

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: NOAA Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Program - FY2013 Funding Competition

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-CSC-2013-2003510

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

Dates: Proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. ET, February 11, 2013. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication by Grants.gov will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy applications will be date and time-stamped when the applications are received. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this document is to advise eligible regional ocean partnerships, tribal governments and state, local, and territory governments, institutions of higher learning, and non-profit and for-profit organizations (requirements described in full announcement) that NOAA is soliciting proposals for competitive funding for Regional Ocean Partnerships that advance national priorities including regional marine and Great Lakes planning efforts.

The Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Program (ROPFP) will support two categories of activities:

- 1) Activities that contribute to achieving the priorities identified by Regional Ocean Partnerships (ROPs) while also advancing national priorities including marine and Great Lakes planning efforts; and
- 2) ROP Development and Governance Support for operations and governance of existing ROPs, and for start-up costs of those regions beginning ROPs.

Eligible entities must submit to NOAA proposals on or before February 11, 2013 in order to participate in this Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 funding opportunity. Total anticipated funding within FY 2013 is approximately \$4,000,000 and is subject to the availability of FY 2013 appropriations. Additional funds from NOAA or other Federal agencies may be used for FY 2013 or multi-year awards from this competition. The start date on proposals should be October 1, 2013.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

This Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Program (ROPFP) is focused on advancing effective coastal and ocean management through regional ocean partnerships, including the purposes and goals of the National Ocean Policy set out in the July 2010 Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force
http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/OPTF_FinalRecs.pdf.

Regional Ocean Partnerships (ROP) have been established to facilitate the effective management of ocean and coastal resources across jurisdictional boundaries by improving communications, aligning priorities, and enhancing resource-sharing between states with support and involvement from Federal agencies as well as other levels of government and a wide array of partners. For the purposes of this funding opportunity, NOAA will consider the following regions eligible for developing ROPFP funding proposals: Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, Great Lakes, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, West Coast, Hawai'i, Pacific Islands (including Hawai'i), and Alaska/Arctic. Where possible, NOAA has identified an existing lead ROP for each region (see Section III.C). For the purposes of this announcement, all non-tribal applicants must coordinate their proposals with the identified lead ROP of that region.

The ROPFP program will support two categories of activities:

1) Focus Area 1 -- Implementation of activities that address both regional ocean governance priorities identified by ROPs in public documents and advance national priorities, especially marine and Great Lakes planning efforts; and

2) Focus Area 2 -- Development and governance support for operations of existing and new ROPs, including development of plans and management of ROP activities.

The ROPFP is intended to support development or implementation of regional ocean governance priorities that also advance the national priorities, especially marine and Great

Lakes planning efforts. Regional priorities may be identified in existing ROP plans or emerge through establishing ROP efforts. The ROPFP is also intended to support regional ocean governance efforts with funds for operations and governance of existing ROPs, and for establishing ROPs in other regions if they choose.

Funding is also available to federally recognized tribes who are trying to develop or engage in regional activities that support national priorities, especially marine and Great Lakes planning efforts, and implementing priority actions that are regionally identified. NOAA will prioritize funding at least one FY 2013 application from federally recognized tribes or groups that the tribes have endorsed, via a letter from federally recognized tribal leads in the region, to submit applications on their behalf. Tribal applications are eligible for funding under both Focus Area 1 and Focus Area 2. Applicants are strongly encouraged to demonstrate coordination between federally recognized tribes within a region and identified lead ROPs in developing proposals for this competition. This funding opportunity supports the Department of Commerce's objectives to support coastal communities that are environmentally and economically sustainable, and support climate adaptation and mitigation. It also directly contributes to the NOAA strategic goal for Resilient Coasts and Economies, and the objectives therein, including Comprehensive Ocean and Coastal Planning and Management and Resilient Coastal Communities That Can Adapt to Impacts of Hazards and Climate Change.

B. Program Priorities

Focus Area 1

Focus Area 1 funds are intended to move forward the implementation of actions and projects related to joint ROP and national priorities including marine and Great Lakes planning. The July 2010 Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (OTPF) provide a framework and identify twelve guiding principles for marine and Great Lakes planning.

Proposals that address the national Areas of Special Emphasis as identified in Part 3, Section II of the OPTF Final Recommendations will receive priority in the evaluation but highest priority will be given to those projects that also support and advance marine and Great Lakes planning. Focus Area 1 applicants must indicate whether they are addressing the Framework and Guiding Principles laid out within the OPTF Final Recommendations (Part 4, Section VIII) and how these efforts will improve the capacity and actions of the ROP or tribes to undertake activities in support of marine and Great Lakes planning.

