

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s):** Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR), National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Northern Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Research Program (NGOMEX)
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** NGOMEX 2006
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 11.478, Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research
- **Program Authorities:** 33 U.S.C. 1442
- **Dates:** The deadline for receipt of proposals at the CSCOR office is 3 p.m., EST, August 24, 2005.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NCCOS/CSCOR is soliciting proposals to support 1 to 3 year studies of coastal ecosystem research related to hypoxia over the Louisiana continental shelf in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2006 Federal appropriations. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made in early Calendar Year 2006, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a May 1, 2006 start date.
- **Electronic Access:** The following web sites furnish supplementary information concerning hypoxia associated with the northern Gulf of Mexico:

Background information that describes the need and priorities for research related to Gulf of Mexico hypoxia is available in the recently released report from the monitoring, modeling and research (MMR) multi-agency workgroup of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force is available at

http://toxics.usgs.gov/highlights/new_hypoxia.html;

A general description of ongoing work in the northern Gulf of Mexico funded through the CSCOR is provided at <http://www.cop.noaa.gov/stressors/pollution/current/gomex-factsheet.html>;

Gulf of Mexico hypoxia reports produced by the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) can be found at http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/products/pubs_hypox.html;

The Action Plan for reducing, mitigating, and controlling hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico that resulted from the CENR reports is available at <http://www.epa.gov/msbasin/planintro.htm>;

Results from the Nutrient Enhanced Coastal Ocean Productivity (NECOP) study can be found at <http://www.cop.noaa.gov/pubs/das/welcome.html> (publication number 14);

University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System (UNOLS) Ship Time Request Form is available in electronic format at: <http://www.gso.uri.edu/unols/ship/shiptime.html>. UNOLS' vessel requirements are identified later in this document under Part IV: Application and Submission Information, section B(2)(g) of this document.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective:

The northern portion of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, which contains almost half of the nation's coastal wetlands and supports commercial and recreational fisheries which generate \$2.8 billion annually, has undergone profound changes due to nutrient enrichment of Mississippi River water from land-based sources. A common effect of this nutrient over-enrichment is the excessive production of algae, which can lead to reduced bottom water oxygen concentrations and seasonal hypoxia over the Louisiana continental shelf. Exposure to hypoxic waters can stress and suffocate marine organisms, affecting commercial harvests and the health of impacted ecosystems. Fish and shrimp are almost completely absent from hypoxic waters, making the

accurate monitoring and prediction of the causes and consequences of this large seasonal hypoxic zone of great value to managers of the Gulf of Mexico at the National, state and local level and those industries that depend upon its living resources.

Nutrient inputs into this critically important coastal ecosystem became a major issue in the mid to late 1980's as it became known that a large area of low oxygen bottom water, known as the "Dead Zone", was a recurrent feature in the Gulf during the summer. The issue became a focal point for considerable scientific and policy attention because of its enormous size and implications for watershed management for more than 40% of the continental United States. It was clear that some type of management action was necessary to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone but there was no clear direction on how to proceed. Uncertainty regarding the causes and consequences of hypoxia in this region was due to a lack of scientific data on the subject.

Since that time, a number of past and present programs have studied the seasonal hypoxia associated with the northern Gulf of Mexico. Notably, from 1990 to 1997, NOAA's Coastal Ocean Program (COP) supported a study on Nutrient Enhanced Coastal Ocean Productivity (NECOP), and the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) completed an integrated assessment to document the state of knowledge of the extent, characteristics, causes, and effects of hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico. These efforts led to a scientific consensus that resulted in the first ever "Action Plan", which described a national strategy to reduce the frequency, duration, size and degree of hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The Action Plan, which involved considerable stakeholder input, states a goal of reducing the 5-year running average size of the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone to less than 5,000 km². Results and reports of these studies and our ongoing program in the Gulf of Mexico can be found on the web sites listed under "Electronic Access" of this document.

