

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:** National Ocean Sciences Competition for High School Students
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** SEC-OED-2007-2000888
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 11.469
- **Program Authorities:** 15 U.S.C. 1540
- **Dates:** The deadline for applications is 5:00 p.m., EST 45 days from the date of publication in the Federal Register.
- **Application Submission:** Applications must be submitted either through Grants.gov or as a paper application to: ATTN: Competition Manager for Funding Opportunity SEC-OED-2007-2000888, 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 requesting applications in support of an academic competition for high school students focusing on ocean sciences and related fields. Projects should be 5 years in duration and shall address one or more of the education goals articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf) and involve partnerships. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made on or around February 28, 2007 and that the grant funded through this announcement will have a start date no earlier than April 1, 2007.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NOAA's Office of Education (OED), on behalf of its partner agencies in the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), is requesting applications in support of an academic competition for high school students focusing on ocean sciences and related fields. The goal of this program is to expose high school students in the United States and its territories to the excitement of ocean sciences and related fields as well as careers in those fields. Projects should be 5 years in duration, employ one or more of the strategies

articulated in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf), involve partnerships among academic institutions, free-choice learning venues, NGOs and Federal entities, and have an evaluation that both monitors the quality of the experience for the participants (be they students, teachers, or volunteers) but also the impact of the program on the participants. Although it is expected that the project's focal point will be a tiered academic competition with regional and national-level events, it should also provide additional learning experiences for student participants, their peers and their teachers, such as internships and field or research experiences. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made on or around February 28, 2007, and that the grant funded through this announcement will have a start date no earlier than April 1, 2007.

B. Program Priorities

Refer to I.A., Program Objective. There are no other program priorities for this announcement. 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 this funding opportunity is provided by the following: 15 U.S.C. 1540.

II Award Information

A. Funding Availability for FY 2007

NOAA announces the availability of approximately \$2,000,000 of Federal financial assistance in FY 2007 for an academic competition for high school students on ocean sciences and related fields. One award in the form of a grant will be made. NOAA will only consider projects that have a duration of 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 \$10,000,000 for 5 years. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for all years for the direct and indirect costs is \$1,000,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than \$1,000,000 total or more than \$10,000,000 total will not be considered for funding through this announcement.

The amount of funding available through this announcement will be dependent upon the final appropriations for FY 2007 through FY 2011 and commitment of funds from partnering agencies of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP).

B. Project/Award Period

Five-year applications will be accepted for review. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately April 1, 2007.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

A grant will be issued under this competition.

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.

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.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

There are no cost-sharing requirements.

C. Other

An institution may apply only once through this funding opportunity.

IV Application and Submission Information

A. To Request an Application Package

Application packages are available through <http://www.grants.gov>. For those applicants without Internet access, 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 an 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

This document requests applications for Federal assistance. The provisions for application preparation are mandatory. Applications received after the published deadline (refer to IV.C, Submission Dates and Times) or applications that deviate from the prescribed format (refer to IV.B.1, Required Elements of Applications) will not be reviewed.

1. Required Elements of 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 will result in proposal exclusion from review.**

CONTENT: Applications must include the elements (a) through (i) below; elements (j) and (k) are optional. **Failure to provide elements (a) through (i) 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
- (ii) SF-424-A, Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs
- (iii) SF-424-B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs
- (iv) CD-511, Certifications Regarding Lobbying

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

- (v) SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

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 (annual and comprehensive) must also be included on the title page. One-page maximum. Title page templates are available at http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_templates.html.
- (c) 1-page Project Abstract. Describe the essential elements of the proposed project. Include: 1) Title, 2) List of names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, 3) Funding request for each year of the project as well as total funding requested; and 4) Concise statement of the objectives of the project, description of the project activities, the expected outcome and the rationale for the work proposed. The abstract is used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words. Project summaries of applications that receive funding may be posted on program-related web sites. One-page maximum.
- (d) 20-page Project Description. The project description section must not exceed twenty pages and must follow the formatting requirements in IV.B.1, 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 Principle Investigator name in the header or footer.

