

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY09 Ocean Exploration Omnibus - Ocean Exploration

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: OAR-OER-2009-2001484

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.460, Special Oceanic and Atmospheric Projects.

Dates: Completed pre-proposals are required for all categories and must be received by 5 p.m. (EDT) on August 29, 2008. Full proposal submissions must be received by 5 p.m. (EDT) on October 21, 2008. Applications received after the above deadlines will not be considered.

Funding Opportunity Description: OE is seeking pre-proposals and full proposals to support its mission, consistent with NOAA's Strategic Plan (<http://www.nrc.noaa.gov>), to search, investigate, and document poorly-known and unknown areas of the ocean and Great Lakes through interdisciplinary exploration, and to advance and disseminate knowledge of the ocean environment and its physical, chemical, and biological resources. Competitive OE proposals will be bold, innovative and interdisciplinary in their approach to Ocean Exploration. NOAA OE anticipates a total of approximately \$1,400,000 including costs for ship and submersible assets will be available through this announcement. Only exploratory proposals will be funded, any other kind of project will not be reviewed. Applicants are encouraged to visit the Ocean Explorer Web site (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) to familiarize themselves with past and present OE-funded activities. Background on how to apply and the required proposal cover sheets are accessible through the OE Office Web site at <http://www.explore.noaa.gov>.

The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission support goal of: Ecosystems - Protect, Restore, and Manage Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through Ecosystem-Based Management.

Pre-proposal submissions can be either by e-mail (preferred, send to [OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov](mailto:OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov)) or by hard-copy (send three copies to the mailing address below). If by e-mail, please put your last name in the subject heading along with the words OER Pre-proposal, e.g., "Smith OER Pre-proposal." Adobe PDF format is preferred. No facsimile pre-proposals will be accepted.

Full proposal submissions for non-Federal applicants must be submitted through Grants.gov. Federal applicants or applicants without internet access may submit hard-copies to: ATTN: Dr. Nicolas Alvarado, Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration & Research, SSMC III, 10th Floor, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. No e-mail or facsimile full proposal submissions will be accepted.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

Ocean exploration was defined by the 2000 President's panel as "discovery through disciplined diverse observations and the recording of the findings." NOAA's Ocean Exploration Program (OE) seeks to catalyze ocean discovery and understanding at our ocean and Great Lakes frontiers through bold and innovative explorations. These explorations should revolutionize our knowledge baselines by exploring, characterizing and mapping, at new and/or higher scales, the ocean's living and nonliving resources and its physical, chemical and biological characteristics. Data and observations resulting from OE expeditions will result in new discoveries, new insight, new knowledge and new frontiers and will likely lead to the revision of existing paradigms or the formulation of new paradigms in the oceans poorly known and unknown regions.

The purpose of this announcement is to invite the submission of pre-proposals and full proposals that address ocean exploration and advanced technology development.

#### B. Program Priorities

Through discovery and the systematic exploration of unknown ocean areas and phenomena, OE serves to ensure NOAA can meet its goal to, "Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources Through an Ecosystem Approach to Management" (New Priorities for the 21st Century, NOAA's Strategic Vision). The results of OE activities are cornerstones upon which ecosystems will be discovered, defined, and understood thus enabling them to be protected, restored, and managed. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of OE activities also serves NOAA's current strategic plan (New Priorities for the 21st Century - NOAA's Strategic Plan) goal to "Understand Climate Variability and Change to Enhance Society's Ability to Plan and Respond." The discovery and characterization of new ocean phenomena and dynamic processes provide essential information for understanding ocean - atmosphere connections and their influence on climate. The discovery of new habitats and species also provides essential information for understanding the effects of a changing climate on the marine resources upon which we depend.

The need for interdisciplinary ocean exploration is echoed as a priority in NOAA's 20-year research vision, Understanding Global Ecosystems to Support Informed

Decision-Making, because they provide a foundation for understanding complex relationships between ocean and terrestrial ecosystems. This need is also elaborated in NOAA's current 5-year research plan, Research in NOAA: Toward Understanding and Predicting Earth's Environment, and both the vision and the plan acknowledge the need for new ocean technologies, including new sensors and platforms as well as enhanced information and telecommunications technologies.