Focus Area 1 proposals that effectively articulate the connection between the proposed project, marine and Great Lakes planning, the Areas of Special Emphasis, and the priorities or actions publicly identified by the relevant ROP or tribal priorities will receive the highest rankings based upon NOAA's evaluation criteria (see Section V.A.).

Focus Area 2

The intent of Focus Area 2, ROP Development and Governance Support, is to help support operations and governance for existing ROPs; support development for regions that are initiating ROP activities as defined in Section III.C; and providing capacity to tribes to coordinate at the regional level.

Proposals may seek funding for any aspects of ROP development, support and operations. Some examples include: funding for ROP staff to coordinate and facilitate stakeholder engagement; holding stakeholder engagement meetings; identifying, developing and/or managing implementation of priority activities in the region; establishing a fiduciary entity to represent the ROP or entering into a partnership with an existing organization to act as fiduciary; and developing annual reports and other outreach materials to demonstrate the impact of regional ocean governance.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1456c (Technical Assistance).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all ROPFP awards is approximately \$4,000,000 per year and is subject to the availability of FY 2013 and FY 2014 appropriations (FY 2014 for second year award). It is anticipated that approximately 2 to 4 Focus Area 1 awards and up to 10 Focus Area 2 awards will be funded through this solicitation. The anticipated Federal funding per Focus Area 1 award (min-max) is approximately \$250,000 to \$500,000 for each year of funding. The anticipated Federal funding per Focus Area 2 award (min-max) is approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000 for each year funding. NOAA anticipates funding at least 1 application from a federally recognized tribe or a group that the tribes have endorsed. There is no limit on the number of proposals from each region. Applicants may bundle multiple projects into one proposal, or may submit single projects; however, NOAA will evaluate all projects for readiness and feasibility for completion within the time frame of the anticipated award. Non-Tribal Applicants must note the requirement detailed in Section III.C for demonstration of coordination with the relevant ROP on projects. Tribal applicants must include letters of support from regional tribal leaders as explained in Section III.C.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this Federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award.

Proposal preparation costs shall not be included within the project application budget. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative funding agreements in order to receive funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Both Focus Area 1 and Focus Area 2 projects will be awarded as multi-year awards. Proposed projects may request funding for up to two years. For multi-year proposals, applicants must include project plans and budgets for each year of the project. When a multi-year proposal is approved, funding initially will be provided for only the first year of the program. Once awarded, those awards that request more than one year of funding will not compete for funding in subsequent years. Funding in year two is contingent upon availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

Proposals not funded in FY 2013 may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications must be written as cooperative agreements and the proposal must clearly identify this funding instrument in the proposal abstract and cover sheet. The abstract and cover sheet must identify the focus area targeted by the proposal. Applicants must clearly articulate the Federal roles and responsibilities of all Federal agencies involved in implementing the proposal.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

All state, local, territory and tribal governments, institutions of higher learning, non-profit and for-profit organizations that may receive and expend Federal funds as legal entities are eligible to apply. Foreign governments are not eligible to serve as the lead applicant for an ROP application, but applicants may choose to collaborate with and provide support to foreign governments and international organizations.

Please note the requirement detailed in Section III.C for demonstration of involvement and endorsement with the relevant ROP on projects and funding amounts proposed for non-tribal applicants. Proposals endorsed by both the ROP and the federally recognized tribes

within the region will be eligible to compete for all of the funding available through this competition.

Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement, but may serve as collaborative project partners. If Federal agencies are collaborators, applicants must provide detail on the level of Federal engagement in the application. Examples might include, but are not limited to: providing additional funding or in-kind services; serving in a review capacity; or participating on priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams.

