ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Ocean Exploration 2014 Funding Opportunity

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-OER-2014-2003874

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.011, Ocean Exploration

Dates: Complete, maximum two-page, pre-proposals are required for all categories and must be received by 5:00 pm (EDT) on October 15, 2013. Full proposal submissions must be received by 5:00 pm (EST) on December 20, 2013. Applications received after the above deadlines will not be considered.

Funding Opportunity Description: Summary: OER is seeking pre-proposals and, ultimately, full proposals to support its mission, consistent with NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/noaa), to search, investigate, and document poorly-known and unknown ocean areas through interdisciplinary exploration, and to advance and disseminate knowledge of the ocean environment and its physical, chemical, archaeological, and biological resources. The office priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission goals of: Healthy Oceans, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation, and Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies, as well as many of the elements of the President's National Ocean Policy.

Competitive ocean exploration proposals will be bold, innovative and interdisciplinary in their approach. NOAA OER anticipates a total of approximately $3,000,000 including costs for ship and submersible assets will be available through this announcement. Only exploration proposals will be considered for funding, any other type of proposed project will not be reviewed. See Section I.B. for thematic priorities.

To familiarize themselves with past and present OER-funded activities, applicants are encouraged to visit the Ocean Explorer Website http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov. Background on how to apply and the required proposal coversheets are accessible through the OER Office Website at http://explore.noaa.gov.
Pre-proposal submissions by non-Federal or Federal applicants are to be e-mailed to oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov. Please put your last name in the subject heading along with the words OER Pre-proposal, e.g., "Jones OER Pre-proposal." Adobe PDF format is preferred. If an eligible applicant can prove he/she does not have internet access, contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII for submission instructions.

Full proposal submissions from non-Federal applicants must be submitted through Grants.gov. If an eligible applicant can prove he/she does not have internet access, contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII for submission instructions. No e-mail or facsimile full proposal submissions will be accepted from non-Federal applicants.

Full proposal submissions from Federal applicants are to be submitted by e-mail to oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov. No facsimile full proposal submissions will be accepted from Federal applicants.

For questions send messages to oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov. Questions and responses will be posted at http://explore.noaa.gov.
I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this announcement is to invite the submission of pre-proposals and, later, full proposals that address ocean exploration. Ocean exploration was defined by the 2000 President’s panel as “discovery through disciplined diverse observations and the recording of the finding.” NOAA’s Office of Ocean Exploration and Research seeks proposals that use an interdisciplinary approach to investigate new ocean areas and phenomena, combining the expertise of scientists from different disciplines. It is expected that the results of funded proposals will stimulate further exploration and research, as well as inform marine policy and marine resource management decisions. Furthermore, data and observations resulting from funded ocean exploration proposals are expected to result in new discoveries, new insights, new knowledge and new ocean science frontiers in the ocean’s poorly known and unknown regions that may revise, or even overturn, current ocean paradigms.

B. Program Priorities

Geographic priorities:

Areas of strategic interest have been identified through workshops and discussions with the ocean science community, other Federal agencies engaged in marine exploration and baseline characterization, and were further informed by the recent National Forum on Ocean Exploration held at the Aquarium of the Pacific July 19-20, 2013 (http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov). Specific regions of interest include the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean and the Arctic, with particular interest given to deep water areas within the U. EEZ and areas that have been mapped in support of the Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) effort (http://ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/ecs/cruises.html and http://ccom.unh.edu/theme/law-sea/law-of-the-sea-data). However, compelling proposals for other regions will be considered. Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop proposals in partnership with other institutions with similar objectives in these regions. Proposals with leveraged resources are highly desired, although this is not a requirement.

Thematic priorities:

Surveys: Surveys of unknown, or poorly known, regions and sea floor features (e.g., ridges, canyons, faults, seamounts, habitats) that may have economic, marine hazard, ecosystem, or other scientific importance. The surveys will be conducted using advanced instrument systems including, for example, autonomous vehicles; multi-beam sonars, side-scan sonars, and other seafloor as well as water-column mapping technologies and systems;
Characterizations: Discover and characterize new habitats, species, communities of organisms, and potential living as well as non-living resources including, for example, mesophotic and deep sea corals, hydrates, seeps, microbial ecosystems, fish stocks and natural products with potential pharmaceutical or biotechnological applications;

Processes: Discover and describe poorly-known or unknown physical, geological, chemical, or biological oceanographic processes that may have potentially far-ranging implications for understanding the Earth's habitability. Such processes may involve deep ocean circulation; chemical and/or heat plumes from hydrothermal vents, benthic-pelagic and pelagic-benthic coupling, and ocean-atmosphere and ocean-seabed linkages;

Technology: Application of new, or the novel use of existing oceanographic technologies to increase the pace, efficiency and scope of undersea discovery and understanding.

