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: FY2013 Integrated Ocean Observing System Community Modeling to Support the Coastal and Ocean Modeling Testbed (COMT)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-IOOS-2013-2003511

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.012, Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS)

Dates: Applications must be received no later than 5:00 PM EST on Thursday, February 28, 2013.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA, along with the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) stakeholders, views a community coastal and ocean modeling test environment as essential to a sustained and operational IOOS. A modeling environment was established with the Coastal and Ocean Modeling Testbed (COMT), http://testbed.ioos.us. The program priorities for this funding opportunity are to operate and continue to develop this community modeling environment while transitioning specific models, tools, toolkits and other capabilities to Federal operational facilities to improve understanding and prediction of consequences of coastal ocean extreme events and chronic conditions affecting the U.S. Ultimately, the goal is to protect lives and livelihoods for the public affected by any of these coastal ocean extreme events. Of particular interest are coastal ocean phenomena that intersect the mission goals of NOAA, other operational agencies and the IOOS® Regional Associations.

NOAA seeks proposals for a single cooperative agreement for a non-Federal partner that will continue to advance the operation of the U.S. IOOS COMT under a community modeling environment.

Submitted proposals should address the following:

- Engagement: Demonstrate engagement with customers or receivers of Testbed products (i.e. models, tools or techniques) such as Federal Operational Centers, which define the requirements

for modeling improvements and provide feedback and evaluation from beginning to end of the project.

- Specific Transition Strategies: Cooperative development of strategies and specific steps needed to transition one or more models, tools, toolkits or other capabilities into a Federal operational facility, to advance an operational capability for each project funded within the grant period. The transition to a Federal operational agency is not intended to imply a model, tool or other capability is operational, but rather has been implemented by the agency under pre-operational conditions.

- Use and Build of Current Infrastructure: Use and build upon existing COMT organization and infrastructure (as seen at http://testbed.ioos.us), models and expertise to; (1)enable data infrastructure, standards and metrics for conducting comparisons and evaluations, (2) maximize the benefits to the modeling community and (3) leverage existing resources, capacities and capabilities.

- Evaluation Plans: Evaluate existing data assimilation schemes for use in coastal ocean models. Evaluate or improve operational models including coastal, ecological, and inundation models.

- Improve Predictions: Use advanced coastal and ocean modeling systems to improve data-driven predictions and determine optimal observing networks for stated societal goals and available resources.

Total anticipated funding for the cooperative agreement is subject to the availability of appropriations. The anticipated federal funding for this announcement ranges from $5,000,000 to $7,500,000 to be awarded in annual increments. The full funding amount will not be awarded in year one, so applicants must submit proposals that identify how this project will be implemented incrementally over a multi-year period.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) provides data for near real-time decisions and for analysis of long-term patterns and trends through the IOOS modeling and analysis subsystem. When fully implemented, IOOS aims to estimate the past, present and future states of the oceans, coasts and Great Lakes for addressing the following seven societal goals:

1. Improve predictions of climate change and weather
2. Improve the safety and efficiency of maritime operations
3. Improve forecasts of natural hazards
4. Improve homeland security
5. Minimize public health risks
6. Protect and restore healthy coastal ecosystems
7. Sustain living marine resources

This funding opportunity is designed to make significant progress towards the realization of IOOS modeling and data analysis subsystem through execution of an extensible, scalable and sustainable community modeling environment, the Coastal and Ocean Modeling Testbed (COMT). The COMT serves the US coastal domain from the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to the head of the tides. The overall goal for this effort is to improve forecasting of environmental phenomena focused on chronic and extreme conditions within the U.S. through transitioning models, tools, toolkits and other capabilities into a Federal operational facility or other entities as appropriate and as defined by agreed-upon roles and responsibilities. The four focus areas required to maintain and develop the COMT, in order to transition specific models, tools and techniques from research to operations are:

1. Use and build upon existing COMT organization, cyber infrastructure, modeling tools and expertise to; (a) enable data infrastructure, standards and metrics for conducting comparisons and evaluations, (b) maximize the benefits to the modeling community and (c) leverage existing resources, capacities and capabilities;

2. Use advanced coastal and ocean modeling systems to improve data-driven predictions and determine optimal observing networks for stated societal goals and available resources;

3. Evaluate existing data assimilation schemes for use in coastal ocean models;

4. Evaluate or improve operational models including coastal, ecological, and inundation models. Supplemental information for these focus areas can be found on the IOOS website at http://www.ioos.gov/funding/welcome.html#announcements.