To address the issue of hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico, CSCOR is supporting multi-year, interdisciplinary research projects to develop a fundamental understanding of the northern Gulf of Mexico ecosystem in the region affected by Mississippi River inputs with a focus on the causes and effects of the hypoxic zone over the Louisiana continental shelf and the prediction of its future extent and impacts. The research program is directed towards the goal of developing a predictive capability for the Louisiana continental shelf ecosystem within an adaptive management framework that connects monitoring, data analysis, model predictions and management actions with continuous feedback for improvement in each category.

The ultimate goal of this high priority program is to identify and fill the critical research gaps important to achievement of NOAA's and the interagency Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force's management goals as embodied in the basin-wide Gulf of Mexico Action Plan. The Gulf of Mexico Action plan is currently in the process of being updated by the Task Force and is due to be released in 2006 or 2007. NGOMEX research supported by CSCOR and the COP has been a critical underpinning to these past policy decisions and will continue to play a pivotal role in developing policy decisions to be determined through the ongoing reassessment of the Action Plan. This Program is also a major element of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (HABHRCA) legislation passed in 1998 and its recent reauthorization in 2004.

B. Program Priorities

The critical research gaps for NGOMEX have historically been determined by the needs and uncertainties identified in the "Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Integrated Assessment (2000)" and the "Action Plan (2001)". The current FRN is building upon these efforts by using the recently released report from the MMR (monitoring, modeling and research) multi-agency workgroup of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force (http://toxics.usgs.gov/highlights/new_hypoxia.html). The report entitled: "A Science Strategy to Support Management Decisions Related to Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico and Excess Nutrients in the Mississippi River Basin", identifies a number of key research needs for the Gulf of Mexico. The report is the product of a workshop held in 2002 which included a broad array of academic, federal, state, and local representatives concerned with hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. The report was approved by the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force in September, 2004 and represents the most up-to-date consensus of the science priorities for addressing this critical national priority. From the suite of monitoring, research, and modeling needs identified in the report, this FRN solicits proposals to address the following areas of interest:

- 1) Gulf Monitoring and Reporting: To support efforts to conduct observational studies necessary to determine the spatial and temporal extent of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico and to increase the understanding and better quantify the biological, chemical or physical processes that contribute to hypoxia development or its impacts. Specifically, priority consideration for selection will be given to observational projects which can:

A) document the magnitude and extent of the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico, a key metric of the Gulf of Mexico Action Plan and;

B) improve the accuracy of models forecasting the magnitude and extent of the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico and/or;

C) determine the potential impact of the hypoxic zone to ecologically and commercially important aquatic species in the northern Gulf of Mexico;

2) Gulf Modeling and Research: Proposals are solicited to improve existing or develop new mathematical models in the region with the ultimate goal of developing a suite of models for application to key management issues highlighted in the MMR report. Specifically, priority consideration for selection will be given to projects which develop:

A) quantitative models to predict the spatial and temporal extent of hypoxia over the Louisiana continental shelf given varying levels of nutrient inputs, physical forcing, and any other key anthropogenic or natural factors that control hypoxia and/or;

B) quantitative models to determine the individual- and population-level effects of different spatial and temporal extents of hypoxia on ecologically and commercially important aquatic species.

3) Overall Considerations: Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the proposed study complements, builds upon and/or maintains continuity with previous and ongoing work in the region. Linked proposals which address multiple focus areas in an integrative, synergistic, and collaborative manner are strongly encouraged. Proposals which can utilize or build upon developing efforts to improve regional ocean observing systems, especially with respect to hypoxia, are also strongly encouraged.

Proposals must clearly articulate how the proposed activities will address the scientific and management needs outlined in the MMR report. The intent of the NGOMEX program is to provide timely and high-quality scientific results that can be used in an adaptive management program to restore and protect the Louisiana continental shelf ecosystem. The results of the funded research proposals should be directly usable by resource

managers to make informed decisions and assess alternative management strategies by providing quantitative predictions of key variables (e.g. duration and extent of hypoxia; population attributes of key living resources). This solicitation for proposals is one more step in the development of this predictive capability.