Marine Archaeology: Interdisciplinary exploration, discovery, and initial documentation of significant submerged cultural heritage sites, at any water depth, including shipwrecks, submerged (previously subaerial) landscapes, aircraft, and other maritime or submerged cultural sites.

Ocean Exploration additional background and requirements:

Marine Archaeology: OER supports standards for conducting marine archaeology projects and expeditions such as those enumerated in the Annex Rules of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Archaeological surveying must be at an appropriate resolution to detect and characterize archaeological resources (<1m).

OER supports only the early stages, i.e., search, discovery, and characterization, of archaeological investigation.
Mapping: Habitat and key feature surveying should include at least low-resolution (>10m) surveys of areas that have never been mapped, and/or high-resolution (<10m) surveys of new areas or areas that have been previously mapped at low-resolution.

Ships and Submersible Assets: Vehicles required to conduct ocean explorations must be explicitly identified, including the use of Human Occupied Vehicles, Remotely Operated Vehicles and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles. OER has not pre-paid or reserved any ship-time associated with this announcement. If the proposed work requires funding for ship time or submersible assets, these costs should be included in the proposed budget. If ship-time has been pre-arranged, be sure to note this in the proposal.

C. Program Authority

33 USC 3403(a)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

At present, OER anticipates a total of approximately $3,000,000 will be available through this announcement. Depending on specifics of proposals received, OER hopes to be able to support approximately 8-15 awards, in the amounts of $10,000 to $2,500,000, through this solicitation. The amount of funding available through this announcement will be subject to the final FY14 appropriation for the Office of Ocean Exploration and Research. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project or to obligate all or any part of available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate or continue exploration activities where funding has been recommended by OER. The amount of funding that OER may recommend for a grant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and OER. The OER Director may defer selected 2014 proposals for consideration for funding in the subsequent, or later, fiscal years.

B. Project/Award Period

OER will accept proposals for one to two-year projects.

The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120 days after NOAA and OER receive their annual funding appropriation from Congress. Applicants should factor in this time when proposing research activities.
C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Proposals selected for funding from NOAA scientists will be funded through an intra-agency transfer. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency transfer.

For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the Federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as specifying direction or redirection of the scope of work due to inter-relationships with other projects or stipulating that the recipient must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a project may continue. By receiving funding from OER, all applicants agree to certain requirements for sample collection, education and outreach, data management and website development. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff or NOAA designee(s) may become members of the at-sea science party serving roles as Data Managers or Web Coordinators. For more details please refer to section VIII of this document.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Neither Cost-sharing nor matching is required.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

1. Potential Partners
OER encourages partnerships between academia, Government agencies, foundations, and private-sector companies. OER also encourages investigators to seek complementary funding for their proposed projects through complementary or linked proposals to other sponsors, both internal and external to NOAA.

2. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary international, Federal, state and local Government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of cultural resource or environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow OER to determine the environmental impact of a proposal under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The two-page pre-proposal application must be accompanied by the required cover sheet obtainable through the OER website at: http://explore.noaa.gov/AboutOER/funding.aspx. If an eligible applicant can prove he/she does not have internet access, contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII for submission instructions.

For full proposals, grant application information and forms are available through Grants.gov. In addition, a proposal cover sheet (available at the OER web site as referenced above) must be submitted with the application. If an eligible applicant can prove he/she does not have internet access, contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII for submission instructions.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Pre-proposal Contents
Complete, two-page pre-proposals are required for all applications. The pre-proposal should be compelling, concise and clear. It should identify the project's priorities and objectives and describe how these relate to OER's mission, objectives and priorities (as described in Section I. A & B above). It should identify all involved collaborators and their expertise, and include a budget summarizing the major categories of effort (including costs associated with analysis, publication of the results and archiving of data). Incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered, and no more than two pages will be reviewed.

