

**Request for Application (RFA)
Science Training in Marine Sciences (STMS)**

General Information:

Announcement Type:	Initial Announcement
Funding Instrument Type:	CA
Funding Opportunity Number:	EPA-ORD-06-26132
Posted Date:	05/09/2006
Original Due Date for Applications:	To be considered timely, initial proposals must be received by 4:00 p.m. Central Standard Time on June 29, 2006 from the U.S. Postal Service or other commercial delivery service.
Current Due Date for Applications:	To be considered timely, initial proposals must be received by 4:00 p.m. Central Standard Time on June 29, 2006 from the U.S. Postal Service or other commercial delivery service.
Archive Date:	Environment 1
Category of Funding Activity:	\$150,000
Anticipated Number of Awards:	\$150,000
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$50,000
Award Ceiling:	66.511 ORD Consolidated Research
Award Floor:	
CFDA Number:	None required
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement:	It is anticipated that the agreement that is
Geospatial Information	awarded will not involve or relate to geospatial information.

Eligible Applicants:

Programs under CFDA 66.511 are available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the United States, including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, and other public or private nonprofit institutions. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive awards. Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. Universities and educational institutions must be subject to OMB Circular A-21.

Federal Agency Name:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Gulf Ecology Division, Attn: Raymond Wilhour, USEPA - Gulf Ecology Division, 1 Sabine Island Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561.

Description:

The Gulf Ecology Division seeks to establish a three-year training cooperative agreement with a state college or university having educational and research programs related to marine science. One cooperative agreement will be awarded to a single college or university or to a consortium of colleges/universities responding to this solicitation. The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to stimulate interest among exceptional undergraduate college/university students, including minority students in graduate school and/or careers involving environmental research in marine sciences. The essence of this program is to provide research experience for undergraduate students at a federal marine research facility. Most, if not all, of the research conducted by the student trainees will be at the Gulf Ecology Division facility, Gulf Breeze, FL, under the direction of EPA scientists.

Application Materials:

Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically via e-mail or online using the Grants.gov website with an electronic signature- please only use one method. Applicants who lack the technical capability to apply either by e-mail or through Grants.gov, may mail their applications to Raymond G. Wilhour, Gulf Ecology Division, 1 Sabine Island Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561, by the closing date and time. To apply electronically, the electronic application package available through the <http://www.grants.gov/> web site must be used. If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, you need to allow approximately one week to complete the registration process. This registration, and electronic submission of your application, must be performed by an appropriate representative of your organization.

Agency Contact Person for Electronic Access Problem:

Larry L. Hodgson, phone: (740) 654-2346 email: Hodgson.Larry@epa.gov

Link to Full Announcement:

END OF COVER PAGE

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Title of Assistance Opportunity: “SCIENCE TRAINING IN MARINE SCIENCES”

Background:

The Gulf Ecology Division (GED) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA), Office of Research and Development (ORD), National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory (NHEERL) is located on a 17 acre island south of Gulf Breeze Florida (1 Sabine Island Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561). Please visit GED's Internet Home Page at <http://www.epa.gov/ged/> to learn more about the facility and the organization.

The Division conducts research to understand the effects of human activities on marine and estuarine systems in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Coast. The ultimate purpose of GED's research is to provide the scientific information, methods, and predictive tools needed by local, state, and federal regulatory and resource management agencies to improve and protect the near-coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Coast.

The Gulf Ecology Division's overall mission is to: (1) develop and apply monitoring and assessment approaches for assessing the condition of the Nation's coastal ecosystems and (2) provide the scientific basis for understanding and predicting the effects of human activities on bays, estuaries, coral reefs, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf of Mexico and southeastern Atlantic. Gulf Ecology Division scientists conduct research in a range of scientific disciplines, usually working in multi-disciplinary research teams. The research addresses the ecological effects of natural and anthropogenic stressors, and their interactions, on individual organisms, populations, communities, and ecosystems. Priority is given to those ecological systems at greatest risk and the stressors most likely to cause widespread ecological effects, with emphasis on the scientific uncertainties which most seriously impede conduct of ecological risk assessments. In addition to their work at the Division's facilities and field sites, Gulf Ecology Division scientists collaborate with leading scientists at research institutions throughout the world.

Research capabilities and interests of the Gulf Ecology Division are organized into three branches:

1. Ecosystem Assessment Branch develops and evaluates methods to assess ecosystem condition and monitor long-term change in ecological condition as well as the sustainability and resilience of coastal ecosystems with the goal of predicting likely responses of ecosystems to changes in environmental stressors resulting from the implementation of ecological programs and policies.