The mission of the COMT is to use targeted research and development to accelerate the transition of scientific and technical advances from the coastal and ocean modeling research community to improve identified operational ocean products and services (i.e. via research to operations and also operations to research). Activities conducted in the COMT should help determine how to implement models more effectively, how to improve knowledge of model uncertainty, how to better integrate observations and models, or how to transition recent advances in algorithms, parameterizations, evaluation tools, and more into models that are used operationally. Operational model use, as indicated in COMT governing documents, can be interpreted as more than forecast models. The COMT is not intended to fund research into the development of new data assimilation schemes, numerical algorithms, parameterizations, but rather it is about evaluating already developed schemes for potential inclusion in operational use. It is expected that proposals will demonstrate coordination with operational centers that will include planning through development and testing stages. Using operational modeling systems to conduct research and development will facilitate the eventual successful research to operations transition.

Submitted proposals should include academic partners, research institutions, and partnerships with appropriate Federal operational modeling groups to guarantee it is multi-disciplinary, inclusive of community-modeling and the range of existing and emerging

models and modeling systems, and has the capacity to address operational constraints inherent in transitioning models into a Federal operational environment.

Submitted proposals should focus on applicant's ability to:

1. Collaborate with Federal partners, demonstrate specific transition plans including: development of metrics and a system to evaluate the potential feasibility, costs, and benefits of improvement to existing operational capabilities of transitioning current and emerging community based ocean and coastal models into Federal operational facilities.

2. Define and transition into a Federal operational facility one or more models, tools, toolkits or other capabilities to advance an operational capability for each project funded within the grant period. The transition to a Federal operational agency is not intended to imply a model, tool or other capability is operational, but rather has been implemented by the agency under pre-operational conditions.

3. Use and build upon existing COMT infrastructure, models and expertise to maximize the benefits to the modeling community and leverage existing resources, capacities and capabilities. There are multiple existing community models, modeling systems and ongoing activities to leverage. This should include conducting end-to-end modeling process of data access and assimilation, interoperable model coupling, model output delivery, model testing and evaluation, analysis, visualization, skill assessment and user evaluation. Data management and cyberinfrastructure activities should use IOOS DMAC standards and protocols, or if not defined, should be coordinated with DMAC activities under way at the IOOS Program Office and within the National Science Foundation Ocean Observatories Initiative Cyberinfrastructure (OOI/CI).

4. Demonstrate engagement of customer or end users that define the requirements for modeling improvements and provide feedback and evaluation from beginning to end of the modeling project.

5. Use advanced coastal and ocean modeling systems to improve data-driven predictions and determine optimal observing networks for stated societal goals and available resources.

6. Evaluate existing data assimilation schemes for use in coastal ocean models.

7. Evaluate or improve operational models including coastal, ecological, and inundation models.

Proposals should describe the rationale for choosing the model(s), modeling systems, environmental issue, and partnerships identified in the submission. Deliverables such as tools/toolkits, libraries, software modules, best practices, skill assessment regiment, evaluation criteria, IOOS DMAC standards used or proposed, and architecture for transitioning models into Federal operational facilities, etc., should be clearly delineated. Proposals should describe a method for independent scientific and technical review of progress during the project period and how the project will be managed with many different partners and contributors.

B. Program Priorities

1. Maintain and mature the existing COMT within a community modeling environment.

A description, including results from previous Testbed grants and current projects can be found on the website at http://testbed.ioos.us and http://www.ioos.gov/modeling/testbed.html. The established cyberinfrastructure represents the community modeling environment that will allow continued capability developments to enable direct model and data comparisons and evaluation. The COMT will substantially contribute to the capacity and capabilities of a national IOOS modeling and analysis subsystem, resulting in a powerful IOOS community modeling environment that transcends institutional boundaries and engages academic, government and private sector expertise and supports the end-to-end modeling process. The community modeling environment will be useful for development, testing and evaluation of models/modeling systems developed by experts within public, academic, private sector and IOOS Regional Associations, and also improve the capabilities of operational modeling centers to transition regional/community-developed models, technology and tools into operations. In addition, the COMT will be designed with the potential to be easily extended and expanded to address a variety of different modeling problems and over different geographies.