C. Program Authorities: 33 U.S.C. 1442

II. Award Information

A. Funding availability

Funding is contingent upon availability of Federal appropriations. NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process and accelerating the award of financial assistance to qualified recipients in accordance with the recommendations of the Program Review Team (Information available at www.noaa.gov). In order to fulfill these responsibilities, this solicitation announces that award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds typically not to exceed \$500,000 per project per year with project durations from 1 to 3 years. It is anticipated that 4 to 8 total projects will be funded and that \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000 per year will be available for projects. Support in FY 2006 and future years is contingent upon the availability of funds.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of other agency priorities.

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.

Publication of this notice does not obligate any agency to any specific award or to obligate any part of the entire amount of funds available. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

B. Project/Award period

Full proposals may cover a project/award period of up to 3 years. Multi-year awards may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but, once awarded, those awards will not compete for funding in subsequent years. Each award shall require a project description that can be easily divided into annual increments of meaningful work representing solid accomplishments (if prospective funding is not made available, or is discontinued).

The following is a description of multi-year awards for those applicants subsequently recommended for award. Multi-year awards are awards which have an award/project period of more than 12 months of activity. Multi-year awards are partially funded when the awards are approved, and are subsequently funded in increments. One of the purposes of multi-year awards is to reduce the administrative burden on both the applicant and the operating unit. For example, with proper planning, one application can suffice for the entire multi-year award period. Funding for each year's activity is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency. Multi-year funding is appropriate for projects to be funded for 2 to 5 years. Once approved, full applications are not required for the continuations into the out years.

C. Type of funding instrument

They are project grants and cooperative agreements.

(1) Research Project Grants: A research project grant is one in which substantial programmatic involvement by NOAA is not anticipated by the recipient during the project period. Applicants for grants must demonstrate an ability to conduct the proposed research with minimal assistance, other than financial support, from NOAA.

(2) Cooperative Agreements: A cooperative agreement implies that NOAA will assist recipients in conducting the proposed research. The application should be presented in a manner that demonstrates the applicant's ability to address the research problem in a collaborative manner with NOAA. A cooperative agreement is appropriate when substantial NOAA involvement is anticipated. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when: responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the recipient; or the assisting agency has the right to

intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities.

(3) Determination of which instrument to use: Applicants must specify the type of award for which they are applying, either a grant or a cooperative agreement. The funding agency will review the applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Before issuing awards, NOAA will determine whether a grant or cooperative agreement is the appropriate instrument based upon the need for substantial NOAA involvement in the project.

(4) In an effort to maximize the use of limited resources, applications from non-Federal, non-NOAA Federal and NOAA Federal applicants will be competed against each other. Research proposals selected for funding from non-Federal researchers will be funded through a project grant or cooperative agreement.

Research proposals selected for funding from non-NOAA Federal applicants will be funded through an interagency transfer, provided legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency. 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 the applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. section 1535) is not an appropriate basis. Support may be solely through NCCOS/CSCOR or partnered with other Federal offices and agencies.

D. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary 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 the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, or whether an Environmental Assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. For those applications needing an Environmental Assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage; and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft of the assessment (prior to award).

Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analysis where necessary (i.e. NEPA environmental assessment) will also delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, state, local, Indian Tribal Governments, and Federal agencies that possess the statutory authority to receive financial assistance.

NCCOS/CSCOR will not fund any Federal FTE salaries, but will fund travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual personnel costs associated with the proposed work. Furthermore, no expenses of any kind will be provided for NOS researchers.

(1) Researchers must be employees of an eligible institution listed above; and proposals must be submitted through that institution. Non-Federal researchers should comply with their institutional requirements for proposal submission.

(2) Non-NOAA Federal applicants will be required to submit certifications or documentation showing that they have specific legal authority to receive funds from the Department of Commerce (DOC) for this research.

(3) NCCOS/CSCOR will accept proposals that include foreign researchers as collaborators with a researcher, who has met the above stated eligibility requirements; and who also is an employee of an eligible institution listed above.

