
NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research
Ocean Exploration Advisory Board Meeting
January 20-21, 2016

This document describes the primary mechanisms OER uses to engage individuals and institutions to meet mission objectives. OER also uses traditional procurement tools, such as competitive contracts, as appropriate.

Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) – Competitive

OER conducts an annual competition for federal funding focused on specific exploration themes of importance to the NOAA mission and national objectives. This call from proposals submitted in response to this competitive announcement undergo peer-review and those recommended for funding must undergo NOAA Administrative review and be approved by the Department of Commerce General Counsel. Awards can be made through grants, internal transfers, or interagency agreements depending on the institution.

OER's grants program is funded through the FFO.

NOAA Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) – Non-Competitive

The NOAA BAA is published annually and encourages individuals and institutions to submit unsolicited, non-competitive proposals under broad categories such as research, technology, education, and outreach. The BAA does not obligate any program receiving a proposal to review it in depth, but if the proposal is of interest it must undergo a rigorous review by subject matter experts.

Any individual or institution can submit an unsolicited proposal that does not align with or address any competitive FFO NOAA has advertised. OER has received numerous such proposals over the years, most often in conjunction with those organizations that have a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the office. Examples include the Ocean Exploration Trust (OET), the University of Rhode Island (URI), the Global Foundation for Ocean Exploration (GFOE), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI), and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF).

OER is funding OET and GFOE under the BAA

Cooperative Institutes (CI) – Competitive

Cooperative Institutes represent long-term partnerships with academic and non-profit research institutions. They are established through a competitive process similar to the FFO, and undergo rigorous peer, administrative, and legal review. Once established, Cooperative Institutes develop an annual proposal for funding, which defines the work to be undertaken, and the final annual grant award amount is negotiated with the NOAA program responsible for

managing the CI. Cooperative Institutes undergo a rigorous review after five-years, and if determined to be successful, can be renewed for another five-years. At the end of that time, and if there still is a requirement for the work, NOAA must develop a new competition to reestablish the CI.

Unlike grants awarded under a FFO, other NOAA programs may provide additional funding for new projects as long as they address the scientific intent of the CI.

OER currently manages the Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research and Technology (CIOERT), which includes Florida Atlantic University, the University of North Carolina Wilmington, University of Miami, and SRI International. OER has also worked with several other Cooperative Institutes to support specific projects and expeditions tailored to meet NOAA and national objectives.

Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA)

CRADAs are written agreements between one or more federal laboratories or programs and one or more non-federal parties under which the government, through its programs, provides personnel, facilities, equipment or other resources with or without reimbursement (but not funds to non-federal parties). The non-federal parties provide personnel, funds, services, facilities, equipment or other resources to conduct specific research or development efforts that are consistent with the mission of the laboratory.

OER participates in an OAR CRADA with Boeing to test and evaluate AUV systems.

Interagency Agreements: An Interagency Agreement (IAA) is formal relationship between federal agencies. An IAA must be established prior to requesting goods or services from; providing goods or performing services for; or undertaking activities of a collaborative nature with any entity outside a particular program. For those situations where a formal relationship must be documented in an agreement between the parties, an agreement must be developed and approved under the appropriate legal authorities with necessary reviews, coordination, and clearances.

In the past, OER has established interagency agreements with United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Navy, the Army, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and other federal agencies. OER also takes advantage of NOAA-wide interagency agreements for specific projects, such as those with the Oceanographer of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and the University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System (UNOLS).