2. Biological Effects and Population Response Branch conducts research and develops methods to assess the effects of multiple and complex stressors, both natural and

anthropogenic, on coastal aquatic plants and animals, including aquatic-dependent species. Research integrates measures across molecular, biochemical and physiochemical levels to characterize biological effects and predict population level responses to environmental stressors with the goal of providing necessary tools for larger scale assessments of community and ecosystem condition.

3. Ecosystem Dynamics and Effects Branch evaluates ecological dynamics to determine the effects of environmental stressors on coastal aquatic ecosystem structure and function in support of ecological criteria development. Research characterizes processes affecting biochemical cycling of nutrients, defines consequences of nutrient enrichment to aquatic life and ecosystem sustainability, and develops stressor response relationships to protect coastal resources.

Recognizing the potential this facility and staff have for training students in marine environmental sciences and the paucity of under-represented groups in this area of science, the Gulf Ecology Division seeks to establish a three-year training cooperative agreement with a state college or university having educational programs related to marine science. One cooperative agreement will be awarded to a single university or to a consortium of colleges/universities responding to this solicitation. The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to stimulate interest among exceptional undergraduate college/university students, including minority students, in graduate school and/or careers involving environmental research in marine sciences. The great majority, if not all, of the research conducted by the student trainees will be at the Gulf Ecology Division facility, under the direction of EPA scientists who will serve as mentors/advisors to ensure the research conducted is of high quality.

Funding Priorities/Focus:

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to develop a Training Cooperative Agreement between EPA's Gulf Ecology Division and a State College or University (or consortium of colleges and/or universities), having experience in the training of undergraduate students in marine science. The objective is to provide training to undergraduate students in areas of research related to understanding and predicting the effects of man's activities on marine, estuarine, and coastal ecosystems. The research experience gained while working with senior EPA scientists at a major U.S. environmental research laboratory will stimulate the interest of students in environmental studies and greatly enhance their competitiveness and effectiveness as they enter and compete within the environmental science research/ management community.

The program will provide assistance to students for the purpose of facilitating education and training in marine and estuarine ecological research and will provide research opportunities for undergraduate student trainees. There will be substantial Federal involvement in this project; e.g., senior scientists at the Gulf Ecology Division will serve as research advisors and mentors to assure the primary elements of the scientific approach are effectively communicated to and practiced by the trainees. These include development of research objectives, scientific approach

and experimental design, presentation and reporting of experimental results, and principals of laboratory health and safety, environmental compliance, and quality assurance.

The principal end product of this agreement will be trained scientists/technicians holding degrees in their chosen fields of environmental science who will utilize their unique training experiences to understand and solve environmental problems of the future. Other expected benefits to students include: (a) development of publications in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings and books, (b) attendance and presentation of data at national scientific meetings, and (c) opportunities for scientific interaction with peers from varied disciplines in a laboratory and/or field research setting.

Environmental Results: This RFA seeks applications that will advance the following goals/objectives as identified in EPA's Strategic Plan (<http://www.epa.gov/ocfo/plan/2003sp.pdf>):

Goal 4 – Healthy Communities and Ecosystems
Objective 4.4 – Enhance Science and Research
Sub-Objective 4.4.2 – Conduct Relevant Research

The principal outcome of this cooperative research training effort is that at least five (5) undergraduate students per year are assisted in receiving a B.S. degree in a field of science related to marine ecology. A secondary outcome of this effort is an improved understanding of the effects of anthropogenic stressors on coastal and estuarine communities and ecosystems.

The major outputs to be expected are scientific data, models, and publications that provide and/or support the guidance, criteria, and standards to protect and enhance our natural coastal and estuarine communities and ecosystems.

Statutory Authority for Award of Assistance: This research is authorized under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

Geospatial Information: It is anticipated that the agreement that is awarded will not involve or relate to geospatial information.

II. Award Information

Anticipated Amount of Individual Award: \$150,000

Anticipated Number of Awards: One

Anticipated Funding: The EPA is expected to fund this award over a period of 3 years. Funding for the first year of the award is expected to be \$50,000. Additional funding of \$50,000

per year for the second through third years will be contingent upon availability of funds and satisfactory progress by the selected recipient.