Any, and all additional information, must be included in the designated two pages or on the cover sheet. Such information may include: 1) vessels, platforms or other critical assets required to technically achieve the goals and their costs; 2) auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project; 3) time or operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations; 4) anticipated outputs (e.g. potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and/or education and outreach material) and 5) any results from past Ocean Exploration funding if applicable.

All pre-proposal submissions must:

a. include the two-page OER coversheet;

b. not exceed two additional single-sided typewritten pages and;

c. be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in at least 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins. The Principal Investigator's last name should be typed in the bottom right-hand corner of each page. See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.G. for submission procedures and addresses.

Pre-proposals received after the due date will not be reviewed.

2. Full Proposal Contents

Full proposals must include the following, unless otherwise indicated, in the order listed. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in the application not being reviewed. Excluding the coversheet, please number each page and label it with the Principal Investigator's last name in the bottom right-hand corner (not required but highly recommended for tracking purposes). As appropriate, all full proposal text should be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in at least 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins. See Section IV.C for
All full proposals must include:

a. Completed Proposal Coversheet: Principal and Co-Principal investigators are to be identified.

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

c. A Data/Information Sharing Plan: See section VIII.C.1.

d. Project Description: The project description is not to exceed 15 pages, including all text and any tables and visual materials (e.g., charts, graphs, maps, photographs). This is a firm requirement. Any project description pages beyond the 15 page limit will be deleted prior to review. Exploration results in discoveries; follow-on research results in detailed knowledge. Only exploration proposals will be funded.

The 15-page limit does not include: the Coversheet, Executive Summary, Budget and Budget Justification, Literature Citation, Current and Pending Support, Curriculum Vitae, Letters of Commitment, and Required Forms.

Successful proposals will incorporate bold, innovative ideas, an interdisciplinary approach, and address applicability to OER’s objectives and priorities (as described in Section I. A & B):

Contents of the Project Description:
Description of the project's scientific, technical, historical, cultural or socioeconomic importance and merit. Will it potentially challenge existing paradigms or lead to the formulation of new paradigms?

Description of the project's goals and objectives and the proposed methodology.

Provision of brief descriptions of the contributions of participating personnel

Description of any complementary funding

Clarification of any time or operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations

Anticipated outputs (e.g. potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and/or education and outreach material) and cost. Proposals should also include a description and justification of data funding needs to align with the Data/information sharing plan for preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, samples, physical collections, and any other science-related products (see Section VIII C).

e. A concise summary of significant results and achievements: This summary should include publications and outputs, and data/information sharing experience from any prior, or ongoing, Ocean Exploration funding.

f. A summary of Current Funding Support: Applicants must provide information on all their current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including potential subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance or that requires a portion of time of the principal investigator or other senior personnel should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be clearly stated.

g. Brief resumes for each investigator: a maximum of two pages for each Principal and Co-Principal Investigator(s) including a representative reference list of relevant recent publications,
h. Detailed Tabular Budget: Separate budgets within the proposal must be provided if more than one funding action is anticipated (e.g., if funds are to be allocated to more than one institution or agency through subcontracts).

i. Budget Justification: including justifications of salary and travel costs, analysis and publication, non-standard items, including shiptime submersibles etc., cost sharing or in-kind contributions. Proposals must include sufficient resources to analyze, interpret, publish, and archive data and results of the project. Applications must include a scope of work, and budgets for each year and a summary budget for the entire award period.

j. NEPA statement: NOAA NEPA Questionnaire: As part of this application process, questions from "The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants" (OMB Control No. 0648-0538) must be answered. This NEPA Questionnaire form is available at www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf. All applicants need to fill in sections A,D,E and F. If you are proposing activities Related to Damage Assessment and Restoration, also fill out section G. If you are proposing activities Related to Fisheries Sampling and Research, fill out section H. Failure to complete all of the indicated questions will result in the application being considered incomplete.

k. Forms: Applicants must submit a complete NOAA grant application package provided from Grants.gov.

l. A list of suggested reviewers: If the applicant chooses to do so, the application may include a list of suggested reviewers (name, e-mail addresses and phone numbers) of five unconflicted potential peer-reviewers. Applicants may also identify individuals recommended for exclusion from the review process (including justification for any such recommendation).