The lead applicant on any proposal will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the purposes of, and in a manner consistent with, this program, including any funds awarded to an eligible sub-awardee.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no requirement for cost sharing.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

In order to be eligible to compete, a project or applicant from non-tribal applicants must meet the following criteria, as applicable to the proposed project and Focus Area:

1) Represent or directly partner with an identified ROP (listed below); or

2) For those regions without an existing ROP (e.g. Alaska), the applicant must possess the authority, proven capacity, and regional relationships to effectively coordinate the development of regional ocean partnership priorities. The Office of the Governor must provide a letter of support for each proposal. Proposals submitted without the Governor's letter of support will be ineligible for this competition. Focus Area 1 proposals must outline steps towards developing an ROP and must be coordinated with an application under Focus Area 2 in order to demonstrate commitment on behalf of the state and entities in developing an ROP. Focus Area I proposals submitted without a coordinating Focus Area 2 proposal will be considered ineligible for this competition

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, each proposal from a region with an existing ROP and that is not submitted by a tribe or tribal designee must include a letter of support or endorsement from the lead ROP for that region (identified below). The letter must confirm that the proposed project has been evaluated for its contributions to regional ROP priorities, and specifically indicate concurrence with the recommended approach and proposal funding amounts. Proposals submitted without a letter of support or endorsement

from the lead ROP for the region will be considered ineligible for the competition. The existing lead ROPs identified for each region for the purposes of the ROPFP are:

- 1) Northeast Regional Ocean Council
- 2) Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean
- 3) South Atlantic Alliance
- 4) Gulf of Mexico Alliance
- 5) West Coast Governors' Alliance on Ocean Health
- 6) Council of Great Lakes Governors
- 7) Caribbean Regional Ocean Partnership
- 8) Pacific Regional Ocean Partnership
- 9) Hawai'i Ocean Resources Management Plan

Federally recognized Tribal governments may apply directly for these funds but require a letter of endorsement from the applicable tribal leaders in the region affected by the proposal. Tribal applications are eligible for both Focus Area 1 and 2 proposals and will be evaluated using the same requirements and criteria as the other proposals including having a regional scope, with an emphasis on marine and Great Lakes planning activities. Applicants are encouraged to show communication or coordination between tribes and existing or emerging regional ocean partnerships.

Allowable uses for funds:

Direct and indirect costs for administering the ROPFP award are allowable and must be incurred within the award period. Note that administrative costs may be included, but the total amount allocated for costs of this nature must be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Direct and indirect costs may include time spent by staff for project planning, implementation, and review. Applicants requesting indirect costs are required to submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with the application package,

Indirect costs must be based on the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by the applicant's cognizant Federal agency. The total amount allocated for indirect costs may not exceed the value of 20 percent of the direct costs awarded, e.g., a proposal requesting \$250,000 in direct costs should limit the indirect cost request to \$50,000.

If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, the negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (pages 4-6) state Within 90 days of the award start date, the recipient shall submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review. The recipient shall provide the Grants Officer with a copy of the transmittal letter and proposed cost rate agreement sent to the U.S. DOC:

Office of Acquisition Management

U.S. Department of Commerce

14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.

Room 641,

Washington, DC 20230

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for proposals are available through the apply function on Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages must be requested from James Lewis Free at 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413; 843-740-1185; or James.L.Free@noaa.gov .

B. Content and Form of Application

1) Focus Area 1 Proposals:

Proposal applications must be 20 pages or less (single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font and exclusive of appendices). The 20-page limit does not include the proposal title page, a table of contents (if included), the project summary (referenced below), and government forms and documentation and any appendices.

2) Focus Area 2 Proposals

Proposal applications must be 10 pages or less (single-spaced, 11 or 12-point font and exclusive of appendices). The 10-page limit does not include the proposal title page, a table of contents (if one is included), the project summary referenced below, and government forms and documentation and any appendices.

Appendices for both Focus Area 1 and Focus Area 2 proposals must be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., detailed budget information, support letters, resumes, references, lists of data sources, maps, and/or required Federal forms as noted above in Section IV.B.1). Applicants must number the pages in the proposal and any appendices. Appendices shall be paginated as stand-alone documents (individually) or as part of the larger document. Appendices must not total more than 30 total pages excluding government forms, the NEPA questionnaire, and information provided to complete government forms. The total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined must not exceed 5 megabytes in storage space. Proposals failing to comply with the format prescribed in this section will not be considered for further review.

Both Focus Area 1 and Focus Area 2 proposals must include the following:

Required Elements

All funding application packages must contain the following components:

a) Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include proposal title, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, duration of proposed project, funding type (cooperative agreement), the focus area targeted by the proposal, and amount of funding request.

b) Project Summary. Provide a one to two-page summary of the proposed project. The summary shall be written for a broad audience and contain the following sections:

i. Project Name/Title

ii. Primary Contact (name, address, phone, fax, email)

iii. Recipient Organization or Institution (If the project is intended to be administered under an existing NOAA Cooperative Institute, applicants must state which Institute will administer the award)