(4) Non-Federal researchers affiliated with NOAA-University Joint Institutes should comply with joint institutional requirements; they will be funded through grants either to their institutions or to joint institutes.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

None

C. Other Requirements

Each proposal must also include the ten elements listed under Proposal Submission/Required Elements, (a)-(j) or it will be returned to sender without further consideration.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Submit Application Package

Applications submitted in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to be submitted through the Grants.gov web site. Electronic Access for the full funding announcement for this program is available via the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov>. This announcement will also be available at the NOAA web site <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Eamd/SOLINDEX.HTML> or by contacting the program official identified below. After October 1, 2004, you will be able to access, download and submit electronic grant applications for NOAA Programs in this announcement at <http://www.grants.gov>. The closing dates will be the same as for the paper submissions noted in this announcement. NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

Getting started with Grants.gov is easy! Go to <http://www.Grants.gov>. There are two key features on the site: Find Grant Opportunities and Apply for Grants. Everything else on the site is designed to support these two features and your use of them. While you can begin searching for grant opportunities for which you would like to apply immediately, it is recommended that you complete the remaining Get Started steps sooner rather than later, so that when you find an opportunity for which you would like to apply, you are ready to go.

Get Started Step 1B. Find the grant opportunity for which you would like to apply. Start your search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities and register to receive automatic e-mail notifications of new grant opportunities or any modifications to grant opportunities as they are posted to the site by clicking the Find Grant Opportunities tab at the top of the page.

Get Started Step 2B. Register with Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Your organization will also need to be registered with Central Contractor Registry. You can register with them online. This will take about 30 minutes. You should receive your CCR registration within 3 business days. Important: You must have a DUNS number from Dun & Bradstreet before you register with CCR. Many organizations already have a DUNS number. To determine if your organization already has a DUNS number or to obtain a DUNS number, contact Dun & Bradstreet at 1-866-705-5711. This will take about 10 minutes and is free of charge. Be sure to complete the Marketing Partner ID (MPIN) and Electronic Business Primary Point of Contact fields during the CCR registration process. These are mandatory fields that

are required when submitting grant applications through Grants.gov.

Get Started Step 3B. Register with the Credential Provider. You must register with a Credential Provider to receive a username and password. This will be required to securely submit your grant application.

Get Started Step 4B. Register with Grants.gov. The final step in the Get Started process is to register with Grants.gov. This will be required to submit grant applications on behalf of your organization. After you have completed the registration process, you will receive e-mail notification confirming that you are able to submit applications through Grants.gov.

Get Started Step 5B. Log on to Grants.gov. After you have registered with Grants.gov, you can log on to Grants.gov to verify if you have registered successfully, to check application status, and to update information in your applicant profile, such as your name, telephone number, e-mail address, and title. In the future, you will have the ability to determine if you are authorized to submit applications through Grants.gov on behalf of your organization.

Hard copies of proposals (single-sided) will also be accepted and require an original proposal and 2 proposal copies at time of submission. This includes color or high-resolution graphics submitted as part of the proposal. For color graphics, submit either color originals or color copies. Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of full proposals will not be accepted. Submit the hard copy original and 2 copies of your proposal to Attn. NGOMEX 2006, Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (N/SCI2), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 8th Floor Station 8243, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Technical Information. Larry Pugh, NGOMEX 2006 Program Manager, NCCOS/CSCOR, 301-713-3338/ext 160, Internet: Larry.Pugh@noaa.gov.

Business Management Information. Laurie Golden, NCCOS/CSCOR Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/ext 151, Internet: Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission
Applications submitted in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to be submitted through the Grants.gov web site. Electronic Access for the full funding announcement for this program is available via the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov>. These announcements will also be available at the NOAA web site

<http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Eamd/SOLINDEX.HTML> or by contacting the program official identified below.

If you are unable to access this information, you may call NCCOS/CSCOR at 301-713-3338 to leave a mailing request.

This document requests full proposals only. The provisions for proposal preparation provided here are mandatory. Proposals received after the published deadline (refer to DATES) or proposals that deviate from the prescribed format will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Information regarding this announcement and additional background information are available on the NCCOS/CSCOR web pages.

