

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Federal Agency Name(s): Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS)
- Funding Opportunity Title: Automated Flood Warning Systems (AFWS) Program
- Announcement Type: Initial Announcement
- Funding Opportunity Number: N/A
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.450, Integrated Flood Observing and Warning System (IFLOWS)
- Dates: Proposals must be received by the NWS no later than 5 p.m., local time, October 21, 2004.
- Funding Opportunity Description: The AFWS Program represents a NOAA/NWS effort to partner with institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, and, state, local, and Indian tribal governments to provide capital funds for the creation, refurbishment, or enhancement of Automated Flood Warning Systems (AFWS).

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The objective of the AFWS Program is to provide funding to communities with flood and flash flood problems that affect safety of life and property to assist them in creating, refurbishing, or enhancing Automated Flood Warning Systems (AFWS).

B. Program Priorities

The AFWS program will give priority to those applicants demonstrating need for an existing or proposed AFWS serving an area with significant flood and flash flood risk, and ability to operate and maintain an AFWS, including making the data available to NWS. Data received by the NWS will be redistributed to the public without restrictions.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the AFWS program is provided by 15 USC 313; 33 USC 883d; 49 USC 44720(b).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Approximately \$500,000 will be available each fiscal year subject to the availability of funds. Proposals in any amounts may be submitted, but awards in excess of \$100,000 are unlikely. It is anticipated that 5 to 10 awards will be granted each year.

B. Project/Award Period

This program announcement is for funds for a new or current AFWS for up to a year period, with an anticipated start date of April 1, 2005. If an application is selected for initial funding, the NWS has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Applications must include a scope of work and a budget for the entire award period. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards.

C. Type of funding instrument

Funding shall be in the form of a grant.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, and, state, local and Indian tribal governments.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program. Applicant resource commitment will, however, be considered in the competitive selection process. Refer to Part V, Section A.3.b for further information.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available at

<http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>.

If the applicant has difficulty downloading the required forms, please contact John Bradley, NOAA/NWS; 1325 East-West Highway, Room 13396; Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3283, or by phone at 301-713-0624 ext. 154, or fax to 301-713-1520, or via internet at john.bradley@noaa.gov. (TDD capabilities can be accessed through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800-735-2258, between the hours of 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.)

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to all provisions under "Proposals" and "Required Elements" by the deadline of October 21, 2004. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in proposals being returned to the submitter without review.

1. Proposals

- a. Proposals must include an original and two unbound copies. Only the original version of all federally required forms accompanying the proposal need be submitted.
- b. Proposals should be no more than 30 pages (numbered) in length, including budget and all appendices. Appended information should be counted within the 30-page total. Federally mandated forms are not included within the page count.

2. Required Elements

Standard forms. The applicant must submit a standard application package, including SF-424 application; SF-424A (budget) and SF-424B (assurances) for non-construction awards; SF-424C (budget) and SF-424D (assurances) for construction awards (if applicable), CD-511 (debarment, suspension, drug-free, and lobbying documentation), SF-LLL (applicable only if reporting lobbying activity), and a copy of recipient's most current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (if applicable). The applicant must also complete and retain CD-512 (certifications for lower-tier transactions and lobbying). Along with the forms described above, the applicant must provide a statement of work, project description, and a detailed budget narrative and justification.

Statement of Work. The application must provide a brief statement of work indicating how the requested funding will assist the applicant in addressing a flood problem, and how the project will benefit both the applicant and the general public.

- a. Project Description. The application must have a narrative that describes the project in relation to the evaluation criteria listed in Part V, Section A.
- b. Budget. Along with the detailed budget described on Standard Form 424A, the applicant must provide a detailed budget narrative and justification. The budget and justification must provide a clear and measurable cost allocation to the described functions of the award. The budget should show the direct correlation between cost and the activities to be performed. In a properly done budget, one should be able to determine the cost per task and subtask from the budget and the information provided in the budget narrative.

C. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for receipt of proposals at the NOAA/NWS office is 5:00 p.m., local time, October 21, 2004.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

F. Other Submission Requirements

All applicants are to submit hard copy proposals. Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of proposals will not be accepted. The hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery to John Bradley, NOAA/NWS; 1325 East-West Highway, Room 13396; Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3283.

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 AFWS Program, this includes:
 - a. *Historical information about flash flood-related losses* including statistics, news articles, official studies, declarations, or other information pertaining to

evacuations, deaths, injuries, displacement, economic impact, and property damage caused by past floods. Also includes dates, frequency, and statistical information related to past floods.

