

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2006 Coastal Services Center Performance Measurement Technical Assistance

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement for the NOAA Coastal Services Center (CSC) (will now be referred to as the Center throughout this document)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.473, Coastal Services Center

Dates: For applications submitted through Grants.Gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the program office. Proposals must be time stamped by Grants.gov or received by the Center no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, October 3, 2005.

Funding Opportunity Descriptions: Coastal Learning Services (CLS) program seeks proposals where the Center will enter into a two-year cooperative agreement in which the cooperator will collect and analyze physical, social, and environmental indicator data and the Center will provide technical assistance and training on performance measures.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description for the CLS Program

The Center's CLS program seeks proposals for a two-year cooperative agreement under which the cooperator will collect and analyze physical, social, and environmental indicator data and the Center will provide technical assistance and training on performance measures. A number of institutions and agencies at local, state and regional levels are monitoring their progress in achieving programmatic goals using performance measures. For example, to fulfill the requirements under the National Coastal Management Performance Measurement System, National Coastal Management Programs and National Estuarine Research Reserves are collecting indicator data to measure effectiveness in achieving Coastal Zone Management Act goals at the national level. The performance measurement system will identify and assess the act's national impact through various indicator categories. All proposals under this announcement must show relevance to state or local coastal resource management efforts.

NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process and to accelerating the award of financial assistance to qualified recipients. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, this solicitation announces that up to \$300,000 may be available in

FY2006, although the actual award amount will be determined by the proposals and available funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. Two to four awards are anticipated from this announcement.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being covered by the award.

Statutory authority for this program is provided under 16 U.S.C. 1456c (Technical Assistance).

II. Award Information

Total anticipated funding for these cooperative agreements is up to \$300,000 and is subject to the availability of FY 2006 appropriations. Two to four awards are anticipated from this announcement. The nature of the cooperative agreement is such that the Center will provide substantial involvement in the project. General areas of responsibilities that the Center has had in past projects include training and one-to-one technical assistance to cooperator and their partners on project design and evaluation, logic model development, and performance metrics.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are state, local, Indian tribal governments, private or nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education. Applicants must be familiar with the coastal community and the issues faced by coastal managers and scientists and applicants must have state or local coastal resource management agencies as project partners. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may also be project partners. Note: Federal agencies or institutions who are project partners must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds in excess of their appropriation.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no requirement for cost sharing in response to these guidelines.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit application packages through www.Grants.gov. All application materials can be found on this Web site in the FIND and APPLY sections.

All applicants are required to submit a NOAA grants application package, budget narrative, curriculum vitae for each principal investigator, and project proposal. The standard NOAA application package includes the SF-424 (Rev. 7-03), Application for Federal Assistance, SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, SF-

424B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs, and CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters; Drug Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying. SF-LLL and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, should only be submitted to the government if applicant is actually reporting lobbying activities. The CD-512, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Transactions, is a form that remains in the applicant's file. Applicants should not submit CD-512 to the government. The CD-346, Applicant for Funding Assistance should only be submitted to the government if the applicant is a non-profit entity. If applicants are not submitting a proposal through www.Grants.gov, all of these forms can be obtained from < <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html> > or from the Center's website, < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/CSCgrant.html> >. If for some reason the applicant has difficulty downloading the required forms, he or she should contact Violet Legette at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413 or phone her at 843-740-1222 or email her at < Violet.Legette@noaa.gov >.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

This announcement is a call for proposals for work under the Center's Coastal Learning Services (CLS) Program. The program's goal is to provide competency-based training and workshops that meet the needs of the nation's coastal resource managers. Coastal Learning Services (CLS) serves the nation's coastal resource managers through training workshops, professional conferences, and meeting support services. The program also provides a wide range of related consulting services on topics that include instructional design, information design and usability, assessments, and facilitation. More information on the program can be found at < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/cls/>>.

One of the trainings offered by the program is entitled "Project Design and Evaluation." This course provides coastal resource management extension and education professionals with the knowledge, skills, and tools to design and implement projects that have measurable impacts on the audience they want to reach. This interactive curriculum can help the recipient increase the effectiveness of their projects by applying valid adaptive management theory to their design. Part of the training focuses on performance measurement as it relates to project evaluation. More information on this course and other trainings offered by the Center can be found at < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/bins/training.html> >.