1. Proposals

As previously stated, applications should be submitted through www.Grants.gov unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copy proposals will be accepted (refer to IV. Application and Submission Information).

2. Required Elements

For clarity in the submission of proposals, the following definitions are provided for recipient use: Funding and/or Budget Period - The period of time when Federal funding is available for obligation by the recipient. The funding period must always be specified in multi-year awards, using fixed year funds. This term may also be used to mean "budget period". A budget period is typically 12 months. Award and/or Project Period - The period established in the award document during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends. The term "award period" is also referred to as project period in 15 CFR 14.2(cc).

Each proposal must include the following ten elements or it will be returned to sender without further consideration:

(a) Standard Form 424. At time of proposal submission, all applicants anticipating direct funding shall submit the Standard Form, SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal and all requested copies. Multi-institutional proposals must include signed SF-424 forms from all institutions requesting funding.

(b) Signed Summary title page. The title page should be signed by the Principal Investigator (PI). The Summary title

page identifies the project's title, starting with the acronym: NGOMEX 2006, a short title (less than 50 characters), and the PI's name and affiliation, complete address, phone, FAX and E-mail information. The requested budget for each fiscal year should be included on the Summary title page. Multi-institution proposals must also identify the lead investigator for each institution and the requested funding for each fiscal year for each institution on the title page, but no signatures are required on the title page from the additional institutions. Lead investigator and separate budget information is not requested on the title page for institutions that are proposed to receive funds through a subcontract to the lead institution; however, the COP Summary Proposal Budget Form and accompanying budget justification must be submitted for each subcontractor. For further details on budget information, please see Section (g) Budget of this part.

(c) One-page abstract/project summary. A project summary (abstract) is to be submitted at time of application, shall include an introduction of the problem, rationale, scientific objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work to be completed. The summary should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost, and budget period. It should be written in the third person. The summary is used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words.

(d) Project description. The description of the proposed project must be complete and divided into annual increments of work that include: identification of the problem, scientific objectives, proposed methodology, relevance to the NGOMEX 2006 program goals, and its scientific priorities. The project description (including relevant results from prior support) should not exceed 20 pages. Page limits are inclusive of figures, other visual materials, and letters of endorsement, but are exclusive of references, a milestone chart, and letters of collaboration from unfunded collaborators. This section should clearly identify project management with a description of the functions of each PI within a team. It should provide a full scientific justification for the research, rather than simply reiterating justifications presented in this document. It should also include:

- (i) The objective for the period of proposed work and its expected significance;
- (ii) The relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and relation to previous work and work in progress by the proposing principal investigator(s);

(iii) A discussion of how the proposed project lends value to the program goals;

(iv) Potential coordination with other investigators.

(e) References cited. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publications. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 20 page project description.

(f) Milestone chart. Provide time lines of major tasks covering the duration of the proposed project.

(g) Standard Form 424A. At time of proposal submission, all applicants are required to submit a SF424A Budget Form for each fiscal year increment. Multi-institution proposals must include a SF424A for each institution, and multi-investigator proposals using a lead investigator with a contractor/subgrantee approach must submit a SF424A for each contractor/subgrantee. Each contractor or subgrantee should be listed as a separate item. Describe products/services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Provide separate budgets for each subgrantee or contractor regardless of the dollar value and indicate the basis for the cost estimates. List all subgrantee or contractor costs under line item 6.f. contractual on the SF424A. All applications must include a budget narrative and a justification to support all proposed budget categories. Any ship time needs must be clearly identified in the proposed budget. The proposer is responsible for requesting ship time through appropriate channels and for meeting all requirements to ensure the availability of requested ship time. Copies of relevant ship time request forms should be included with the proposal. The UNOLS Ship Time Request Form is available at the website cited earlier in this document under the section "Electronic Access".