- iv. Other Investigators (name, affiliated organization, institution or agency)
 - v. Brief Project Summary including objectives, ties to ROP priorities and marine and Great Lakes planning processes, and intended benefits
 - vi. Partners
 - vii. Proposed funding for each year of the project.
- c) Project Description. All project descriptions (proposals) must include the following sections:
- i. Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. In particular, note the connection to regional ocean governance, including ROP priorities and where applicable, how marine and Great Lakes planning processes can be applied to address those priorities, and expected outcomes. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual reports describing progress toward these goals and objectives. Provide a description of measures that will be used to evaluate progress and success in achieving the goals and objectives of the project.
 - ii. Background. Summarize the problem to be addressed, identified needs and the status of ongoing efforts to address them. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to other ongoing or planned regional ocean governance efforts. Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project for advancing regional coastal and ocean planning and management priorities.
 - iii. Partnerships: Provide information on the range of partners, including local, state, tribal, and Federal government as well as non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry. Include the roles and support each key partner is providing and how the ROP will include and grow partnerships as appropriate to achieve the goals of both the ROP and as appropriate, marine and Great Lakes planning activities.
 - iv. Audience. Identify specific users of the project results, describe how they will use the results, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the results.
 - v. Approach. Provide a work plan that:
 - 1. Identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles of partners and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives;
 - 2. Describes how users and partners are involved in the planning and design process;

3. Addresses clear data management requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archiving that is compliant with Federal standards (see environmental data/information plan requirements in section VIII);

4. Identifies methods that will be used to ensure active and meaningful participation by all partners and appropriate stakeholders in the region; and

5. Clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Federal partners.

6. Includes measureable outcomes to evaluate success of the project.

vi. Benefits. Identify, with a high degree of specificity, the uses of the information derived from the work, and the benefits that will be achieved from those uses (by particular users of the information or by society as a whole). Document how valid user requirements are guiding the proposed work. Describe how the information from the project will be delivered to those users, and any special considerations or requirements for ensuring or improving the delivery of information or improving coastal and ocean management.

vii. Milestone Schedule. Display time lines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes.

viii. Project Budget. Provide a budget description that follows the categories and formats in the NOAA grants package (Standard Form 424-A) and a brief narrative justification of the budget.

1. Detailed budget information, such as a potential subrecipient breakout of the information in Form SF-424A must be included in an appendix. In this appendix, 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 if sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities.

2. Applicants must itemize and describe the intended use of equipment that will be purchased under the award. Applicants must complete a lease versus purchase analysis for any equipment \$5,000 or greater.

3. The budget narrative must also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants must state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants must allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. Foreign travel must receive prior approval, and therefore, must be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in a NOAA Grants

Management Division workshop for recipients, as well as for meeting with NOAA staff and/or key project personnel.

In addition, both Focus Area 1 and 2 proposals must include:

3) Appendices

a) Mandatory Detailed Budget Information, including budgets and SF-424A forms for subawards and contracts. Information must include the name of the entity receiving funds, the location of the entity receiving the funds (for example, city, state, and Congressional district), and the location of the primary place of performance under the contract/subaward.

b) Resumes. Provide resumes of the lead and co-principal investigators of the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Applicants must limit resumes to a maximum of two pages for each key investigator.

c) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> including the NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html .

As part of an applicant's package, applicants are required to complete selected sections of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (OMB Approval No.: 0648-0538) (as noted on the following page) 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). This questionnaire is located online at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf> . The applicant should complete the required sections of the questionnaire, see below; even though the entire questionnaire must be submitted as part of the application. This questionnaire will not count toward the page limits described in the announcement.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants are required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. An applicant's failure to

cooperate with NOAA shall be grounds for the denial of 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.

Applicants are required to answer the questions indicated in this Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Applicants must answer the NEPA questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible. It is important to note that one of the selection criteria is "adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination..." and NOAA may therefore decide against funding applications that do not answer all of the questions indicated in the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Some of the questions may overlap with material provided in other parts of the application. This overlap occurs because the answers to the questionnaire are provided to NOAA staff members who do not review the other parts of the application. If appropriate, the applicant may copy the information from other parts of the application and paste it into the answers to the questionnaire.

The applicant is required to complete the following sections of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants:

Question C1. Is the proposed activity going to be conducted in partnership with NOAA or would the proposed activity require NOAA's direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, describe NOAA's involvement, activity, or oversight, including the name of the office or program that is involved.