OE's core activities also directly address the Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy challenge of "Expanding the Scientific Frontier: The Need for Fundamental Science," which states,

"It is essential that the nation cultivate and investigate new ideas about the ocean and new approaches for exploring the marine environment that may challenge existing interpretations. In doing so, society should recognize and even encourage risk-taking in supporting the most exciting and promising ideas for making progress in understanding the ocean."

Charting The Course For Ocean Science, NSTC Joint Subcommittee On Ocean Science And Technology, Jan. 26, 2007, p.6.

OE provides a foundation for all six themes in the Ocean Research Priorities Plan through its exploration and discovery mission.

In furtherance of these objectives, OE explores, tests new ideas, utilizes new approaches, and develops new technologies. As envisioned in the Report of the President's Panel on Ocean Exploration, Discovering the Earth's Final Frontier: A U.S. Strategy for Ocean Exploration, OE also engages in partnerships with other agencies and programs, e.g., the National Science Foundation, the Department of Interior Minerals Management Service, the Census of Marine Life, and the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, to leverage its pursuit and achievement of NOAA goals.

Interdisciplinary expeditions are a keystone of NOAA's Ocean Exploration Program with scientists from multiple fields jointly exploring poorly known or unknown ocean areas. The characteristics of the habitat, region or discipline explored should suggest a potential for bold, new discoveries. Scientists are strongly encouraged to collaborate by submitting a single proposal for a multi-disciplinary expedition. Collaborations that include international representation are also encouraged. Specific thematic priorities within Ocean Exploration are:

" Survey unknown, or poorly known, regions and sea floor features (e.g., ridges, canyons, faults, seamounts, habitats) which may have economic, hazardous, or scientific importance. Conduct these surveys using advanced instrument systems to include autonomous vehicles; multi-beam sonar, side-scan sonar, and other seafloor and water column mapping technologies and systems in support of integrated ecosystem assessments;

" Discover and describe new species, new communities of organisms, and new

resources, both living and non-living, including those of economic importance and/or benefit to humanity, e.g., natural products for pharmaceutical or biotechnology applications; new hydrate, seep, or microbial environments; and, fish stocks.;

" Description of poorly-known or discovery and description of unknown communities of organisms displaying novel relationships with their environments;

" Discover and describe poorly-known or unknown physical, geological, chemical, or biological processes with far-ranging implications for the study of the earth as a whole, e.g., deep ocean currents; chemical and/or heat plumes from hydrothermal vents; benthic-pelagic and pelagic-benthic coupling; ocean-atmosphere and ocean-seabed linkages; or, other significant ocean phenomena;

" Deployment of in-situ instrumentation at poorly-known or unknown locations to explore in the time domain.

" Develop and/or apply physical, chemical, and biological oceanographic technologies to increase the pace, efficiency and scope of undersea discovery and understanding. This includes design, development and utilization of new methodologies and tools, probes, sensors, and systems to discover and understand living and non-living resources and processes.

#### Ocean Exploration Background/Requirements:

Habitat and key feature surveying includes low resolution (>10m) surveys of areas that have never been surveyed, and/or high resolution (<10m) surveys of new areas or areas that have been surveyed only at low resolution.

#### i. Ship and Submersible Assets

Vehicles required to conduct ocean explorations should be explicitly identified, including the use of Human Occupied Vehicles, Remotely Occupied Vehicles and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles. OE has not pre-paid or reserved any ship-time. If the proposed work requires funding for ship time or submersible assets, these costs should be included in the proposed budget. If you have already acquired ship time, please be sure to note this in your proposal.

#### ii. Geographic Areas of Particular Interest

All oceans, coasts and the Great Lakes will be considered.

### C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. 883d

## II. Award Information

## A. Funding Availability

In anticipation of the FY09 President's Budget, OE anticipates a total of approximately \$1,400,000 will be available through this announcement. Depending on the quality and quantity of proposals received, OE anticipates supporting approximately 4 awards through this solicitation, resulting in an average award level of approximately \$350,000.

The OE Director may hold-over select proposals submitted for 2009 funding for consideration in 2010.

The amount of funding available through this announcement is subject to the final FY09 appropriation for Ocean Exploration. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project or to obligate all or any part of available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate or continue research activities where funding has been recommended by OE. The exact amount of funds that OE may recommend be granted will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Future opportunities for submitting proposals may be available and will depend on OE funding levels.

