

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: FY2005 Coastal Services Center (CSC) Environmental Characterization of a Coastal Estuary, Watershed, or Special Management Area located entirely or in part within California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, Pacific U.S. Island Territories, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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

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

Dates: Proposals must be received by the CSC no later than 5 p.m., local time, October 1, 2004.

Funding Opportunity Descriptions: Landscape Characterization and Restoration (LCR) program, seeks proposals where the Center will enter into a two-year cooperative agreement which the cooperator and the Center will jointly develop an environmental characterization of a coastal estuary, watershed, or special management area located entirely or in part within within California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, Pacific U.S. Island Territories, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description for the LCR Program

The Center's LCR program seeks proposals for a two-year cooperative agreement under which a cooperator and the Center will jointly develop an environmental characterization of a coastal estuary, watershed, or special management area located entirely or in part within California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, Pacific U.S. Island Territories, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The characterization must focus on one or more needs of resource managers of the chosen estuary, watershed, or special management area, and must emphasize examinations of ecosystem function through the integration of physical, ecological, and socioeconomic information. Products from the characterization must include three components: a narrative that provides this integrated context and clearly communicates the resource management needs, a geospatial database, and a decision support tool that makes use of geospatial data. The cooperator will choose the management needs that will focus the characterization, such as but are not limited to: a regional habitat restoration plan; watershed management, including addressing non-point source pollution; integrating cultural/traditional approaches to resource management; smart growth; or invasive species management. Products from the characterization must clearly help managers make resource management, regulatory, or

land-use planning decisions and 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 and for training to coastal managers in their use.

NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process and accelerating the award of financial assistance to qualified recipients. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, this solicitation announces that approximately \$300,000 may be available in FY2005, although an 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. No more than one award is 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 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 \$300,000 and is subject to the availability of FY 2005 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 socioeconomic information and analyses; design of GIS and 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 in response to these guidelines.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

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, 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. 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 Landscape Characterization and Restoration Program. The program's goal is to help Federal, state, and local resource managers include ecosystem processes in their resource management, regulatory, and land-use planning decisions. The program and program partners will work toward this goal by examining interrelationships among ecological, land uses, human demographic, and socioeconomic trends and by developing an environmental characterization that allows management practices to reflect those relationships. 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, a customized Geographic Information System interface, and a decision support tool. Characterizations are produced in a digital format and distributed either via CD-ROM or the Internet. The Landscape Characterization and Restoration Program and its cooperators are currently working on, or have completed, characterizations of the ACE Basin (South Carolina), Kachemak Bay (Alaska), Rookery Bay/Belle Meade watershed (Florida), coastal Rhode Island, the central California coast, Northern Puget Sound (Washington), the Wai'anae region of Oahu (Hawaii), and the Apalachicola River and Bay Watershed (Florida). Overviews of the program and these characterizations are available through the Internet at < <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/lcr> >.

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 socioeconomic information and analyses; design of GIS and 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 <Pace.Wilber@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, how those users will incorporate 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:

2. 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 show how the proposed decision support tool will be integrated with the other information in the characterization. The outline also should clearly allow reviewers to ascertain the balance between physical, ecological, socioeconomic, 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.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due by 5 p.m. EDT, October 1, 2004.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the Center's LCR 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 LCR program. The Center's LCR 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). 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 1, 2004, deadline. All appendix material must be unbound.

Address to submit applications: Applicant should submit application package to NOAA, Coastal Services Center, to the attention of Pace Wilber, Room 234B, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413. Applications received after that time will not be reviewed. The applicant must submit one original and two copies of the proposal(s).

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 LCR 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 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 (40 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 LCR 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 three 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; socioeconomic, physical, 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 (10 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the LCR 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, 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 LCR 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 LCR program 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 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 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

4. Start Dates

March 1, 2005 or later should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the LCR 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 for the LCR program, contact Pace Wilber at 843-740-1235 (phone) or 843-740-1315 (fax) or email him at < Pace.Wilber@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.