Anticipated Project Period: August 30, 2006–August 29, 2009

Supplemental Applications: Applications for supplemental awards of existing EPA assistance agreements will not be eligible to compete for this assistance opportunity.

Type of Award: The Agency anticipates the award of a cooperative agreement.

Anticipated Federal Involvement:

1. EPA scientists will function as mentors for student trainees while participating in research activities at the Gulf Ecology Division.
2. Proposed EPA science mentors and the EPA Project Officer (of this cooperative agreement) will concur with the selection of trainees prior to the acceptance of trainees into the STMS program.
3. EPA scientists will provide research opportunities and experience for undergraduate trainees.
4. EPA scientists will prepare research and quality assurance plans that will incorporate research tasks used for training undergraduates. GED administration will approve the research plans and tasks before research commences.
5. As appropriate, EPA scientists will collaborate with student trainees in preparing scientific reports for publication or trainees will provide assistance to EPA scientists in preparing such reports.

III. **Eligibility Information:**

Eligible Applicants: Programs under CFDA 66.511 are available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the United States, including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, and other public or private nonprofit institutions. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive awards. Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. Universities and educational institutions must be subject to OMB Circular A-21.

Cost Sharing Requirements: Institutional cost-sharing is not required. However, if the applicant intends to cost-share, a brief statement concerning cost-sharing should be added to the budget justification, and estimated dollar amounts must be included in the appropriate categories in the budget table.

Other Eligibility Criteria:

Minimum criteria: To be considered, an applicant must demonstrate knowledge and experience in marine environmental sciences and provide educational opportunities for students in related fields of science. The applicant must offer a B.S. degree in one or more areas of science related to marine or estuarine ecology and participate in research to understand the effects of human activities on marine and/or estuarine ecosystems. If the applicant does not meet this criterion, the application will be rejected.

Administrative Eligibility Criteria: Applications that do not substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement will be rejected. In addition, where a page limit is expressed with respect to parts of the application, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applications must be received by the EPA on or before the solicitation closing date published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants received after the published closing date will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Also, applications exceeding the funding limits described herein will be returned without review.

Relevance Eligibility Criteria: Proposals that are found administratively acceptable will be subjected to a review for relevancy to EPA's mission to support advancement of environmental science. Proposals will be rejected if they are found to lack relevance. Examples of proposals that lack relevance include:

1. Proposal is deficient technically with no chance for consideration.
2. Proposal fails to advance the objectives stated in the solicitation even if successfully performed.
3. Proposal essentially duplicates research already completed or underway.
4. Proposal fails to demonstrate a public purpose of support and stimulation; i.e., it implies the primary purpose is to provide direct support to the Federal government.

Subagreement Eligibility Criteria: Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application for this assistance agreement. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the assistance agreement, and which eligible organization(s) will be subawardees of the recipient. Sub awards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 40 CFR 30.2(ff). The recipient must administer the assistance agreement, is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds, and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 40 CFR 30.2(gg), sub recipients are accountable to the recipient for proper use of EPA funding.

Coalitions may not include for profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant. For profit organizations are not eligible for sub awards. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the

competitive procurement procedures of 40 CFR Part 30. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify contractors or consultants in the proposal. Moreover, the fact a successful applicant has named a specific contractor or consultant in the proposal EPA approves does not relieve it of its obligations to comply with competitive procurement requirements or consultant compensation limitations.

Applications will be reviewed for threshold eligibility purposes prior to initiation of the technical and programmatic reviews under Section V. Proposals from ineligible applicants or proposals that do not meet the eligibility criteria set forth above will be returned without further review.

IV. Application and Submission Information:

Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically via e-mail or online using the Grants.gov website with an electronic signature please only use one method. Applicants who lack the technical capability to apply either by e-mail or through Grants.gov, may mail their applications to Raymond G. Wilhour, Gulf Ecology Division, 1 Sabine Island Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561

1. Instructions for E-Mail Submissions

Proposals must be e-mailed to wilhour.ray@epa.gov. The title of the email should read "Science Training in Marine Sciences". The proposal should be one attached file prepared as described in section IV, Part A. Please do not zip the attached file. If you do not receive an email confirmation within five business days, please call Ray Wilhour at 850-934-9213.

2. Instructions for Submissions Using Grants.Gov

With Grants.Gov, you will be able to submit your entire proposal package on line with no hard copy or computer disks. Please be sure to view the additional instructions that are available for download on Grants.gov for this announcement. If you have any technical difficulties while applying electronically, please refer to <http://www.grants.gov/Customersupport> or call the toll free Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.