## B. Project/Award Period

The current principal focus of the OE program is on one to two year projects. Proposals must include sufficient resources to analyze, publish and archive data and results of the project. Applications must include a scope of work, budgets for each year and a total for the entire award period.

The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120-150 days after the annual NOAA funding appropriation from Congress. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in proposing research activities.

## C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Proposals selected for funding from NOAA scientists will be funded through an intra-agency transfer. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency transfer. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the Federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as specifying direction or redirection of the scope of work due to inter-relationships with other projects or stipulating that the recipient must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a

project may continue. By receiving funding from OE, all applicants agree to certain expectations for sample collection, education and outreach, data management and Web site requirements. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff may become members of the at-sea science party serving roles as Data Managers or Web Coordinators. For more details please refer to section VIII of this document.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education; other nonprofits; commercial organizations; foreign governments; organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments; international organizations; state, local and Indian tribal governments; and Federal agencies. PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required.

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

##### i. Funding Requirements

Not Applicable.

##### ii. Potential Partners

As evidenced by the success of funded research under the auspices of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), the Ocean Exploration Program encourages partnerships between academia, government and industry. While not a requirement, proposals demonstrating partnerships with at least two of the above sectors are encouraged. Partnership with industry is strongly encouraged. OE also encourages investigators to seek complementary funding for their proposed projects through linked proposals to other agencies, both internal and external to NOAA.

##### iii. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary International, Federal, State and Local Government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed

work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse environmental impact. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of cultural resource or environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine the environmental impact of a proposal under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

#### IV. Application and Submission Information

##### A. Address to Request Application Package

There is a two-page pre-proposal application required for a complete pre-proposal submission (Section IV. B. 1.), in addition to the required cover sheet which may be obtained through the OE Office web site at: <http://www.explore.noaa.gov/research-funding-opportunities>, which is not in Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>), but must be included to have a complete submission.

Full proposal application packages for non-Federal applicants are available at <http://www.grants.gov/>.

For applicants without internet access, hard copies of the OE cover sheet and the application package can be obtained by contacting Dr. Nicolas Alvarado, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration & Research, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, Rm. 10244, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, by phone at (301) 734-1015, or email: [OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov](mailto:OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov).

##### B. Content and Form of Application

###### 1. Pre-proposal Contents

Complete two-page pre-proposals are required for all submissions and should be compelling, concise and clear. They should identify project priorities and objectives, describe how the proposed project relates to OE's mission and themes (as described in Section 1. A & B above), identify all major collaborators and their expertise, and include a budget summarizing the major categories of effort, including funds for analysis, publication of results and archiving of field data. Incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered.

As appropriate, additional information should be supplied regarding 1) any vessels, platforms or other critical assets required to technically achieve the goals and their costs; 2) any auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project; 3) time or

operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations; 4) anticipated outputs (e.g. potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and/or education and outreach material) and 5) results from past Ocean Exploration funding (if appropriate).

All pre-proposal submissions must: 1) include the 2-page OE coversheet; 2) not exceed two additional single-sided typewritten pages and; 3) be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in at least 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins. The Principal Investigator's last name should be typed in the bottom right-hand corner of each page. See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.F. and IV.G. for submission procedures and addresses. Pre-proposals submitted after the due dates will not be reviewed.

## 2. Full Proposal Contents

Full proposals must include the following, unless otherwise indicated, in the order listed. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in application not being reviewed. Excluding the coversheet, please number each page and label it with the Principal Investigator's last name in the bottom right-hand corner (not required: highly recommended for tracking purposes only). As appropriate, all full proposal text should be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in at least 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins. See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.F. and IV.G. for submission procedures and addresses. Proposals submitted after the due dates will not be considered. No appendices are permitted.

a. Completed 2-page Proposal Coversheet: Principal and Co-Principal investigators should be identified.

b. Maximum One-Page Executive Summary: Describe the essential elements of the project being proposed. Include: 1) Title, 2) List of names, contact details and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, 3) Funding request for each year of the project as well as total funding requested, and 4) A concise statement of the compelling objectives and benefits of the project and the rationale for the work proposed;

c. Project Description: The project description is not to exceed 15 pages, including all text and any tables and visual materials (e.g., charts, graphs, maps, photographs). The 15-page limit does not include the Coversheet, Executive Summary, Budget and Budget Justification, Literature Citation, Current and Pending Support, Curriculum Vitae, Letters of Commitment, and required forms.