Question C2. Would the proposed activity involve any other Federal agency(ies) partnership, direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, provide the name(s) of the agency(ies) and describe its involvement, activity, or oversight.

Question D1. Provide a brief description of the location of the proposed activity.

Question E1. List any Federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, or waivers that would be required to complete the proposed activity. Provide the date the permit, authorization, or waiver was obtained or will be obtained. Provide copies of the permit, authorization, or waiver as appropriate. Was a NEPA analysis prepared for the permit, authorization, or waiver? If yes, state the title of the NEPA analysis and provide copies of the NEPA analysis.

Question F1. Is there the potential for the proposed activity to cause changes that would be different from normal ambient conditions (for example, temperature, light, turbidity,

noise, other human activity levels, etc.)? If yes, describe the changes and the circumstances that would cause these changes.

d.) Data Sharing Plan. - Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as an appendix. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Additionally, PIs must indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

Information on NOAA's Data Management Policy is available under:
http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf

e.) Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to Ms. Cristi Reid, NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration, SSMC 3, Room 15700, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The information collection does not request any proprietary or confidential information. No confidentiality is provided.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. NOAA's OMB Approval No. : 0648-0538.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. ET February 11, 2013. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication by Grants.gov will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs for states that participate in this process. 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. A list of the participating states and the clearinghouse points of contact can be found at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. Funding Restrictions

None.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1) Letter(s) of Endorsement -- As detailed in Section III.C each proposal - for both Focus Area 1 and 2 - must include a letter of support or endorsement from the lead ROP identified for each region for the purposes of this funding opportunity or from the Governor(s) of the states in a region that is developing an ROP. For tribal applications, the letter must include letter(s) of endorsement from tribal leaders from the geographic scope of the regional submission.

2) Proposal application packages, including any letters of support, should be submitted through the apply function on Grants.gov. The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov. Please be advised that potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete.

Applicants must allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM -- formally The Central Contractor Registry (CCR)). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the registration if your organization is applying for a federal grant for the first time. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application's SF-424 form.) The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted.

3) If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the proposals and related forms must be mailed to the attention of James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center, 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina, 29405-2413. No email or fax copies will be accepted. Proposal application packages, including any letters of support, shall be submitted together in one package.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program objectives (50 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities.

For Focus Area 1, questions related to this criterion include:

a) Does the proposal identify and advance clear goals and objectives that are consistent with ROP or tribal priorities? For applicants from regions without an established ROP (e.g., Alaska), does the proposal demonstrate that they are working towards a regional ocean partnership?

b) How does the proposal address advance marine and Great Lakes planning efforts including the Guiding Principles laid out in the OPTF Final Recommendations? Do the applicants show the connection between the proposed activities and the Guiding Principles?

c) Does the proposal address one or more of the priorities outlined in the OPTF Final Recommendations?

e) Does the proposal identify primary partners, expand existing partnerships, develop new innovative partnerships and key stakeholders and describe how they will participate in project activities?

f) Does the proposal reflect strong support from project partners either through direct involvement in the proposal or through letters indicating support and involvement in the actions?

g) Does the proposal demonstrate either direct involvement or a letter of support from the lead ROP in the region? For applicants from regions without an established ROP, is the proposal supported by the relevant governors and has the region also submitted a Focus Area 2 proposal? For submissions from federally recognized tribes, does the applicant include letters of support from tribal leaders in the region?

h) Will the proposal result in benefits that are region-wide? Are regional benefits clearly articulated and are the benefits transferable to other ROP or tribal regions and/ or national priorities?

For Focus Area 2, questions include:

a) Does the proposal contribute to the establishment or implementation of a long term regional ocean partnership or ensure long term tribal coordination across the region?

b) Does the proposal identify an effective development process that will result in a consensus for regional priorities, specific actions to address those priorities, and tangible outcomes?

c) Establishing a regional ocean partnership or regional tribal dialogue regarding regional partnership may come with challenges/barriers (i.e. entities in a region may be accustomed to traditions of competing for economic development, research funding, and other financial or social benefits). To what extent does the proposal identify such challenges/barriers and explain how such barriers will be overcome?

d) Does the proposal adequately identify coordination methods for development activities to achieve active and meaningful participation by partners, including various levels of governments, and appropriate stakeholders in the region?

e) Does the proposal include methods to achieve lasting coordination for regional ocean governance and for the implementation of a regional ocean partnership or regional tribal coordination?

f) Does the partnership include participation by a large cross section of state, Federal and/or tribal governments and participation by other relevant interest groups (e.g. industry, academia, NGOs, etc)?

