

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: FY 2006 Coastal Services Center Environmental Characterization of a U.S. Coastal Region.

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: October 3, 2005.

Funding Opportunity Descriptions: The Center’s Landscape Characterization and Restoration (LCR) and Outreach Programs seek proposals for a two-year cooperative agreement under which the cooperator and the Center will jointly develop an environmental characterization of a coastal region designed for use by coastal resource managers within two or more states to address a single management issue related to coastal development, this issue to be selected by the cooperator. In the past, funding opportunities offered by the LCR program have called for projects focusing on a single watershed or group of watersheds located within specific regions of the United States, such as the Southeast, the Pacific Coast or the Great Lakes regions. However, since this environmental characterization is intended to support resource management within a broader region, proposals focusing on any part of the coastal United States will be accepted.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description for the LCR and Outreach Programs

The Center’s LCR and Outreach Programs seek proposals for a two-year cooperative agreement under which the cooperator and the Center will jointly develop an environmental characterization of a coastal region designed for use by coastal resource managers within multiple jurisdictions in the region to address a single management issue related to coastal development, this issue to be selected by the cooperator and clearly described in the proposal. Appropriate geographic scales range from multiple states (in the northeast) to significant portions of large states (e.g., Florida, California, or Alaska). The focal management issue must be one that requires coordination across multiple jurisdictions for effective management; examples of appropriate issues include but are not limited to the conservation or restoration of

coastal habitat; non-point source pollution; or coastal community development. The characterization must be designed to support end-users (coastal resource managers in state and local government, and elsewhere) throughout the selected region in their efforts to balance the demands of preserving and restoring ecosystem function with the demands associated with coastal development, and must effectively integrate relevant information addressing the ecological and human dimensions of the targeted management issue. The characterization must comprise both narrative and geospatial information.

The human dimensions component of the characterization shall include a baseline of social, economic, and other human dimensions information that would support the development of social assessments, a social atlas, and performance measures and other indicators of the effectiveness of management activities. This baseline shall address demographics using data from the Bureau of the Census and other sources; institutional, policy, and decision making processes; stakeholder analyses; cultural and historical inventories; attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs; land ownership; land use patterns; and other appropriate and available data.

As part of this project, the cooperator should include assessments of the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of more than one jurisdiction within the selected project areas. These assessments should synthesize the appropriate baseline data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the selected issue and geographic area to aid in decision making within the selected jurisdictions. The results of these assessments should be included in the final characterization, and might include, for example, spatial representations of the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of a community using maps and spatial data layers, and other information needed to assess impacts of future land use change and other resource management actions.

Products from the characterization must be clearly shown to help managers make resource management, regulatory, or land-use planning decisions and must provide a means for promoting the use of geospatial data in local management decisions. Proposals must outline a process for disseminating products of the characterization to coastal resource managers throughout the targeted region and training end-users in the use of these products.

The budget for this proposal shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work and identify the elements that the cooperator would recommend for revision or elimination in the event that sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities. 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 included under the award.

Statutory authority for this program is provided under 16 U.S.C. 1456c (Technical Assistance); and 33 U.S.C. 1442 (research program respecting possible long-range effects of pollution, overfishing, and man-induced changes of ocean ecosystems).

II. Award Information

Total anticipated funding for a cooperative agreement is between \$250,000 and \$350,000 and is subject to the availability of FY 2006 appropriations. No more than one award is 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: development of spatial models and analyses to address the identified management needs; guidance in the development of social, economic and other human dimension information and analyses; design of Geographic Information System (GIS) and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) architectures; and compilation of final products onto CD-ROM or Internet sites.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, hospitals, other non-profits, commercial organizations, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners. Note: Federal agencies or institutions who are project partners must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from outside sources in excess of their appropriations.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no requirement for cost sharing.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Applications are available through Grants.gov APPLY. If an applicant does not have Internet access, applications can be requested from Jeffery Adkins at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413 or phone him at 843-740-1244 or email < Jeffery.Adkins@noaa.gov >.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

This announcement is a call for proposals for work under the Center's LCR and Outreach Programs. The programs' goal is to help Federal, state, and local resource managers include ecosystem processes in their resource management, regulatory, and land-use planning decisions. The programs and the cooperator will work toward this goal by examining the interrelationships among ecological, land use, and human demographic and social and economic trends, and by developing an environmental characterization that allows management practices to reflect those relationships. This announcement further requires the cooperator to perform three or more social assessments, each assessment focusing on a different jurisdiction within the selected region (all may not be within the same state). These assessments shall be performed to generate a social atlas (a spatial representation of the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of a community using maps, spatial data layers, etc.) and other information needed to assess impacts of future land use change and other resource management actions. The human dimensions component of this characterization shall include but not be limited to the products of the social assessments. Environmental characterizations have both narrative and geospatial components; these include detailed

descriptions of the focal management needs and examinations of potential solutions, as well as a spatial database, and a customized GIS interface. Characterizations are produced in a digital format and distributed either via CD-ROM or the Internet. The LCR Program and its cooperators are currently working on, or have completed, a number of characterizations. Overviews of these characterizations and of the LCR program are available through the Internet at < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/lcr> >. An overview of the Outreach program is available through the Internet at < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/outreach/> >.

