authority

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

II.

Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately \$2,500,000 and is subject to the availability of FY 2009 appropriations. The anticipated federal funding per award (min-max) is approximately \$50,000 to \$1,200,000 per year. The anticipated number of awards ranges from 10 to 20, approximately, and will be adjusted based on available funding and quality of received proposals.

B. Project/Award Period

This is a multi-year funding opportunity. Proposed projects may request funding for one to five years. Multi-year awards may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but once awarded; those awards will not compete for funding in subsequent years. Anticipated start date, if found meritorious, generally will be 6 months after receipt by NOAA.

When a multi-year proposal is approved, funding initially will be provided for only the first year of the program. Funding in years two through 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 or grants and the proposal should clearly identify this funding instrument in the proposal abstract and cover sheet. If the project is intended to be a cooperative agreement, applicants should clearly articulate the federal roles and responsibilities in the proposal and, subsequently, discuss prospective roles in detail after awards have been made. Under this mechanism, the federal government has agreed to be substantially involved by acquiring, increasing access to, and enhancing capacity to use data and tools; convening partners to accomplish broad based work; providing meeting planning and facilitation; coordinating outreach and education activities.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible funding applicants are institutions of higher education, state, local and Indian tribal governments.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no requirement for cost sharing.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for the letter of intent (LOI) requirements and full proposals are available through Grants.gov APPLY. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages can be requested from Gilbert Mitchell at 1315 East-West Highway, N/NGS1, Room 9356, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910 contact him at 301-713-3228x114 or e-mail Glbert.Mitchell@NOAA.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

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

The 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. A LOI is required prior to submitting a full proposal.

The LOI should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to program objectives. The LOI should include the components listed below. If these components are not included, the funding applicant risks not being encouraged to submit a full proposal application. The LOI should include the following information on a cover page:

1. Identification of the NOAA National Ocean Service as the target of the LOI.
2. Project title.
3. Name and institution of the principal investigator (PI), and contact

information for that person.

The body of the LOI should be no more than 2 pages, single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font, and should include the following components:

1. Statement of the Purpose - state the intent, goal, and output of proposed work.
2. Summary of how funding will be allocated and the project to be completed, including the methodology, products, and approximate cost.
3. Description of intended benefits to the NHMP
4. Description of the partnerships to be employed in the development and completion of the proposed work.

Full proposal applications must total no more than 10 pages (single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font and exclusive of appendices). The 10-page limit does not include the proposal title page, a table of contents if one is included, and the project summary referenced below under item two (2) and any appendices. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., detailed budget information, support letters, resumes, references, lists of data sources, and maps).

Applicants should paginate their proposal and any appendices. Appendices may be paginated as stand alone documents (individually) or collectively.

All funding application packages must contain the following components:

- A. Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include proposal title, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, duration of proposed project, funding type (grant or cooperative agreement), funding request by year (as appropriate).
- B. Project Summary. Provide a one to two-page summary of the proposed project. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:
 - a. Project Name/Title
 - b. Primary Contact (name, address, phone, fax, e-mail)
 - c. Recipient Institution
 - d. Other Investigators (name, affiliated institution or agency)
 - e. Brief Project Summary including objectives and intended benefits
 - f. Partners
- C. Project Description.

All project descriptions (proposals) must include the following sections:

- a. Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. 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.
- b. Background. Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem to be addressed and the status of ongoing efforts to address the identified needs. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to

other regional efforts.

c. Audience. Identify specific users of the results of the project, describe how they will use the results, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the results.

d. Approach. Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles of partners and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. Describe how users are involved in the planning and design process. The work plan must clearly address data management requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archive that is compliant with federal regulations. If the project includes federal partners, the roles and responsibilities of the federal partners must be clearly identified.

e. Benefits. Identify, with a high degree of specificity, 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 valid user requirements 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.

f. Milestone Schedule. Display time lines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes.

g. Proposed 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 and shall identify the elements of the project that the cooperator would recommend for revision or elimination in the event that sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities. Applicants must itemize and describe the intended use of all equipment and in addition equipment costs greater than \$5,000 in value must have a lease versus purchase analysis if it is to be purchased under the award. The budget narrative must also provide the cost and description of anticipated travel. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. Foreign travel must receive prior approval and should be anticipated in the proposal to the extent possible.