If you wish to apply electronically via Grants.gov, the electronic submission of your proposal package must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on "Get Started." The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov. For more information, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on "Get Started," and then "For AORs" (Authorized Organization Representative) on the left side of the page. *Note that the registration process may take a week or longer to complete.* If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an AOR and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To begin the application process for this grant opportunity, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on “Apply for Grants.” Then click on “Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions” to download the PureEdge viewer and obtain the application package (https://apply.grants.gov/forms_apps_idx.html). You may retrieve the application package by entering the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-XXX-06-xx, or the appropriate CFDA number 66.511, in the space provided. Then complete and submit the application package as indicated. You may also be able to access the application package by clicking on the button “How To Apply” at the top right of the synopsis page for this announcement on <http://www.grants.gov> (to find the synopsis page go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on the “Find Grant Opportunities” button on the top of the page and then to go EPA opportunities).

Proposals materials submitted through grants.gov will be time/date stamped electronically.

Proposal Submission Deadline: The closing date and time for applicants to submit proposals under this announcement is June 29, 2006. Proposals submitted via electronic-mail (e-mail) or through grants.gov must be received by 4:00 pm Central time on June 29, 2006. Proposals submitted by mail must be postmarked by this same time and date.

A. Application Materials:

The application is made through submission of the materials described below no matter the mode of submission. ***It is essential that the application contain all information requested and be submitted in the formats described.*** The application must contain the following items: The application package *must* include all of the following materials:

1. Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance: Complete the form. There are no attachments. Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711. The form must contain the original signature of an authorized representative of the applying institution. Please note that both the Principal Investigator and an administrative contact are to be identified in Section 5 of the SF424.
2. SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs: Complete the form. There are no attachments. The total amount of federal funding requested for the three-year project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22. If indirect costs are requested, a copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement must be submitted as part of the application package.
3. SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs: Complete the form. There are no attachments.

4. Grants.gov Lobbying Form – Certification Regarding Lobbying: Complete the form. There are no attachments.
5. EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contact Form: Should include the Principal, Co-Investigators and administrative contacts.
6. EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report. Complete the form. There are no attachments.
7. Project narrative is the technical proposal that discusses the technical approach and organizational capabilities for accomplishing the goals stated under the Funding Priorities/Focus in Section I. It must not exceed twenty (20) consecutively numbered (bottom center) 8.5X11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. This page limitation shall include all text, tables, figures, references, attachments, and appendices.

The following topics, directly related to the evaluation criteria as described in section V, must be addressed:

- Proposed partnership with the Gulf Ecology Division to provide quality scientific training to undergraduate trainees. Include procedures for the selection of students and matching their research interests with the appropriate EPA scientists who will be their mentors. Identify key personnel including their roles and commitment to the project. Identify and discuss other program components considered important in an overall partnership between the University and the Gulf Ecology Division that will provide a quality education and research experience for all trainees. General areas of research and the respective Gulf Ecology Division mentors will be provided to the successful applicant at the initiation of this training cooperative agreement and up to two times per year thereafter, subject to availability of funds.
- Proposed approach for recruiting students interested in developing a career in marine environmental sciences, including proposed approach for recruiting minority students. For purposes of this criterion, recruitment refers to the scope of activities designed to expand the pool of applicants for student trainee positions. Recruitment does not include the selection of any particular student for this training program. The procedures which are proposed must assure that students with high potential in the sciences, including minority students, are recruited using standard recruiting practices by Colleges and Universities including national advertisements. Recruitment of candidates should proceed according to Equal Employment Opportunities and Affirmative Action guidelines promulgated by the Universities. Strict criteria for academic excellence and research potential should be stated in the proposal to assure that all students have an opportunity to participate in the program. All trainees in the program must be citizens of the United States.

- Proposed approach(es) for balancing on-campus training requirements with research opportunities at the Gulf Ecology Division without adding unreasonable burdens to the trainees; the advantages of the training program must far exceed any minor disadvantages to the student trainees. Include proposed procedures for scheduling on-campus class work with off-campus research activities at the Gulf Ecology Division. We anticipate student trainees to participate in research training 40 hours per week during the summer term/semester and, where possible, 20 hours at other times.
- Institutional expertise and capabilities related to marine and estuarine research. Describe B.S. degree programs offered and research activities currently pursued related to marine and estuarine studies
- Plan for tracking and measuring progress toward achieving the following expected outputs and outcomes. The principal **outcome** of this cooperative research training effort is that at least five (5) undergraduate students per year are assisted in receiving a B.S. degree in a field of science related to marine ecology. A secondary outcome of this effort is an improved understanding of the effects of anthropogenic stressors on coastal and estuarine communities and ecosystems.