- b. *Demographic information that describes people and property at risk* describing specific high-risk areas, including the number of people and properties that are affected, historical information attesting to the rapidity of rising water in the high-risk areas, and an official count of the number of flood insurance policies written in the area of coverage. (The Federal Emergency Management Agency is a source of information for insurance policies).
 - c. *Performance measurements* used to track the success of goals set forth in the proposal. Discussion should include what the project goals are, how measurements can be conducted, and by whom.
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 (25 percent). For the AFWS Program, this includes:
- a. *Technical details* of the project, including site specific gage locations and how the data will be provided to both the applicant and NOAA/NWS. A discussion should also provide information that describes the communications links from sensors to the NOAA/NWS. For AFWS, it is recommended that raw data be provided to the NOAA/NWS in either ALERT or SHEF formats.
 - b. *Level of coordination* with the local NOAA/NWS forecast office and/or River Forecast Center. NOAA/NWS coordination is the extent to which the local NOAA/NWS forecast office has been involved in the planning of the proposal. The focus of NOAA/NWS involvement should be to assist in identifying site locations that would facilitate forecasting.
 - c. *Contribution of data* to saving lives and reducing property damage. Discussion should include why site specific selections were made, whether alternative data sources are available, and various alternative locations for gage placement, as appropriate.
 - d. *Level of past participation*, if applicable, in IFLOWS, ALERT or other AFWS Programs. Provides historical information related to the applicant's previous and/or current participation in activities related to flood warning or other data collection systems, including AFWS and ALERT. Discussion should include technical system descriptions, participating agencies, contact points, nature and duration of the project, and use of the data or other products resulting from the activity. Emphasis should be placed on how the financial assistance will enhance or support the existing system.
 - e. *Multiple uses of the data*. Indicates whether data provided by the system can be used for purposes other than flood warning. If so, discussion should describe who the users would be, how data would be used, how parties would acquire data, and the extent to which these parties would participate in supporting or administering the system.

3. Overall Qualification of Applicants. This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project (25 percent). For the AFWS Program, this includes:
 - a. *Description of the entity* that will administer the system on a long-term basis. This may also include a copy of by-laws for non-profit organizations, or other supporting documentation that affirms the viability of the organization.
 - b. *Evidence of long-term viability* demonstrating that the applicant possesses the necessary resources and commitment to operate and maintain an AFWS, irrespective of NOAA funding, beyond the funding period. Among topics that should be discussed are historic precedence and supporting information attesting to the long-term viability of ongoing administrative support. Discussion should also include general descriptions of personnel who are responsible for day-to-day administration of the activity, how their jobs will be administered, and how activities will be coordinated with the NOAA/NWS weather forecast office and other participating agencies, if any. Examples of other supporting documentation include letters of commitment from participants, local budget submissions, examples of historical funding precedence, and letters of support indicating resource commitment from participants.

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 AFWS Program, this includes:

Clear and measurable cost allocation must relate to the described functions of the award. Examples are itemized lists for all estimated travel, labor, equipment, subcontracts, and other identified activities. The proposal also requires a detailed budget narrative that covers the following: *for travel*--specific purposes and locations; *for labor*--job descriptions, hours, and overhead; *for equipment*--proposed locations and pro rated percentage of use for the flood warning system; *for contracts*--activity, estimated hours, and labor rates. A timeline detailing when project activities are expected to start and finish is also required.

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).

Outreach and education plan should identify project stakeholders and indicate how they will be encouraged to learn about, use, and benefit from the AFWS.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review/screening will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals will then be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by an independent peer panel review. Three to seven NWS experts representing NWS Regions may be used in this process. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The Selection Official selects proposals after considering the peer panel reviews and selection factors listed below. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will award in rank order unless the proposal is selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors.

C. Selection Factors

The Merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer. 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 (See Section I.B).
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

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during November and December 2004, and funding should begin during spring 2005 for most approved projects. April 1, 2005, 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. NOAA/NWS will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, by postal mail. NOAA/NWS shall dispose of all applications that are not awarded.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and National Policy Requirements. 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 published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html

Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal assistance opportunities. 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.

C. Reporting

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 and performance reports are semi-annual.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

The point of contact is John Bradley, NOAA/NWS; 1325 East-West Highway, Room 13396; Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3283, or by phone at 301-713-0624 ext. 154, or fax to 301-713-1520, or via internet at john.bradley@noaa.gov.