2. Address scientific and technical challenges for improving operations and services.

Of particular interest is a systematic approach to keep operational models and forecast systems (e.g. ROMS, FVCOM, ADCIRC) up-to-date with the community models and standards to address coastal ocean phenomena that intersect the mission goals of NOAA, other operational agencies such as USGS, USACE, NASA, Navy, EPA and the IOOS® Regional Associations.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate a broad understanding of existing ocean, coastal and Great Lakes modeling systems and efforts, and be cognizant of and in compliance with the standards and protocols for sharing and archiving of data in support of IOOS. Applicants should also demonstrate or have a track record of ability or experience working with operational centers to conduct transition from research to operations. Applicants should be familiar with the Ocean.US Development Plan and the Ocean.US/DMAC guidance documents (see Section VIII for references); priorities identified in the MAST Workshop, July 22-24, 2008, and interactions with IOOS Regional Associations.

For additional details, a supplemental information sheet can be found here, http://www.ioos.gov/funding/welcome.html#announcements.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009, 33 U.S.C 3601-3610.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all awards is subject to the availability of appropriations. NOAA expects to fund one award in an amount ranging from $5,000,000 to $7,500,000. The full funding amount will not be awarded in year one, so applicants must submit proposals that identify how this project will be implemented incrementally over a 5-year multi-year period.

Please note, there is a possibility that year one of the 5-year cooperative agreement will not be funded if the appropriation is not available. However, NOAA does expect to fund the selected proposal in outer years, if/when, the funds do become available

B. Project/Award Period

This is a multi-year funding opportunity. Unless otherwise specified, proposed projects may request funding for up to five years. While the full funding amount will not be awarded in year one, applicants may submit proposals that identify how tasks will be implemented in a phased approach.

Please note, should an applicant decide to propose a project less than five years, NOAA does not anticipate announcing another federal funding opportunity for these activities prior to 2017. Funding in the out-years is contingent upon availability of funds from Congress and satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

NOAA will likely issue a cooperative agreement. However, the agency reserves the right to make awards to applicants under the funding announcement as appropriate. Proposals should be written as a cooperative agreement and should specify this award type on the cover sheet.

If a cooperative agreement is awarded, the federal government will be substantially involved by, for example, convening partners and building diverse teams to accomplish work; providing direction on annual plans as priorities shift for the COMT; assisting with instructional design; and/or coordinating access to datasets, Federal testing facilities, High Performance Computing, operational standards and configurations, modeling expertise, consultation and review, and operational requirements within NOAA and other Federal agencies as necessary.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible funding applicants for this competition are institutions of higher education, non-profit and for-profit organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions and foreign governments may not be the primary recipient of awards under this announcement, but are encouraged to partner with applicants when appropriate.

If applicants have partners who would receive funds, the lead grantee will be expected to provide funds to the project partners. If a federal partner is a NOAA office, the funds will be transferred internally. If the partners are federal agencies other than NOAA, the grantee,

IOOS program office and the federal partner must use interagency agreements or otherwise take steps relevant to their organizations to ensure that funds can be transferred. Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to accept funds in excess of their appropriation.

Applicants should clearly state in their proposals whether invitational travel for Federal employees is anticipated on the project so that NOAA can determine if it is permissible.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no requirement for cost sharing or matching.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for proposals are available through www.grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages can be requested from:

Regina Evans

U.S. IOOS

1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1225,

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; or

E-mail: regina.evans@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications that do not include all required documentation and information as listed below will not be reviewed.

Letter of Intent: Letters of Intent are not requested under this announcement.

Full Proposal: The proposal narrative must total no more than 20 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font). The 20-page limit does not include the proposal title page, a table of contents, the data sharing plan, and the project summary referenced below under item two (2), and any appendices. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., detailed budget information, negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, support letters, resumes, references, lists of data sources, and maps) and may not exceed 50 pages in length. In addition to an overall budget, an SF-424A must be submitted for each year of the proposal. Applicants must also provide a separate budget for each subcontract. SF-424As will not be included in the page count of the proposal or appendices.

Applicants should paginate their proposal and any appendices. Appendices may be paginated as standalone documents (individually) or collectively. Applicants should present their workplan in priority order such that if less money is available than is requested, the process of modifying proposals is simplified.