(h) Biographical sketch. All principal and co-investigators must provide summaries of up to 2 pages that include the following:

(i) A listing of professional and academic credentials and mailing address;

(ii) A list of up to five publications most closely related to the proposed project and five other significant publications. Additional lists of publications, lectures, and the rest should not be included;

(iii) A list of all persons (including their organizational affiliation) in alphabetical order, with whom the investigator has collaborated on a project or publication within the last 48

months, including collaborators on the proposal and persons listed in the publications. If no collaborators exist, this should be so indicated;

(iv) A list of persons (including their organizational affiliation) with whom the individual has had an association like thesis advisor or postdoctoral scholar sponsor;

(v) A list of the names and institutions of the individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors.

The material presented in (iii,iv,v) is used to assist in identifying potential conflicts or bias in the selection of reviewers.

(i) Current and pending support. Describe all current and pending federal financial/funding support for all principal and co-investigators, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time investigators and collaborators have devoted to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be devoted to the project solicited under this notice.

(j) Proposal format and assembly. Proposals submitted via Grants.gov APPLY should follow the format guidelines below:

Documents must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat PDF format to maintain format integrity. Please submit the required documents as described below. The following documents appear under Required Elements within each FFO. Submit in the order requested and File Names shown below.

A. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

1. Complete the form. Only one SF-424 is accepted within grants.gov

2. In the case of multiple institutions requesting direct funding. Attach the additional SF-424 in "Other attachments"

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below

3. Label the file name as "SF424/Institution name."

B. Summary Title Page

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Summary Title Page."

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below

C. One-page abstract/project summary

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Abstract."

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below.

D. Project Description

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Project Description."

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below.

E. References Cited

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "References."

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below.

F. Milestone Chart

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Milestone Chart."

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below.

G. SF-424A - Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs

1. Complete the form. Only one 424A is accepted within grants.gov.

2. If additional pages are needed,

see "K. Other Attachments Form" below

3. Label the additional 424As by form "424A/institution name."

H. Budget Justification/Narrative

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Budget Justification."

see "K" Other Attachments Form" below.

2. Label the additional budget justifications as "Budget justification/institution name."

3. Include ship time (if applicable) in the justification.

I. Biographical Sketch

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Bio Sketch/PI name."

see "K". Other Attachments Form" below.

J. Current and Pending Support

1. This an attachment. Label file name as "Current/pending support."

see "K". Other Attachments Form" below.

K. Other Attachments Form

1. When submitting letters of support that are not included in the stated page limit of the project narrative, prepare one document containing those letters.

Label file name as Letters of Support.

2. Other appropriate documents may also be submitted Here, e.g. "Data Management Plan"

Save your completed application package with two different names before submission to avoid having to re-create the package should you experience submission problems. If you experience submission problems that may result in your application being late, send an e-mail to support@grants.gov and call the [grants.gov help desk](#). Their phone number is posted on the grants.gov web site. The program manager associated with the RFA will use programmatic discretion in accepting late arriving proposals due to documented electronic submission problems.

Hard copy proposals should be clamped in the upper left-hand corner, but left unbound. The 2 additional copies can be stapled in the upper left-hand corner or bound on the left edge. Electronically submitted or hard copy page margin must be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right, and the typeface standard 12-point size must be clear and easily legible. Proposals should be single spaced and single-sided.

C. Submission Date and Time

The deadline for receipt of proposals at the CSCOR office is 3 p.m., EST, August 24, 2005 (Note that late-arriving applications provided to a delivery service on or before August 24, 2005 with delivery guaranteed before 3 p.m., EST on August 24, 2005 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the delivery service with delivery to the address listed below guaranteed by the specified closing date and time; and, in any event, the proposals are received in the NCCOS/CSCOR office by 3 p.m., EST, no later than 2 business days following the closing date.)

D. Intergovernmental review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(a) (2), an opportunity for public notice and comment is not required for this notice relating to grants, benefits and contracts. Because this notice is exempt from the notice and comment provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is not required, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does

not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs: Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which DOC will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of (a) the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award or (b) the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by a cognizant or oversight Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date.