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: development of spatial models and analyses to address the identified management needs; guidance in the development of social, economic and other human dimension information and analyses; design of Geographic Information System (GIS) and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) architectures; and compilation of final products onto CD-ROM or Internet sites. Any questions about appropriate roles for the Center can be directed to <Jeffery.Adkins@noaa.gov>. Cooperators are responsible for managing the project and coordinating with the Center; identifying the management needs that guide development of the characterization; identifying the information required to address the needs; developing and collecting the information (text, tables, graphics, charts, and maps) and tools (organizational structure and models) required to address the management needs; developing partnerships with other members of the resource management community; developing spatial data and metadata; determining how the products should be organized to maximize usefulness within the resource management community; and distributing the products to the coastal management community and conducting training in their use. All proposals must follow this format by including the following sections:

a. Goal(s), Objective(s), and Geographic Area. Identify on a map and describe in the narrative the specific geographic area that will be examined.

1. Identify the specific management objective(s) of the project, including: The management goals that are currently not being achieved; how the characterization products from this cooperative agreement will significantly address that deficiency; and the benefits that will result to the cooperators, partners, public, and resource management community.

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 characterization. Summarize the status of any ongoing efforts by the cooperator and partners to address these objectives.

c. Audience. Identify potential users of the characterization, describe how they will use the characterization in their management of natural resources, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the characterization.

d. Proposed Work Plan. Provide a general methodology that: outlines the

expected narrative of the characterization CD-ROM or Web site; identifies geospatial data needs, existing sources, and plan for acquiring or compiling data; and describes the decision-support tool, anticipated output, and uses for the intended audience; divides the project according to a timeline into discrete steps; identifies critical decision points; discusses any obstacles to completing the project that may require special planning; identifies a plan for disseminating the products and training coastal managers in their use; explicitly outlines the respective roles of the cooperator, partners, and the Center. 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 produce the characterization. The work plan that is required for the proposal is less detailed but should demonstrate that the cooperator and partners have sufficient local knowledge of the management problems to lead an innovative effort directed toward developing appropriate solutions. The outline for the narrative portions of the characterization should list the major topics (e.g., physical environment, economic trends) and immediate subordinate themes (e.g., geology, industry profile). The outline also should clearly allow reviewers to ascertain the balance between ecological, human dimensions, and geospatial components of the characterization, and provide a quality control plan that includes a plan for reviewing the content of the characterization.

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, content development, and review of the characterization products, 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. The timeline should include three months at the end to work with the Center on final assembly, review, and editing of the products.

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. The budget narrative also shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work and shall identify the elements of the project that the cooperator would recommend for revision or elimination in the event that sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on

October 3, 2005. 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. Applications received after that time will not be reviewed.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the Center's LCR and Outreach Programs 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 LCR and Outreach Programs. The Center's LCR and Outreach Programs are seeking applications for non-construction projects.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY. For applicants without internet access, send applications to 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413.

If the Grants.gov Web site is not used, the applicant must submit one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the proposals and related forms to the Coastal Services Center. No e-mail or fax copies will be accepted. All 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.

Any US Postal Service correspondence, except for applications, should be sent to the attention of Jeffery Adkins, NOAA Coastal Services Center, room 238A, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413.

V. Application Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria (With Weights)

a. Importance/relevance and Applicability of proposal to the program goals (20 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 grant offered by the LCR and Outreach Programs this includes: How well the proposal demonstrates the regional and national significance of the management issue, needs, and objectives that will guide development of the environmental characterization. At a minimum, the proposal must identify management goals that are not currently being achieved, describe how characterization products from this cooperative agreement will significantly address that deficiency, and state the benefits that will result to the public and resource management community.

b. Technical/scientific merit (25 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 grant offered by the LCR and Outreach Programs 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 four characterization components will address local management needs. This criterion includes such factors as the technical merit of the process that the cooperator has outlined for developing the characterization and the proposed role for the Center in its development. How well the proposed work will integrate technology; human dimensions and ecological information; and public participation to accomplish project goals and objectives. This criterion measures both the scope of the proposed project and the integration of its various components.

c. Overall qualifications of applicants (25 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the grant offered by the LCR and Outreach Programs 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, letters of support from users and partners, and a plan for disseminating the products and training the coastal management community in their use.

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 grant offered by the LCR and Outreach Programs 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 grant offered by the LCR and Outreach Programs this includes: How well the applicant integrates outreach and education activities into the work in order to assure that the project outputs will significantly address the management issue(s) targeted by the project.

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 a proposal is justified to be awarded out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors listed in the section 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 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) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
- (4) Program priorities and policy factors
- (5) Applicant's prior award performance
- (6) Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
- (7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before Recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

4. Start Dates

March 1, 2006 or later should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Federal Program Officer for this Cooperative Agreement.

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 from the Grants Officer either by postal mail or electronically.

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

2. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) 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). **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.

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 Federal 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 Jeffery Adkins by telephone at 843-740-1244 or by email at < Jeffery.Adkins@noaa.gov > or Ginger Hinchcliff by telephone at 843-740-1184 or by email at < ginger.hinchcliff@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.