The major **outputs** to be expected are scientific data, models, and publications that provide and/or support the guidance, criteria, and standards to protect and enhance our natural coastal and estuarine communities and ecosystems. Include approaches for recruiting students to apply, including minority students, incorporating the selected students into the program, evaluating student progress, providing for the educational and research needs of the trainees, and reviewing the overall direction and progress of the program and making corrections.

Include proposed procedures for monitoring the student progress in the program and reporting that progress to the Gulf Ecology Division and University staff who share responsibilities for student training. This includes scholastic and research progress and accomplishments. Include a description of corrective actions/approaches recommended to remedy poor performance of trainees. Also, describe standards to be used to continue or discontinue student participation in the program.

Trainees in this program should have at least one Gulf Ecology Division and one University/College scientist as advisors and mentors. Since other EPA-funded programs are available to directly support research of faculty, staff and students at academic institutions, monies are not available in this Training Cooperative Agreement to fund the research of university/college faculty members.

All work will be performed in accordance with University and EPA policies including health and safety, environmental compliance, and quality assurance requirements. Salaries or stipends will be paid at the rate established by University policy for research assistants in other programs while the students are on duty at the Gulf Ecology Division, Gulf Breeze, FL.

- Experience in providing off-campus research opportunities for students with extramural scientific collaborators. Include a brief description of these relationships including objectives, approaches, number of students participating, and some measure of success (e.g., number or percentage of students pursuing a career in environmental sciences).
- Cost effectiveness of the proposed budget structure. Clearly identify costs directly related to student training, personnel, overhead, and other costs. Administrative costs should be a small percentage of total costs and maximum training opportunities should be supported.
- Past performance in reporting on outputs and outcomes in prior similar agreements. Include how well and timely the goals, objectives, and reporting requirements of past similar agreements funded by EPA or other federal agencies during the past 5 years were accomplished. For each agreement (and point of contact) referenced, submit information showing that progress/technical reports or other documentation generated under the agreement adequately demonstrated progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of the agreement.
- Programmatic Capability: Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe whether, and how, you were (i) able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports. In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current and prior Federal agency grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V.

8. Quality Management Plan that describes a quality system in terms of management and organizational structure, policy and procedures, personnel qualifications and training; procurement of items and services; documentation and records; computer hardware and software; planning; implementation of work processes; assessment and response; and quality improvement. Thus, the Quality Management Plan may be viewed as the "umbrella" document under which

individual projects are conducted. The Quality Management Plan is used to demonstrate conformance to Part A requirements of ANSI/ASQC E4-1994. The Quality Management Plan must be approved and signed by the senior management of the organization. For more information, go to <http://www.epa.gov/quality>. Please note that Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) are not required since the student trainees will participate in EPA research projects having approved QAPPS.

9. Budget Narrative includes detailed, itemized budget estimates for the project that is broken down into direct labor, fringe benefits, equipment, travel, other direct costs and overhead with summaries for each year and the total for the entire project. If a sub-agreement, such as a subcontract, is included in the application, provide a separate budget for the subcontract in the same format if the sub-agreement is greater than \$25,000. Include the total amount for the sub-agreement under “Contracts” in the master budget. Any project containing sub-agreements that constitute more than 40% of the total direct cost of the grant will be subject to special review. Additional justification for use of such a subcontract must be provided, discussing the need for this agreement to accomplish the objectives of the research project.

Please note that institutional cost-sharing is not required. However, if you intend to cost-share, a brief statement concerning cost-sharing should be added to the budget justification, and estimated dollar amounts must be included in the appropriate categories in the budget table.

Describe the basis for calculating the personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, and other costs identified in the itemized budget and explain the basis for their calculation. (Special attention should be given to explaining the “travel,” “equipment,” and “other” categories.) For any proposed equipment, identify any tangible non-expendable personal property to be purchased which has an estimated cost of \$5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year. (Personal property items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 are considered supplies.)

10. Copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

11. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54 should include the Principal, Co-Investigators, and administrative contacts. A copy of this form should also be completed for major sub-agreements (contacts at the institutions of primary co-investigators).