The proposed 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 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 program objective (refer to I.A);
- (ii) A discussion of how the proposed project reflects or addresses components of the stated NOAA Education Plan and standards (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf);
- (iii) A discussion of how the proposed project reflects or addresses the Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts (http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf);
- (iv) Coordination with project partners (Note: letters of commitment articulating partners' role should be submitted as a separate section of the application);
- (v) 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 the 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.

- (vi) Because of the uncertainty of Federal funding, a description of how the project will be implemented at the following annual funding levels: \$1,000,000 per year, \$1,500,000 per year and \$2,000,000 per year. Enough information should be given so that reviewers can assess the impact various funding levels will have on the operation of the program.
- (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 20-page project description. If there are no references to cite, applicants should indicate that this is the case.
- (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 the 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(s), 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). 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. PIs and key personnel at academic institutions should also indicate the amount of their time that will be committed to teaching during the proposed project period.

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

The following table is provided as a checklist of required elements for 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	20 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

Applications

The deadline for applications is 5:00 p.m., EST 45 days from publication in the Federal Register. 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. A hard copy application will be accepted after the due date provided the applicant can document that it was provided to a delivery service sufficiently far in advance of the date and time due that the service was able to guarantee delivery 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 applications will be accepted. **Applications that are late or are received by fax or email will not be considered for review.**

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

There are no special restrictions.

F. Addresses for Application Submission

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:

Competition Manager for Funding Opportunity SEC-OED-2007-2000888, DOC/NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Ave., NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230. If submitting a hard copy, applicants are requested to provide a CD-ROM of the application, including scanned signed forms.

V Application Review Information

A. Application Evaluation Criteria

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA's Federal, regional, or local activities. The proposal should address how well the proposed project addresses NOAA's stated objectives and priorities.

Reviewers will evaluate:

- How well the proposed project meets the program objective described in I.A.
- The extent to which the project employs the strategies and meets the relevant standards defined in the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf);
- How the project will be implemented on a regional **and** national scale;
- How the project staff and their partners plan to recruit student teams from underserved and/or underrepresented student populations;
- The extent to which the project is aligned with appropriate national learning standards and the Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts (http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitConcepts_10.11.05.pdf).

(2) Technical/scientific merit (35 %): 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 project uses appropriate methods to achieve project outcomes and is likely to be implemented on the scale described for each of the funding scenarios proposed (i.e., \$1M, \$1.5 M and \$2 M);
- Whether the applicant has considered potential problems and their solutions in the implementation of the project;
- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time proposed;
- Whether there are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the success of the project in meeting the anticipated outcomes; and
- The extent to which the project leverages other resources or investments to achieve its objectives.

- (3) Overall Qualifications of Applicants (30%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will evaluate:
- The relevancy of 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 educational programs that involve extensive partnerships in order to accomplish program goals;
 - 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 extensiveness of the program partnerships; and
 - The extent to which all partners are contributing meaningfully to the project, including articulation of activities in letters of commitment.
- (4) Project Costs (10%): The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Reviewers will evaluate:
- The adequacy of the proposed resources to accomplish the proposed work within the indicated time-frame; and
 - The adequacy of detail in the budget narrative in allowing an informed determination of how well justified all costs associated with the project are.
- (5) Outreach and Education (0%): This criterion ascertains whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This competition does not use this criterion.

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of an 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 and presented to the Program Officer. 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.

C. Selection Factors

The panel review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors.

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

Selected applicants may be asked to modify objectives, project plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant.

In anticipation of additional funding, declined applications may be retained for up to 1 year and then destroyed.

VI Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

Successful applicants will receive notification electronically that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Official notification of funding, electronically signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications may be made electronically through NOAA's Grants Online system 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, and the duration 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, correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the project narrative and provide specific, project-related information.

Federal Cash Transaction reports, form SF-272, are due semi-annually on October 30th and April 30th for the preceding 6-month period (April 1st – September 30th and October 1st to March 30th) or portion there of if the project start- or end-date falls in the middle of one of these intervals. Financial reports are due via fax or email to the NOAA Grants Management Division for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month period.

D. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Sarah Schoedinger at 704.370.3528 or Sarah.Schoedinger@noaa.gov.

For those applicants without Internet access, hard copies of referenced documents may be requested from NOAA's Office of Education by contacting 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.