C. Submission Dates and Times

Completed pre-proposals are required and must be received by 5:00 pm (EDT) on October 15, 2013. Before 5:00 pm (EDT), an auto-reply message will notify applicants that their email with pre-proposal material was received. After 5:00 pm (EDT), an auto-reply
message will notify applicant that their email with pre-proposal material submission is late and will not be considered. A complete pre-proposal is a prerequisite for submission of a full proposal. Applicants will receive an email encouraging or discouraging a full proposal submission by November 1, 2013. If you have not received a reply by November 1, 2013 contact OER (at oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov or 301-734-1014) as soon as possible.

Full proposals must be received by 5:00 pm (EST) December 20, 2013. For non-Federal applications submitted through www.Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis for determining timeliness. For Federal applications submitted via email proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the Program Office.

Pre-proposals and Full Proposals received after their respective cutoff dates and times will not be considered.

Important:

All applicants submitting electronic proposals should be aware that the volume on Grants.gov can be heavy and adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application.

If an eligible applicant has proven that he/she does not have internet access, and the Agency Contact has approved a paper application, the applicant must allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received before the deadline, taking into account that overnight carriers do not always fulfill their timeline guarantees.

Please note:

Applicants may have to register or renew their central contractor registration prior to submitting to Grants.gov. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the System for Award Management website https://www.sam.gov. For questions please visit the Federal Service Desk https://www.fsd.gov.
D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

F. Other Submission Requirements

None.

Pre-proposal submissions are to be e-mailed to oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov. Please put your last name in the subject heading along with the words ocean exploration pre-proposal, e.g., "Jones ocean exploration pre-proposal." Adobe PDF format is preferred. No facsimile pre-proposals will be accepted.

Full proposal submissions from non-Federal applicants must be submitted through Grants.gov. If an eligible applicant can prove he/she does not have internet access, contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII for submission instructions. No e-mail or facsimile full proposal submissions will be accepted from non-Federal applicants.

Federal applicants are ineligible to submit via Grants.gov and must submit their submissions by e-mail to oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov.

V. Application Review Information

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

a. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to OER Goals (40%): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to appropriate NOAA, international, Federal, regional, state, or local priorities. For the OER review process this includes the degree to which the proposal addresses and supports OER geographic and thematic priorities. A central aspect of this criteria is whether the proposed effort is exploratory in nature (expanding the breadth of knowledge) as opposed to a research focus (expanding the depth of knowledge on any particular topic).

b. Scientific and Technical Merit (40%): This criterion ascertains whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the OER review process, in addition to the scientific, and/or technical merit of the effort, review criteria include whether: a) the effort is interdisciplinary with suitable plans and methods; b) the anticipated results (as appropriate, scientific, technical, historical, cultural, societal or economic) could have high downstream impact, e.g., leading to the revision of existing paradigms, the formulation of new paradigms or pushing new frontiers of knowledge or activity; and c) plans for preservation, documentation, and sharing of data, multimedia and specimen collections are adequately and clearly outlined.

c. Overall qualifications of applicants (10%): This ascertains whether the applicant(s) possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the OER review process this includes: a) the qualifications of the applicant(s); b) the strength, diversity, and depth of any partnership to accomplish the work proposed; and c) if they have previously received OER funding, the applicant's prior OER award performance, including timely publication of results.

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

Once a full proposal is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. When a proposal is determined to be in compliance and complete, the proposal will be subjected to peer-review.

Peer reviewers will rate the individual proposals using the evaluation criteria and percentage weights provided above and provide summary comments. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in the peer-review process, which will include external mail reviews and/or a peer-review panel. Peer-review panelists will not be asked to reach consensus on individual proposals. Based on external mail reviewer scores, summary comments and, as appropriate, summaries and scores from review panelists, the OER Director, in consultation with appropriate OER scientific and technical staff, will make the final decision.

C. Selection Factors

In making final selections, the OER Director will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the 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. Office priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicants prior award performance, including experience in data/information sharing.

6. Partnerships.

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

OER’s intent is to notify all applicants (Federal and non-Federal) of the results of the peer review of their proposal, as well as OER's final recommendation to award or decline funding, by postal mail or email within approximately 180 days after receipt of the full proposal. Progress of the peer-review process may affect this timeline. Successful applicants will receive notification that their proposal has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that enables OER to distribute funding. Notifications will be issued via email to the proposal's Authorizing Official.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

1. Use of Universal Identifier

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and 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.

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Requirements.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements: Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). A copy of the notice may be obtained at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html.