All funding application packages must contain the following components:

1. 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), and funding request. If funds are to be transferred to a NOAA partner on the project, also state the amount to NOAA on the cover.

2. Project Summary. Provide a one to two-page summary of the proposed project. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:

a. Project Name/Title

b. Primary Contact (name, address, phone, fax, e-mail)

c. Recipient Institution

d. Other Investigators (name, affiliated institution or agency)

e. Brief Project Summary including objectives and intended benefits

f. Partners

3. Project Description. All project descriptions (proposals) must include the following sections:

a. Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Goals and objectives should be specific for each year of the work plan presented. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.

b. Background. Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem to be addressed and the status of ongoing efforts to address the identified needs. Summarize the relationship of the proposed work to other regional efforts.

c. Audience. Identify specific users of the results of the project, describe how they will use the results, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the results.

d. Approach. Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles and contributions, including resources, of partners and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. Describe how users are involved in the planning and design process. The work plan must clearly address data management requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archiving that is compliant with federal regulations as indicated in the Data Sharing Plan Policy under 'Other Information,' below. If the project includes federal partners, the roles, responsibilities and contributions of the federal partners must be clearly identified.

e. Benefits. Identify, with a high degree of specificity, the users of the information derived from the work, and the benefits that will be achieved for those users, as well as 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.

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

g. 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. A Standard Form 424-A must be submitted for each year of the project as well as for each subcontract.

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 should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. Foreign travel must receive prior approval, and therefore, should 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 should one be offered.

If NOAA or other Federal partner is requested to perform any work as part of the project, please be advised that the work to be performed and resource required must be reflected in the project description and partner budget separately. The budget should clearly show where all funds will go and how the funds will be used. Applications for federal assistance (form SF-424 and SF-424a) must show the total amount LESS what would go to the NOAA/Federal partner. Detailed budget and budget justifications within the proposal should show the total amount including that which would go to the NOAA/Federal partner and should include text stating that the applicant wishes for the NOAA/Federal partner to retain those funds and use them toward project activities.

Additional detailed budget information, including a description of complementary funding and in-kind contributions from project partners, should be included in an appendix (see IV.B.4 for additional information).

4. Appendices

a. Detailed Budget Information, including budgets of subawards and contracts, information on equipment, personnel and travel, etc. Information should include the names of all entities receiving funds, the locations of the entities receiving funds (city, state, and Congressional district), and the locations of the primary places of performance under the contract/subaward. In this appendix, the budget narrative also shall clearly identify the priority and cost of separable elements of the proposed work, and shall identify the elements of the project that the cooperator would recommend for revision or elimination in the event that sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities.

b. Resumes. Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work.

c. 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.gc.noaa.gov/documents/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf , and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.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).

NOAA may require follow-up information after the application process has been completed. 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 not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Applicants are required to answer the questions indicated in this Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity. Applicants should answer the NEPA questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible. If the applicant does not answer all of the questions indicated in the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity the application will be considered incomplete.

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 staffs 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. Many questions have a "yes" or "no" response. If the response is "no" the applicant does not need to elaborate on their answer. If the response is "yes" the question will have a second part asking the applicant to provide more information.

Applicant NEPA questions are as follows:

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 (e.g., temperature, light, turbidity, noise, other human activity levels, etc.)? If yes, describe the changes and the circumstances that would cause these changes.

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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. The valid OMB Control Number is 0648-0538, which expires on November 30, 2012.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by www.grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 5:00 PM (EDT) on Thursday, February 28, 2013. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by

Grants.gov may take up to two business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications received after this time will not be reviewed or considered.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications that include State agencies as funded partners are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs", which relies on State and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPCO) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget Web site: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html.

E. Funding Restrictions

None.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Application packages must be submitted through www.grants.gov. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. If an applicant does not have Internet access, the applicant must submit through surface mail, by the deadline, one set of originals (signed) and two copies of the proposal and related forms to the attention of Regina Evans, U.S. IOOS, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1225, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. No e-mail or facsimile copies will be accepted.

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, so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date.

Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.012). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. Note: Your organization's

Employer Identification Number (EIN) will also be needed to complete the application process.

Grants.gov will provide information about submitting a proposal through the site as well as the hours of operation. After electronic submission of the application, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail 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 prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (35 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Will the proposal result in the capability to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of transitioning a model from research to an operational setting? Will the proposed work plan lead to Federal and academic partners collaboratively developing a transition process? Is the proposed testbed process capable of being adapted and/or expanded to other geographies and modeling issues? Does the proposal demonstrate a strong commitment to community modeling, for instance through its use of models, infrastructure, and communication mechanisms?