12. Biographical Sketches - 2-page curriculum vitae should be included for the Principal Investigator and any other key personnel identified in the proposal.

B. Submission Instructions for Printed Applications:

The complete application *must be* sent through regular mail, express mail, or a major courier to: **Raymond Wilhour, USEPA-Gulf Ecology Division, 1 Sabine Island Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL, 32561.**

Because of security concerns, applications cannot be personally delivered. To be considered timely, printed applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. local time in Gulf Breeze, FL 45 days after the effective date (I recommend that you insert the due date once all revisions have been cleared) of the RFA from the U.S. Postal Service or a major courier. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered and will be returned to the submitter. Printed applications, including all documents stated in Section IV.A above, must be submitted in the original with 3 copies and should be double-sided. Grant application forms can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/application.htm>

C. Intergovernmental Review:

This assistance opportunity is subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants should contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out how to comply with the State's process. The names and addresses of the SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

D. Amendments:

Amendments will be posted on this website and the due date for applications will be extended if deemed appropriate.

E. Confidentiality:

By submitting an application in response to this solicitation, the applicant grants the EPA permission to make limited disclosures of the application to technical reviewers both within and outside the Agency for the express purpose of assisting the Agency with evaluating the application. Information from a pending or unsuccessful application will be kept confidential to the fullest extent allowed under law; information from a successful application may be publicly disclosed to the extent permitted by law.

In accordance with 40 CFR 2.203, applicants may claim all or a portion of the application/proposal as confidential business information (for example, hypotheses or methodologies contained in the research narrative that the applicant wishes to protect from possible public disclosure). EPA will evaluate confidentiality claims in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2. Applicants must clearly mark applications/proposals or portions of applications/proposals they claim as confidential. If no claim of confidentiality is made, the EPA is not required to make an inquiry to the applicant otherwise required by 40 CFR 2.204(c)(2) prior to disclosure.

F. DUNS Number:

Grant applicants are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements. OMB has determined that there is a need for improved statistical reporting of Federal grants and cooperative agreements. Use of the DUNS number government-wide will

provide a means to identify entities receiving those awards and their business relationships. The identifier will be used for tracking purposes, and to validate address and point of contact information.

A DUNS number will be required whether an applicant is submitting a printed application or using the government-wide electronic portal (Grants.gov). The DUNS number will supplement other identifiers required by statute or regulation, such as tax identification numbers. Organizations can receive a DUNS number in one day, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705- 5711. Individuals who would personally receive a grant or cooperative agreement award from the Federal government apart from any business or non-profit organization they may operate are exempt from this requirement. The website where an organization can obtain a DUNS number is: <http://www.dnb.com>. This takes 30 business days and there is no cost unless the organization requests expedited (1-day) processing, which includes a fee of \$40.

V. Application Review Information

Each application that meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Section III will be subjected to technical and programmatic reviews. The technical review will be conducted by a panel consisting of at least two non-EPA reviewers and one EPA reviewer. The purpose is to evaluate the scientific merit of the proposal and the capability of the applicant to complete the project as proposed. The following criteria will be used in the evaluation process:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

1. Proposed partnership with the Gulf Ecology Division to provide quality scientific training to undergraduate trainees.....10 points
2. Proposed approach for recruiting students interested in developing a career in marine environmental sciences, including proposed approach for recruiting minority students..... 15 points
3. Proposed approach(es) for balancing on-campus training requirements with research opportunities at the Gulf Ecology Division without adding unreasonable burdens to the trainees..... 10 points
4. Institutional expertise and capabilities related to marine and estuarine research.....15 points
5. Plan for tracking and measuring progress toward achieving the following expected outputs and outcomes 15 points
6. Experience in providing off-campus research opportunities for students with extramural scientific collaborators..... 10 points
7. Cost effectiveness of the proposed budget structure.....15 points

8. Programmatic Capability Applicant is (i) technically able to successfully carry out and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports. In evaluating applicants under this factor EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider other relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current and prior Federal agency grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you have no relevant or available past performance or past reporting history, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for the elements of this factor under Section V. In addition, provide information on your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.....
.....10 points

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Other Factors: When two or more of the highly rated proposals receive equivalent rankings, the respective budgets will be evaluated for cost reasonableness and cost realism in order to determine which applicant will receive the award. The proposal that is determined to be most reasonable/realistic will be selected for award. The amount of cost sharing proposed (if any) will not result in additional points for any applicant, but will be considered in the evaluation of the reasonableness and realism of the overall budget.