F. Other Submission Requirements

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities (30 percent). For the purpose of this competition, this includes the degree to which the proposal addresses the specific "Program Priorities" section and the degree to which the proposed work will develop products leading to improved management of the hypoxic zone and impacted living resources in the Gulf of Mexico;

2. Technical/scientific merit: 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 (30 percent). For the purpose of this competition, proposals will be judged on soundness of scientific principles and the likelihood that it will lead to outcomes that represent substantial impact or progress in their fields. The proposed work should have focused objectives and a complete and technically sound strategy for project design, methodologies, data management, data analysis, and development of products in support of the objectives;

3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project (20 percent). For the purpose of this

competition, the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work as evidenced by past research accomplishments, previous cooperative work, timely communication, and the sharing of findings, data, and other research products;

4. Project costs: The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame (10 percent). For the purpose of this competition, the adequacy of the proposed resources to accomplish the proposed work, and the appropriateness of the requested funding with respect to the total available funds;

5. Outreach and education: 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 (10 percent). For the purpose of this competition, the applicant must demonstrate clear connections to management entities who will use the results of the proposed work and define the specific products and outcomes of the proposed work that will be used in achieving this goal.

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by independent peer mail review and/or by independent peer panel review. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in this process. The peer mail reviewers will be several individuals with expertise in the subjects addressed by particular proposals. Each mail reviewer will see only certain individual proposals within his or her area of expertise, and score them individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1).

The peer panel will comprise 4 to 8 individuals, with each individual having expertise in a separate area, so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of scientific expertise. The panel will have access to all mail reviews of proposals, and will use the mail reviews in discussion and evaluation of the entire slate of proposals. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and scores provided above and used by the mail reviewers. The individual peer panelist scores shall be averaged for each application and presented to the

program officers. No consensus advice will be given by the independent peer mail review or the review panel.

The program officers will neither vote or score proposals as part of the independent peer panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the proposal. Those proposals receiving an average panel score of ``Fair'' or ``Poor'' will not be given further consideration, and proposers will be notified of non-selection.

For the proposals rated by the panel as either ``Excellent,'' ``Very Good,'' or ``Good'', the program officers will (a) rank the proposals to be recommended for funding by average panel ratings, and/or by applying the project selection factors listed below; (b) determine the total duration of funding for each proposal; and (c) determine the amount of funds available for each proposal subject to the availability of fiscal year funds. Awards may not necessarily be made in rank order. In addition, proposals rated by the panel as either ``Excellent,'' ``Very Good,'' or ``Good'' 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.

Recommendations for funding are then forwarded to the selecting official, the Director of NCCOS/CSCOR, for the final funding decision. In making the final selections, the Director will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the selection factors listed below in C.

Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the proposer. Declined applications will be held in the NCCOS/CSCOR for the required 3 years in accordance with the current retention requirements, and then destroyed.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A program officer may first 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.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA 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

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will begin in October, and May 1st, 2006 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige

NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying 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.

In conformance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements section 15 CFR 14.36, any data collected in projects supported by NCCOS/CSCOR should be delivered to a National Data Center (NDC), such as the National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC), in a format to be determined by the institution, the NODC, and the Program Officer. It is the responsibility of the institution for the delivery of these data; the DOC will not provide additional support for delivery beyond the award. Additionally, all biological cultures established, molecular probes developed, genetic sequences identified, mathematical models constructed, or other resulting information products established through support provided by NCCOS/CSCOR are encouraged to be made available to the general research community at no or modest

handling charge (to be determined by the institution, Program Officer, and DOC).

C. Reporting

All financial and progress reports shall be submitted electronically through the Grants Online system unless the recipient does not have internet access. In that case, hard copy Financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the NOAA program officer. Financial reports are semi-annual and Performance reports are annual.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Technical Information. Larry Pugh, NGOMEX 2006 Program Manager, NCCOS/CSCOR, 301-703-3338/ext 160, Internet: Larry.Pugh@noaa.gov.

Business Management Information. Leslie McDonald, NCCOS/CSCOR Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/ext 155, Internet: Leslie.Mcdonald@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Collection of information requirements

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number. This notification involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040 and 0348-0046.