2. Technical and scientific merit (35 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Proposals will also be evaluated on how effectively the proposed project builds upon prior NOAA investments in regional ocean and coastal observing technologies and systems. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposed project address

issues of interoperability and coupling of different models? Is the eventual operational prediction of the targeted event or variable likely to be significantly improved by this project?

3. Overall qualifications of the funding applicants (15 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Are the investigators qualified and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct a project of the nature and scope proposed? Are investigators from other agencies and institutions across multiple regions and agencies included as key personnel on the project to capitalize on available expertise and promote a coastal and ocean modeling community approach? Are there any project partners providing complimentary funding or in-kind contributions?

4. Project costs (10 percent): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Are the cost, schedule, and deliverables clear, reasonable, and logically presented? Does the proposal demonstrate that the budget is commensurate with project needs? Is the cost effectiveness of the project optimized through strategic partnerships with collaborating institutions, agencies, or private sector partners?

5. Outreach and education (5 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources and the IOOS mission to provide required data and information on local to global scales to address IOOS seven societal goals. Questions relevant to this criterion include: Does the proposed project demonstrate that the target user community has been fully engaged in development of the desired project outcomes? Does the proposal demonstrate that information generated by the project will reach its target audience and have a positive impact on the development of a community modeling system environment and the continued advancement of the Coastal and Ocean Modeling Testbed?

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals will be evaluated and individually scored in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by at least three independent peer evaluations. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order

of the proposals. The Selecting Official will award in the rank order unless proposals are justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors provided below. The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

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 staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The start date on proposals should be June 1, 2013; or the first day of the month of any month after June 1, 2013.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

1. The proposal recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by email that its application was recommended for funding. Unsuccessful proposals will not be returned to the applicant.

The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office that a proposal was forwarded to GMD is NOT the official award notice. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer either by postal mail or electronically. Costs incurred prior to receiving notice from an authorized federal grants or procurement officer are solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

2. 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: (1) will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM?), formally the Central Contractor Registration (CCR), capabilities accessible through the U.S. Department of Treasury's System for Award Management at https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/; (2) will be required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System; and (3) 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,

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. 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) are applicable to this solicitation. A copy of the notice may be obtained at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/.

2. Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports electronically through the NOAA 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 www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative questions regarding this announcement, contact: Regina Evans, U.S. IOOS, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1225, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; Phone: 301-427-2422; E-mail: Regina.Evans@noaa.gov

For technical questions regarding program priorities or proposal content, contact: Becky Baltes, U.S. IOOS, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1225, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; Phone: 301-427-2427; E-mail: Becky.Baltes@noaa.gov

Please be advised that frequently asked questions (FAQ) related to this announcement will be posted in a FAQ section at http://www.ioos.gov/funding/welcome.html#announcements, if applicable.

VIII. Other Information

A. Data Sharing Policy

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 part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project, including model runs; 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. Guidance and templates for the development of this plan can be found at: https://geoide.noaa.gov/wiki/index.php?title=Category:NOAA_Procedural_Directives. 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. Any software routines, modeling system, framework or tools, modeling testing and evaluation techniques, protocols and metrics, modeling evaluation criteria, modeling standards and protocols, concept of operations for the modeling system, or other project results are expected to be shared with all partners and will be shared with the ocean and coastal modeling community upon completion of the work.

4. 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.

B. Official Notification

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

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all progress reports a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and products in the coastal management community and on forecasting environmental events; and b) 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 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)."

C. References

1. Ocean.US, 2002. Building Consensus: Toward an Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observing System (IOOS®). Ocean.US, Arlington, VA. 175pp. http://www.ocean.us/documents/docs/Core_lores.pdf

2. Ocean.US 2006. The First Integrated Ocean Observing System Development Plan:A Report of the National Ocean Research Leadership Council and the Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration. Ocean.US, Arlington, VA. 86 pp. http://www.ocean.us/documents/docs/FINAL-ImpPlan-NORLC.pdf

3. Ocean.US 2008. The Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) Modeling and Analysis Workshop Report . Ocean.US, Arlington, VA., July 22-24, 2008, 21 pp.