Successful proposals will include bold, innovative ideas, an interdisciplinary approach, and an explanation of how their proposal fulfills OE's mission and themes (as described in Section I. A & B):

" Aspects to consider include:

" Does the proposed effort focus on exploration? Exploration expands the breadth of knowledge; research expands the depth of knowledge. How much is already known about the project/area you are proposing? Only exploration proposals will be funded.

" What is the proposal's scientific, technical, historical, cultural or socioeconomic importance and merit? Is it likely to lead to new discoveries, new

insight, new knowledge or new frontiers? Will it challenge existing paradigms or the lead to the formulation of new paradigms?

- i) Describe the goals and objectives of your project, the rationale for your approach, the methodology you propose to use and your justification for the proposed effort.
  - ii) Provide a brief discussion of the personnel chosen for the overall effort, and as appropriate, how the team expertise will cover the interdisciplinary aspects of the effort,
  - iii) Any auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project,
  - iv) Time or operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations, and
  - v) Anticipated outputs (e.g. potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and/or education and outreach material) and cost.
- Proposals should also include a description and justification of data funding needs and explain how data will be made accessible or available to the public.
- d. Summary of Results from Past Ocean Exploration Support (if applicable). Concise summary of results and achievements, including publications from past Ocean Exploration funding.
  - e. Summary of Relevant Current Funding Support: Applicants must provide information on all their current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including potential subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance or that requires a portion of time of the principal investigator or other senior personnel should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated.
  - f. Brief Resumes for Each Investigator: two pages maximum for all Principal and Co-Principal Investigator(s) involved in carrying out the proposal including relevant recent publications and references,
  - g. Detailed Tabular Budget: Separate budgets within the single proposal must be provided if more than one funding action is anticipated (e.g., if funds are to be allocated to more than one institution or agency through subcontracts).
  - h. Budget Justification: including justification for how labor hours and travel costs were determined, justification for non-standard items as well as cost share/in-kind contribution.
  - i. NEPA questions or a statement: There are none.
  - j. Forms: Applicants must submit a complete NOAA grant application package provided from Grants.gov.
  - k. List of Suggested Reviewers or Reviewers Not to Include (optional): Applicants may include a list of suggested reviewers (name, e-mail addresses and phone numbers) of five unconflicted potential peer-reviewers who they feel are especially well qualified to review the proposal. Applicants may also designate reviewers which are to be avoided, including potentially disqualifying conflicts of interest, e.g., thesis student/advisor, recent collaborators, etc...

See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.F. and IV.G. for submission procedures and addresses.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Completed pre-proposals are required for all categories and must be received by 5 p.m. (EDT) on August 29, 2008. Before 5:00 pm (EDT), an auto-reply message will notify applicants that their email with pre-proposal material was received. After 5:00 pm (EDT), an auto-reply message will notify applicant that their email with pre-proposal material submission is late and will not be considered. A complete pre-proposal is a prerequisite for submission of a full proposal. Applicants will receive an email encouraging or discouraging a full proposal submission by September 1, 2008. If you have not received a reply by September 5, 2008 contact OE (OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov) as soon as possible.

Full proposal submissions must be received by 5 p.m. (EDT) on October 21, 2008. Applications received after the above deadlines will not be considered. For applications submitted through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), 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 in Silver Spring, Maryland. For applicants without internet access or federal applicants, hard copies of the cover sheet and the application package can be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 734-1015 as well.

Pre-proposals and Full-Proposals submitted after their respective cutoff date and time will not be considered. Please note applicants may have to register or renew their central contractor registration prior to submitting to [grants.gov](http://grants.gov). [Grants.gov](http://grants.gov) will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the Central Contractor Registration website (<http://www.ccr.gov/>).

### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State's process under EO 12372. The names and addresses of the SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's Web site:<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

### E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

## F. Other Submission Requirements

Pre-proposal submissions can be either by e-mail (preferred, send to OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov) or by hard-copy (send three copies to the mailing address below). If by e-mail, please put your last name in the subject heading along with the words OER Pre-proposal, e.g., "Smith OER Pre-proposal." Adobe PDF format is preferred. No facsimile pre-proposals will be accepted.