Roles and Responsibilities

By working in a cooperative partnership, the unique skills, capabilities, and experiences of the Center and the cooperator will be combined to offer an opportunity for each organization to further its goals. In their proposals, potential cooperators shall explicitly propose the respective roles and responsibilities of the Center and the cooperator. General areas of responsibilities that the Center has had in past projects include training and one-to-one technical assistance to cooperator and their partners on project design and evaluation, logic model development, and performance metrics. Any questions about appropriate roles for the Center can be directed to Jan Kucklick at < Jan.Kucklick@noaa.gov >.

Cooperators are responsible for managing the project and coordinating with the Center; identifying program-specific management needs that guide collection and

analysis of the appropriate indicators; identifying the information required to address the needs; developing and collecting the information required to address the management needs; developing partnerships with other members of the resource management community; developing spatial data and metadata as appropriate; determining how the indicator information should be organized to maximize usefulness within their agency, and for aggregation with other states to help “tell the story” of the impacts of the CZMA; and distributing the indicator information to the coastal management community and NOAA. All proposals must follow this format by including the following sections:

a. Goal(s), Objective(s), and Management Priority. Identify the goal(s) and objective(s) of the indicator collection effort and how it fits into the agency’s own management and strategic plan(s).

b. Background. Provide sufficient background information for reviewers to independently assess the local significance and regional importance of the management objectives that will be addressed by the indicator collection effort. Summarize the status of any ongoing efforts by the cooperator and partners to address these objectives.

c. Audience. Identify potential users of the performance indicators and how those users will incorporate the information in their evaluation of programs and activities and ultimately their management of natural resources. Applicants must show relevance to state and local coastal management efforts.

d. Proposed Work Plan. Provide a general methodology that describes the process the cooperator will establish to train staff on performance measures (if needed), select the indicator categories to measure, collect and analyze the data, and summarize the data for project partners. One of the initial activities after the cooperative agreement is awarded will be for the Center and the cooperator to prepare a detailed work plan that explains how the resources of all parties will be leveraged to collect and analyze the indicator data. The work plan that is required for the proposal is less detailed but should demonstrate that the cooperator and partners have sufficient knowledge of performance measurement in general, and specifically how the collected indicator data can be used effectively to ultimately address management needs.

e. Project Management, Partners, and Support. Describe how the lead cooperator will manage the project and coordinate with the Center. Identify how the project will progress and how the work plan will be implemented by the cooperator(s). Identify who will be involved in planning, development, and review of the effort, and identify how coordination among these groups will be achieved. When formal partnerships already exist, include letters from partners that acknowledge their role in the project and their commitment and willingness to participate in the project. When formal partnerships do not already exist, describe plans for developing them. Describe the resources the cooperators and partners have for conducting the project, including personnel qualifications (education, experience, and time available to work on the project), facilities, equipment, and, to the extent practicable, the information and tools already available. Describe how widely the project is supported within the resource management community and offer evidence of that support.

f. Milestone Schedule. List target milestones, timelines, and describe how each milestone addresses project objectives. The time period targeted for the award is approximately 24 months, but can vary depending on need.

g. Project Budget. Provide a detailed budget description that follows the

categories and formats in the NOAA grants package and a brief narrative justification of the budget.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on October 3, 2005. For applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the program office. Applications received after that time will not be reviewed.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the Center's CLS program are subject to Executive Order 121372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) 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 in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at < <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html> >.

5. Funding Restrictions

There are no funding restrictions under the Center's CLS program. The Center's CLS program is seeking applications for non-construction projects.

6. Other Submission Requirements

In addition to the proposal(s), the applicant must submit a complete NOAA grant application package (with signed originals). All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications through www.Grants.gov.

If the Grants.gov Web site is not used, the applicant must submit one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the proposal(s) and related forms to the Coastal Services Center. No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted. Project proposals must total no more than 10 pages (double spaced, 12-point font, and exclusive of appendices). Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal; e.g., support letters, resumes, lists of data sources, maps. Letters of support may be mailed separately, but must be received by the October 3, 2005, deadline. All appendix material must be unbound.

Applicant should submit application package to the attention of Lisa Holmes, NOAA Coastal Services Center, room 119, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413. Applications received after that time will not be reviewed.