2. Limitation of Liability.

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

3. 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 at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NEPA_HANDBOOK.pdf. 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 an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines that an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

4. UNPAID OR DELINQUENT TAX LIABILITY - In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

C. Reporting

1. An expedition/field work plan must be submitted to OER in time to meet ship/platform requirements but no later than 10 days prior to beginning the expedition/field work.

2. Within 10 days of the completion of the expedition/field work recipients must provide a "quick look" report.

3. Within 60 days of completion of the expedition/field work (or annually if the work is multi-year) grant recipients must provide:
a. an updated collection level metadata record identifying completed collections and including Digital Object Identifiers (if assigned);

b. a data inventory identifying data types collected, data release dates and/or documents specific proposed exceptions to the open data access policy (e.g., data that may have homeland/national security, cultural heritage, or protected resources value in accordance with NAO 212-15);

c. expedition/field work location data (e.g. ship navigation track or area of operations for public GIS display);

d. for continuing observations, data inventories should be submitted periodically if there is a significant change in location, type or frequency of such observations.

4. Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date of the project. Progress reports are due electronically to the NOAA OER and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports should detail collaborative activities that have occurred during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information including financial reports.

5. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards 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 Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over $25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research at (301) 734-1014 or submit inquiries via email to the address: oer.ffo2014@noaa.gov. Email
inquiries should include the Principal Investigator's name in the subject heading. Inquiries can be mailed to: ATTN Yvette Jefferson, FFO 2014, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration & Research, SSMC III, Rm 10315, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

VIII. Other Information

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

A. Sample Collection

In certain cases, OER may require the collection of living/non-living samples during the exploration aboard a NOAA or NOAA-chartered vessel. This may occur even when an expedition does not call for collection of samples. In such cases, OER will work with the expedition team to ensure any such sampling will not significantly interfere with or jeopardize the principal objectives of the expedition. Cultural heritage materials will only be collected under the appropriate permits and with prior accommodation for conservation and curation as described in the Annex Rules of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

B. Education & Outreach

Although education and outreach activities are not part of the evaluation criteria, all funded applicants and collaborators are required to cooperate with OER in facilitating education and outreach activities associated with their projects. Consequently, proposals should include an explanation of what activities are planned. This may include participation in the development of lesson plans, professional development for teachers, accommodation of a teacher/educator-at-sea, participation in a media event or press conference to describe the expedition and its findings, at-sea media participation, and support for public/student tours of the research vessel and interaction with scientists in shipboard labs.

As warranted, OER will organize an education and/or outreach event in collaboration with the applicant. NOAA's Ocean Explorer website (http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov) is the principal vehicle for chronicling and documenting all missions supported by OER. Mission participants will be required to provide information pre-, during, and post-cruise for this site such as cruise tracks; preliminary bathymetry; characterization of data collected;
photographic or other images from the mission; and be available to participate in interviews, essays, or written materials. In these cases, OER will provide an OER Web Coordinator to work with the applicant and science party to determine the content of web offerings, and to develop and implement a web production plan.

C. Data Management Guidance (Sharing of Findings, Data and other Information)

Applicants receiving funds under the NOAA OER Program are required to comply with NOAA Administrative Order 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information and specifically with the guidance provided in The NOAA Data Sharing Policy for Grants and Cooperative Agreements. This policy is consistent with all Government agencies including NSF.

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under an awarded grant/cooperative agreement will be made visible, accessible and independently understandable to users in a timely manner (e.g., no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created) free of charge or at minimal cost that is no more than the cost of distribution to the user, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. A Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required as part of the Project Narrative. This plan will be reviewed and evaluated. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information that will be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, must be posted with the published data.
3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Implementation of data management in OER is also guided by the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration’s recommendation for a rapid and unfettered data management and dissemination process, and by Public law 111-11 Section XII Ocean Exploration. Applicants awarded funding under the NOAA OER Program must state their intent to comply with above regulations.

To ensure broad public access to information, OER publishes the Digital Atlas, an online geospatial index to OER–funded expeditions. The metadata produced to satisfy the NOAA requirements will be used to populate the Digital Atlas. The OER Data Management Coordinator, when not otherwise specifically designated in each Grant or Contract award, will be the NOAA National Coastal Data Development Centers OER Liaison Officer (oer.info.mgmt@noaa.gov) or (228-688-2256 or toll free 1-866-732-2382).

D. Proprietary or Privileged Information

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

E. Release of Grantee Proposal Information

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

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

NOAA Administrative Order 215-101

NOAA Data Sharing Policy for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Procedural Directive