2) Technical and scientific merit (25 percent): This 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 Focus Areas 1 and 2, questions related to this criterion include:

a) Is the approach technically appropriate for the stated goals and objectives?

b) Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame given the technical approach or scientific needs?

c) Does the proposed approach incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work?

d) If geospatial data are to be acquired, does the proposal promote interoperability with other components of regional and national geospatial systems? Has a thorough search been conducted to ensure that data do not already exist that can meet the intended purpose of the proposed acquisition? Will the data be collected to national and/or international standards and specifications that promote multi-purpose uses in the future per Federal Geospatial Data Committee standards, Ocean.Data.Gov and regional data portals, and the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act of 2009? Does the proposal comply with Executive Order 12906, Coordinating Geographic Data Acquisition and Access: The National Spatial Data Infrastructure?

3) Overall qualifications of the funding applicants (15 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant and identified collaborators possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

For Focus Areas 1 and 2, questions related to this criterion include:

a) Are the investigators qualified, and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed?

b) Are investigators from other agencies and institutions within the region included as key personnel on the project to capitalize on available expertise and promote a regional approach?

c) Does the proposal adequately demonstrate the capacity of the applicant and partners to implement proposed work?

d) Does the proposal adequately define how participation and accountability among principle investigators and partners will be sustained?

4) Project costs and metrics (10 percent). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

For Focus Areas 1 and 2, questions related to this criterion include:

- a) Does the proposal demonstrate that the budget is commensurate with project needs?
- b) Is the cost effectiveness of the proposal optimized through strategic partnerships with collaborating institutions, agencies, or private sector partners?
- c) Have administrative costs been minimized to the greatest extent possible?
- d) Are the budget and budget justification adequately detailed to determine how requested funds will be used (i.e. salary, equipment, supplies, travel, etc.)? Does the budget include separate SF-424A forms for each subaward and subcontract?

5) Outreach and education (0 percent). NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This competition does not include this criterion.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals will be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by at least three independent peer reviewers through an independent peer mail review and/or an independent peer panel review. A mix of Federal and non-Federal reviewers will be used. No consensus advice will be given by the independent peer reviewers through mail reviews or on the review panels. The merit reviewer's ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The Selecting Official shall award according to rank order unless there is a specific justification for selecting out of rank order based upon factors listed in Section V.C. The Selecting Official or designee may also negotiate the funding level of the proposals to be recommended for funding. The Selecting Official will send the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award. Proposals that are not funded in the current fiscal period may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive review process.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The competition manager will make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. 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. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.

4. Program priorities and policy factors.

5. Applicant's prior award performance.

6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups, especially tribal organizations.

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.

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The start date on proposals should be the first day of October 2013.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The program office will forward the applications recommended for funding by the selecting official to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD). The program office will notify the applicant via email that their application was recommended for funding. The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award notice. The Grants Officer will send the official notification to the applicant either via surface mail or electronically.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email that their application was not recommended for funding within 10 business days after the final program office recommendations have been approved by the NOAA GMD and the applicant accepts the award.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency

Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to process Central Contractor Registration capabilities accessible through the U.S. Department of Treasury's System for Award Management < <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/> > and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl and http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in 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). This notice may be obtained under http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a080211c.html .

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements

See the NEPA information in Section IV., B., of this announcement.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports electronically through the Grants Online system. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report

to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsrs.gov/> on all subawards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative questions, contact James Lewis Free, NOAA CSC; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Room B-119; Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413, phone 843-740-1185, fax 843-740-1224, email James.L.Free@noaa.gov . For technical questions regarding this announcement, contact Rebecca Smyth, phone 510-251-8324, email Rebecca.Smyth@noaa.gov .

To obtain a copy of the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, please refer to http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/OPTF_FinalRecs.pdf .

VIII. Other Information

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another email when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency.

Official notification of an award notice is provided by the Grants Management Division, not the program office. If one incurs any costs before receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

The Coastal Services Center will not release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is online at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/> .

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. Applicants in their final progress report will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and products in the coastal management

community; and b) certify that Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP).

If equipment is purchased with grant funds, applicants may be asked to submit an equipment inventory in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(f)(3), 15 CFR 24.32(b) or 15 CFR 24.32(d)(2) as an appendix to progress reports. Further, the program office recommends that recipients request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project period ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete an other award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(g)-(h) and 15 CFR 24.32(g)(2).

Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.473). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.