D. Appendices

a. Mandatory Detailed Budget Information, including budgets of subawards.

b. Resumes. Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit resumes to a maximum of two pages for each key investigator.

c. 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 Web site: < <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> > including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://204.193.232.34/cgi-bin/doiit.cgi?204:112:57d630bf949b45219bc4c5ca1bea7235c4db0a8aa44dffad547f71f89863b5bd:169> 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).

NOAA may require follow-up information after the application process has been completed. 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 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 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.

Applicants are required to answer the questions indicated in 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 may be considered incomplete.

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 staffs 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.

Applicant NEPA questions are as follows:

Question C1. Is the proposed activity going to be conducted in partnership with NOAA or would the proposed activity require NOAA's direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, describe NOAA's involvement, activity, or oversight, including the name of the office or program that is involved.

Question C2. Would the proposed activity involve any other federal agency (ies) partnership, direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, provide the name(s) of the agency (ies) and describe its involvement, activity, or oversight.

Question D1. Provide a brief description of the location of the proposed activity.

Question E1. List any federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, or waivers that would be required to complete the proposed activity. Provide the date the permit, authorization, or waiver was obtained or will be obtained. Provide copies of the permit, authorization, or waiver as appropriate. Was a NEPA analysis prepared for the permit, authorization, or waiver? If yes, state the title of the NEPA analysis and provide copies of the NEPA analysis.

Question F1. Is there the potential for the proposed activity to cause changes that would be different from normal ambient conditions (e.g., temperature, light, turbidity, noise, other human activity levels, etc.)? If yes, describe the changes and the circumstances that would cause these changes.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Public reporting burden for this collection of NEPA information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to Ms. Shelby Mendez, NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration, SSMC 3, Room 15718, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The information collection does not request any proprietary or confidential information. No confidentiality is provided.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. The valid OMB Control Number is 0648-0538, which expires on June 30, 2009.

C. Submission Dates and Times

LOIs. The deadline for receipt of LOIs is 4:00 p.m. ET on August 1, 2008. 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. Applicants submitting multiple LOIs must use a unique project title for each LOI and may send all LOIs in one e-mail or in multiple e-mails. Hard copy submission of LOIs will be date and time stamped when they are received. LOIs will not be considered if received by the National Ocean Service after 4:00 p.m. ET on August 1, 2008. Applicants may not submit full proposals unless they submitted an LOI. The final decision to submit a full proposal will be made by the applicant.

Full Proposals. Full proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. ET, September 2, 2008. 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 delivered by mail will be date and time stamped when they are received. Applications received after the submission deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications under the National Ocean Service are subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPCO) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's web site <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

N.A.

F. Other Submission Requirements

A letter of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to Gilbert.Mitchell@noaa.gov. Insert `_FY 2009 National NHMP Program_` as the subject line of the e-mail containing the LOI. Applicants submitting multiple LOIs must use a unique project title for each LOI and may send all LOIs in one e-mail or in multiple e-mails. If hard copy LOIs are submitted, an original and two copies should be sent to the attention of Gilbert Mitchell at 1315 East-West Highway, N/NGS1, Room 9356, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910 contact him at 301-713-3228x114 or e-mail Glbert.Mitchell@NOAA.gov.

Full proposal application packages must be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY. If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the hard copy proposals and related forms should be mailed to the attention of Gilbert Mitchell at 1315 East-West Highway, N/NGS1, Room 9356, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910 contact him at 301-713-3228x114 No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted.

Please be advised that 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. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted.