Full proposal submissions for non-Federal applicants must be submitted through Grants.gov. Federal applicants or applicants without internet access may submit hard-copies to the address below.

No e-mail or facsimile full proposal submissions will be accepted.

Address for Hard-Copy Submissions: ATTN: Dr. Nicolas Alvarado, Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration & Research, SSMC III, 10th Floor, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

Hard copy applications should be binder-clipped together (not bound or stapled) and printed on one-side only. Three signed, hard copy originals are required (use blue/black ink). Since reviewers will require access to an electronic copy, applicants submitting hard copies are highly encouraged to also submit a digital version in one Adobe PDF file on CD-ROM.

Pre-proposal submissions can be either by e-mail (preferred, send to OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov) or by hard-copy (send three copies to the mailing address below). If by e-mail, please put your last name in the subject heading along with the words OER Pre-proposal, e.g., "Smith OER Pre-proposal." Adobe PDF format is preferred. No facsimile pre-proposals will be accepted.

Full proposal submissions for non-Federal applicants must be submitted through Grants.gov. Federal applicants or applicants without internet access may submit hard-copies to: ATTN: Dr. Nicolas Alvarado, Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration & Research, SSMC III, 10th Floor, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

No e-mail or facsimile full proposal submissions will be accepted.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

i. Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The OE Director, in consultation with the program staff, will make the decision to encourage or discourage full proposal submissions based on one or more of the following factors: (1) Importance, Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals and thematic priorities (see Section I.A. Program & Notice Objectives and Section I.B. Program Priorities & Guidance); (2) Scientific and Technical Merit, (3) Overall qualifications of applicants, (4) Project Costs, (5) Logistical feasibility (e.g., ship availability), given OE resource availability and (7) Consistency with the priorities of this announcement. The final decision to submit a full proposal is up to the applicant.

ii. Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Full proposals will be evaluated and rated individually by three or more independent peer reviewers and/or a peer-review panel. The following criteria will be used to review proposals using the corresponding weight value:

1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (40%):

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to appropriate NOAA, international, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the OE review process this includes the degree to which the proposal addresses and supports OE's mission, objectives, themes and priorities (see Section I.A. Program & Notice Objectives and Section I.B. Program Priorities & Guidance). A central aspect of this criteria is whether the proposed effort is exploratory in nature (expanding the breadth of knowledge) as opposed to a research focus (expanding the depth of knowledge on any particular topic).

2. Scientific and Technical Merit (40%): This criterion ascertains 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 OE review process, in addition to the scientific, and/or technical merit of the effort, review criteria include whether: a) the effort is interdisciplinary with suitable plans and methods, b) the anticipated results (as appropriate, scientific, technical, historical, cultural, societal or economic) will have high downstream impact, e.g., leading to the revision of existing paradigms, the formulation of new paradigms or new frontiers of knowledge or activity.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10%): This ascertains whether the applicant(s) possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the OE review process this includes the qualifications of the applicant(s), the strength, diversity and depth of any partnership to accomplish the work proposed, as well as accomplishments from past OE funding including timely publication of results, if applicable.

4. Project Costs (10%): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the OE review process this includes the reasonableness of project costs, relative to the scope of work proposed and the available funds.

5. Outreach and education (no 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. This criterion is not used in this competition.

## B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

If proposals are determined to be in compliance and complete, a proposal will be subjected to peer-review. Peer reviewers shall rate the individual proposals using the evaluation criteria and percentage weights provided above and provide summary comment. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in the peer-review process, which may include external mail reviews and/or a peer-review panel. Peer-review panelists will not be asked to reach consensus on individual proposals. Based on the individual scores, summary comments and, as appropriate, summaries and scores by the panelists, the OE Senior Scientist, in consultation with appropriate OE staff, will make funding recommendations to the OE Director. In making the final selections, the OE Director will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors in section V.C.

## C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the following factors.

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - a. Geographically (This includes ship availability)
  - b. By type of institutions
  - c. By type of partners
  - d. By research areas
  - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors (as in Section I.B).
5. Applicants\_ prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

OE will notify all applicants (Federal and non-Federal) of the results of a peer review and the final recommendation to award or decline funding of a proposal in writing, by postal mail or email approximately 120-180 days after receipt of a full proposal depending on the peer-review conducted (mail only, panel only, or mail and panel). Successful applicants will receive notification from the NOAA Grants Management Division that the application has been funded. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows OE funding of the project to begin. Notifications will be issued through electronic mail to the proposal's Authorizing Official.