Review and Selection Process:

Evaluation Review Process: The eligibility review discussed in Section III will be conducted by EPA personnel who are not part of the technical review panel. The technical review panel, which reviews the technical proposal for scientific merit and organizational capabilities, shall consist of at least one internal EPA reviewer and at least two non-EPA reviewers who are able to demonstrate technical expertise and a lack of any conflict of interest. The technical review panel will review the proposal against the criteria above identified as Technical Evaluation Criteria and rank the proposal based upon this evaluation.

Source Selection: EPA will make a selection of the applicant for award based upon the combined rankings of the technical review panel. EPA may negotiate changes to the proposal with the selected applicant. For example, EPA will discuss significant comments received from the technical reviewers, aspects of the budget that may be questionable, the proposed terms and conditions for the agreement, and the nature and extent of EPA collaboration. The Decision Official is an Office of Research and Development (ORD) manager who will determine which applicant should receive the award based on the technical review comments and rankings and the recommendation of the EPA project officer.

Rejection Factors: Applications may be rejected because they fail to comply with the administrative requirements of the RFA, they are found to lack relevancy, they are judged technically and/or programmatically unacceptable, or they are not deemed suitable for award due to other factors (if identified).

VI. Award Administration Information

Award Notices

Notice of award will be made in writing by an official in the EPA Grants Administration Division. Preliminary selection by the Decision Official in the Office of Research and Development does not guarantee an award will be made. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of EPA should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with an EPA Program Official. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the EPA Grants Award Official does so at their own risk.

EPA will promptly notify in writing (postal or email) those applicants whose application is rejected. An unsuccessful applicant may request a debriefing to better understand the evaluated strengths and weaknesses of its proposal and the reason for rejection if other than technical merit. EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no awards.

Disputes

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005). Disputes relating to matters other than competitive selection of recipients will be resolved under 40 CFR 30.63 or 40 CFR 31.70, as applicable.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates: The anticipated award date is August 30, 2006

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Regulations and OMB Coverage: Grants and agreements with institutions of higher education, hospitals, and other non-profit organizations are subject to 40 CFR Parts 30 and 40 and OMB Circular A-122 for non-profits and A-21 for institutions of higher learning.

Grants and agreements with state, local, and tribal governments are subject to 40 CFR Parts 31 and 40 and OMB Circular A-87.

Programmatic Terms and Conditions: Terms and conditions will be negotiated with the selected recipient covering the following requirements:

1. An acceptable quality assurance document. A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is not required since all research performed by student trainees will be covered by EPA approved research project and quality assurance plans.
2. To further the assistance-agreement objectives of public support and stimulation, applicants must agree to make data resulting from this agreement accessible to the public.
3. The nature and extent of collaboration between EPA and the recipient.

Reporting

Quarterly Progress Reports: The selected recipient will be required to submit quarterly progress reports summarizing technical progress in achieving the environmental outputs and associated outcomes, difficulties encountered, and planned activities for the next quarter. Each report shall include a summary of expenditures.

End of First Year Progress Report: The selected recipient will be required to submit an end of first year progress report summarizing technical progress in achieving the environmental outputs and associated outcomes, and difficulties encountered. This report will be used to determine satisfactory progress for subsequent second year funding.

Final Report: The selected recipient will be required to submit a final report by the end of the period of performance.

VII. Agency Contact

The primary agency contact for this RFA is **Raymond Wilhour** at:
1U.S. EPA – Gulf Ecology Division
Telephone: (850) 934-9213
E-mail: wilhour.ray@epa.gov (applications may not be submitted via email)

If unable to reach Ray Wilhour, contact, Mr. Larry Hodgson at:
Telephone: (740) 654-2346 E-mail: Hodgson.Larry@epa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Questions

Questions should be submitted in writing within 15 days of the effective date of the RFA. Do not attempt to seek information regarding this RFA from any source other than those identified in

Section VII, as the information provided may be erroneous. Questions that are considered significant will be answered via an amendment to this RFA.

Animal and Human Subject Research

Research projects that involve animals will be subject to the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-544), as amended, 7 U.S.C. 2131-2156. Recipients who propose to conduct research on human subjects must agree to meet all of the EPA requirements under 40 CFR 26, referred to as the “Common Rule”. If the proposed project involves human or animal testing studies, please indicate it on a separate sheet of paper.