V. Application Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria (With Weights)

a. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the CLS program this includes: How well the proposal demonstrates the local significance and regional importance of the need(s) or management objective(s) that will guide the collection and analysis of the indicator data. At a minimum, the proposal must identify management goals that are not currently being achieved, describe how the information from this cooperative agreement will significantly address that deficiency, and state the benefits that will result to the public and resource management community. Relevance to

state and local coastal management efforts must be demonstrated.

b. Technical/scientific merit (35 points). 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. For the CLS program this includes: How well the proposal divides the project into discrete tasks that make effective use of the technical capabilities of the cooperator, partner(s), and the Center. How well the proposal identifies a plan for managing project tasks, coordinating among the various contributors, and implementing product development. How effectively the proposal demonstrates that the data collection and analysis will address local management needs as well as be applicable to the larger national picture of performance measures and effectiveness of the CZMA. This criterion includes such factors as the technical merit of the process that the cooperator has outlined and the proposed role for the Center in its development. How well the proposed work will integrate technology; socioeconomic, physical, and ecological information; and public participation to accomplish project goals and objectives. How well the information collected will be used in evaluating effectiveness of the program and projects. How the program proposes to make changes based on the indicator data. This criterion measures both the scope of the proposed project and the integration of its various components.

c. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the CLS program this includes: How well the proposal demonstrates that the project is broadly supported by the resource management community; that a broad group of resource managers and constituents will benefit from the product(s) and contribute to their design and assembly; and that a broad group of resource managers will use the product(s). This criterion includes such features as a formal public involvement plan, a plan for managing the partnership team involving communication and decision-making strategies, and letters of support from users and partners.

d. Project costs (10 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the CLS program this includes: How well the applicant demonstrates that the budget is commensurate with project needs and that the partnerships employed will improve the overall cost effectiveness of the project and value of the products by contributing funds, expertise, or other resources.

e. Outreach and education (20 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the CLS program this includes: How well the applicant demonstrates the transferability of the process developed for indicator data collection and analysis to other states and agencies working on this same issue. How well the applicant demonstrates the transferability of the information up to the more national aggregation of information to tell the story about the CZMA and its impacts.

2. Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. A review panel will be established to evaluate proposals on the basis of the evaluation criteria listed above. The panelists will

provide individual evaluations on proposals, thus there will be no consensus recommendation. All proposals reviewed will be ranked according to the average score and the selecting official (the Center's Deputy Director) will award in rank order, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon (1), (2), (3), (5) and (6) of the factors below. Thus proposals with the highest scores may not necessarily be selected for an award. The Selecting Official makes the final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

3. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon (1), (2), (3), (5) and (6) of the following factors:

- (1) Availability of funding
- (2) Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
- (3) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
- (4) Program priorities and policy factors
- (5) Applicant's prior award performance
- (6) Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

4. Start Dates

March 1, 2006 or later should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the CLS Program Manager.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notice

Applications recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded to the GMD by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office, either by email or letter that their application was forwarded to GMD. 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 through the postal mail, signed by a Grants Officer.

Unsuccessful applications for all Center programs will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements Department of Commerce Requirements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109) is applicable to this solicitation.

Geospatial data. The recipients must comply with EO 12906 regarding any and all

geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data.

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 or to provide special fishing privileges.

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 assistance opportunities including special fishing privileges. 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 and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

3. Reporting

Upon official notification of an award, the applicant will be required to submit the following reports:

Financial Status Reports (SF-269 and SF-272) are required semi-annually. These reports should be mailed directly to Grants Management Division, 1325 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20190.

Performance or progress reports are required semi-annually. These reports are submitted directly to the program office, no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of an award. The final report is due 90 days after the award expiration. These reports can be emailed to the program officer or they can be mailed to the attention of the program officer at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

For administrative issues contact Violet Legette at 843-740-1222 (phone) or 843-740-1232 (fax) or email her at < Violet.Legette@noaa.gov >.

For technical questions, contact Jan Kucklick at 843-740-1279 (phone) or 843-740-1313 (fax) or email her at < Jan.Kucklick@noaa.gov >.

VIII. Other Information

Applicants can refer to the Center's website for specific information about the history of the Coastal Services Center. Also, available on this website are specific instructions on filling out the NOAA standard forms for grants/cooperative agreement applications. The Center's website is < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/CSCgrant.html> >.

Applicants also need to remember that 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 signed by an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.