### VI. Award Administration Information

#### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and OE. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of grant funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division.

#### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

##### Department of Commerce Requirements.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) is applicable to this solicitation.

##### Limitation of Liability.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal

or project preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities identified prior to final award of a grant. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

### National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site:

<http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/leaving.cgi?from=leavingFR.html&log=linklog&to=http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA,

<http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/leaving.cgi?from=leavingFR.html&log=linklog&to=http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>

NAO216--6--TOC.pdf, NEPA Questionnaire,

<http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/leaving.cgi?from=leavingFR.html&log=linklog&to=http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations,

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/leaving.cgi?from=leavingFR.html&log=linklog&to=http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/leaving.cgi?from=leavingFR.html&log=linklog&to=http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). Consequently, as part of an

applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

### C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin

with the start date of the project. Progress reports are due either electronically or by mail directly to the NOAA Ocean Exploration office and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports should detail collaborative activities that have occurred during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information including financial reports.

## VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration at (301) 734-1015 or submit inquiries via email to the Frequently Asked Questions address: OAR.OE.FAQ@noaa.gov. Email inquiries should include the Principal Investigator's name in the subject heading. Inquiries can be mailed to:

ATTN:  
Dr. Nicolas Alvarado (Proposal Manager)  
NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration  
1315 East West Highway  
SSMC3, 10th Floor,  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
20910

## VIII. Other Information

By receiving funding from OE, all applicants agree to the following expectations for sample collection, education and outreach, data management and Web site requirements. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff may become members of the at-sea science party serving roles as Data Managers or Web Coordinators.

### A. Sample Collection

In certain cases, the OE Program may initiate the collection of living/non-living samples during the research on a NOAA or NOAA-chartered vessel. This may occur when an expedition 1) does not plan to collect living and/or nonliving samples or collects the samples for purposes other than for pharmaceutical/biotechnology or mineral/new energy discovery uses, or 2) will only conduct a limited analysis of a collected specimen. The OE Program will work with the expedition team to ensure the sampling does not significantly interfere with or reduce the overall objectives of the expedition. In no case, will cultural material be removed or collected as a result of this sampling.

### B. Education & Outreach

All funded applicants and collaborators are strongly encouraged to cooperate with

OE in facilitating education and outreach activities associated with their proposals. This may include participation in the development of lessons, professional development for teachers, accommodation of a teacher/educator-at-sea, participation in a media event or press conference to describe the expedition and its findings, at-sea media participation, and support for public/student tours of the research vessel and interaction with scientists in shipboard labs. Proposals need not craft a specific education and outreach component, although creativity is encouraged on behalf of the applicant. The OE program will assess and provide an appropriate education and/or outreach activity in collaboration with the applicant. NOAA's Ocean Explorer Website (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) is the principal vehicle for chronicling and documenting all missions supported by NOAA and OE. Mission participants are required to provide information pre-, during, and post-cruise for this site such as cruise tracks; preliminary bathymetry; characterization of data collected; photographic or other images from the mission; and be available to participate in interviews, essays, or written materials. A minimum of 15 digital, still images and 10 short video clips (one minute or less each) will be identified during the expedition by the PI, as appropriate, to illustrate the expedition on NOAA an/or other Web coverage, and for distribution to media. These materials will be appropriately credited and will, by agreement, be in the public domain. OE will provide an OE Web Coordinator to work with the applicant and science party to determine the content of the Web offering, and to develop and implement a Web production plan.

#### C. Data Management Guidance (Sharing of Findings, Data and Other Research/NSF)

NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration & Research (OER) is in accord with the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration call for a Federal program that promotes data management and dissemination to ensure that discoveries can have maximum impacts in the research, commercial, regulatory, and educational realms. OER advocates open scientific communication and expects significant findings from supported research and educational activities to be promptly submitted for publication with authorship that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved. It expects PIs to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of the work. It also encourages grantees to share software and inventions, once appropriate protection for them has been secured, and otherwise act to make the innovations they embody widely useful and usable.