A letter of intent (LOI) may be sent via e-mail to Gilbert.Mitchell@noaa.gov. Insert _FY 2009 National NHMP Program_ as the subject line of the e-mail containing the LOI. Applicants submitting multiple LOIs must use a unique project title for each LOI and may send all LOIs in one e-mail or in multiple e-mails. If hard copy LOIs are submitted, an original and two copies should be sent to the attention of Gilbert Mitchell at 1315 East-West Highway, N/NGS1, Room 9356, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910 contact him at 301-713-3228x114 or e-mail Gilbert.Mitchell@NOAA.gov.

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V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

A. Evaluation Criteria for LOIs

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (70 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. Proposals will be evaluated on how well the proposed project will achieve the goals of the NOAA NHMP Program.
2. Technical and scientific merit (30 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, 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 incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work?

B. Evaluation Criteria for Full Applications

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. Proposals will be evaluated on how well the proposed project will achieve the goals of the NOAA NHMP Program.

2. Technical and scientific merit (20 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? Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposed approach incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work?

3. Overall qualifications of the funding applicants (30 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the funding 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 regional and institutional support for the project? Are the investigators qualified and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed? Are investigators from other agencies and institutions within the region included on the project to capitalize on available expertise and promote a regional approach?

4. Project costs (10 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 strategic partnerships?

5. Outreach and education (15 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposal include a plan to solicit input from the target user community regarding desired project outcomes? Does the activity generated by the proposal result in a positive impact on the user community?

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 evaluation to determine whether the proposed project is responsive to the goals as advertised in this notice. The National Ocean Service 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. Proposals received without a LOI will automatically be rejected. The PI may submit a full proposal even if not encouraged to do so as long as an eligible LOI has been submitted. Responses will be sent from NOAA no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on August 11, 2008.

Full Proposal Process

An initial administrative screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals meeting those requirements will then be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by a panel of at least three independent peer reviewers. The merit reviewer's ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. Appropriate mechanisms will be established to avoid conflicts of interest during the proposal merit review process. The Selecting Official will award in the rank order unless proposals are justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors provided in the next paragraph. The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official 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 review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall award according to 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. By type of partners
 - b. By project types
 - c. By research areas

- d. By type of institutions
 - e. Geographically
3. Applicant_s prior award performance
 4. Program priorities and policy factors
 5. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
 6. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
 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.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The start date on proposals should be on October 1, 2008; or the first day of any proceeding month after October 1, 2008, but no later than January 1, 2009.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Applications 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 either by postal mail or electronically.

Unsuccessful applications for all National Ocean Service programs will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). A copy of the notice may be obtained at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html>.

2. **Limitation of Liability:** In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.
3. **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).** See the NEPA information in Section IV, B, of this announcement.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports electronically through the NOAA Grants On-Line System. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by NOAA Grants Management Division and stated in the NOAA Administrative Standard Award Conditions that will accompany the award acceptance package.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative questions, contact Gilbert Mitchell, NOAA NOS, SSMC3; 1315 East West highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or by phone at 301-713-3228 Extension 114, or by fax 301-713-4176, or via e-mail at Gilbert.Mitchell@noaa.gov.

For technical questions regarding this announcement, contact Renee Shields, NOAA NOS SSMC3; 1315 East West highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; or contact her by phone at 301-713-3231 Extension 115, or by fax 301-713-4176, or via e-mail at Renee.Shields@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

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 one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

The National Ocean Service will not release the names of applicants submitting LOIs or proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards

<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do;jsessionid=GbZDVT7JqmXqNlm84y2DBn5CpmGR2vJvQKfnX5CLd94YvywZQTZq!-1742093309> > or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is on-line at < <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/> >.

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 products in the user community; 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)._

Please be advised that 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.)

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 (11.400). 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. After electronic submission of the application, 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.

References:

NOAA's NHMP Regional Implementation Plan

Strategic Plan of the National Ocean Service 2005-2010 Retrieved April 14, 2008 from http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/pdfs/Strategic_Plans/NOS_strategic_plan_2005-2010.pdf.

United States Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration New Priorities for the 21st Century _ NOAA_s Strategic Plan Updated for FY 2006-FY 2011 April 2005