OER will put these principles into practice, in ways appropriate to field and circumstances, through the proposal review process; through award negotiations and conditions; and through appropriate support and incentives for data cleanup, documentation, dissemination, storage and the like. Adjustments and, where essential, exceptions may be allowed to safeguard the rights of individuals and subjects, the validity of results and the integrity of collections, or to accommodate legitimate interests of investigators.

Each applicant should articulate his/her willingness to comply with these principles. The proposal Project Description should outline the plans for

preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, samples, physical collections, curricula materials and other related research and education products. Plans for handling of data and other products will be considered in the review process. Grant recipients are responsible for archiving all acquired data sets and associated products in the appropriate NOAA archive (i.e., National Oceanographic Data Center, National Geophysical Data Center, National Coastal Data Development Center, National Climate Data Center, and the NOAA Central Library) as soon as practical and, in no case, later than two years following the completion of the expedition. Within 60 days of completion of the expedition/field work/etc, grant recipients should provide a collection level metadata record (e.g., number & type of data, and description of the data collected) to the OE Data Manager for submission to the National Data Clearinghouse. This record should be created in compliance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standards for Digital Geospatial Metadata (FGDC-STD-001-1998) in accordance with Executive Order 12906, Co-ordinating Geographic Data Acquisition and Access: The National Spatial Data Infrastructure dated April 1994

[http://www.fgdc.gov/policyandplanning/executive\\_order](http://www.fgdc.gov/policyandplanning/executive_order). For continuing observations, data inventories should be submitted periodically if there is a significant change in location, type or frequency of such observations. Archiving of any specific archaeological site information that is considered sensitive material under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) will not be required to be in compliance with these requirements.

For a subset of funded expeditions, OE will facilitate data collection, management and archival by providing the in-field services of an OE Data Manager. The OE Data Manager will be responsible for documenting all expedition activities (e.g., science, education and outreach, transits, shuttles) in the OE Cruise Information Management System (CIMS). The metadata records contained in the CIMS will be provided to the Science Team for inclusion in required reports, and will be distributed to the appropriate NOAA archive.

To aid in the Census of Marine Life (CoML; <http://www.coml.org>) goal of determining the distribution, abundance and diversity of marine life, all projects are encouraged to maintain their biological species information on-line and linked (either directly or via a Federal data center) to the CoML database, the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) (<http://www.iobis.org>). A statement to this effect should be included in the proposal. Biological samples should be registered with the Census of Marine Life's OBIS database (<http://www.iobis.org>) or a Federal database that is linked to OBIS.

Other data or data products may also be requested at the discretion of the OE Director for administrative, scientific, or educational use. All such product requests will be considered in full collaboration with the applicant, and any data sensitivity issues will be handled appropriately.

PIs and their institutions are responsible for meeting all legal requirements for submission of data and research results that are imposed by foreign governments as a condition of that government's granting research clearances. Each PI and institution must determine their legal obligations in this respect, with the assistance of the Department of State and NOAA, as necessary.

The applicant is encouraged to consider budgeting appropriate resources for any anticipated costs to comply with these data management principles. This generally includes budgeting for the following types of activities: reports, reprints, page charges or other journal costs (except costs for prior or early publication); necessary illustrations; cleanup, documentation, storage and indexing of data and databases; development, documentation and debugging of software; and storage, preservation, documentation, indexing, etc., of physical specimens, collections or fabricated items.

The OE Data Manager, when not otherwise specifically designated in each Grant or Contract award, will be the NOAA National Coastal Data Development Center's OER Liaison Officer (228-688-2936 or toll free 1-866-732-2382).

#### D. Proprietary or Privileged Information

Patentable ideas, trade secrets, privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, disclosure of which may harm the proposer, should be included in proposals only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Such information should be clearly marked in the proposal or included as a separate statement accompanying the proposal and should be appropriately labeled with a legend such as, "The following is (proprietary or confidential) information that (name of proposing organization) requests not be released to persons outside the Government, except for purposes of review and evaluation." While NOAA will make every effort to prevent unauthorized access to such material, it is not responsible or in any way liable for the release of such material.

#### E. Release of Grantee Proposal Information

A proposal that results in a NOAA award will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the proposal aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NOAA will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the proposal or as otherwise authorized by law.

Portions of proposals resulting in grants that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the Government or the grantee owns a right, title, or interest (including a non-exclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NOAA will notify the grantee of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the grantee may advise NOAA of such inventions described, or other confidential, commercial or proprietary information contained in the proposal.