

# Ocean Protection Council

## Grant Program Funding Guidelines

November 2008

### **A. Grant Program Objectives**

The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) is charged with implementing the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA). An important tool to achieve the provisions of COPA is the funding of projects and programs that target the actions identified in the OPC Strategic Plan. This document provides guidance to interested parties about OPC funding opportunities and project selection criteria.

In addition to consistency with COPA and the OPC strategic plan, projects that will be considered for funding by the OPC must:

- Directly relate to the ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds
- Have demonstrable support from the public
- Be of greater-than-local interest

The OPC will give additional consideration to proposed projects that:

- Employ an innovative approach to solving a problem
- Improve the manner in which the state manages coastal and ocean resources
- Help resolve more than one issue
- Include a contribution of funds or services by other entities
- Are ready to implement (grantee or contractor will start and finish the project in a timely manner)
- Involve a combination of local, state, or federal agencies or that are public/private partnerships

### **B. OPC Program Priorities**

The OPC will adopt and periodically update specific program priorities that reflect the issues the OPC is currently working to resolve. Current program priorities are posted on the OPC website.

### **C. Types of Funding Processes**

#### ***1. Competitive Grants***

To ensure an open process with the broadest possible participation, fairness, competition, and innovation, a portion of funding available to the OPC will be allocated through competitive grants. Solicitations for projects may take place several times per year; each solicitation will include the application instructions and guidelines and the review criteria specific for that competitive grant round.

## ***2. Directed Funding***

A portion of funds available to the OPC will be allocated on a continuous basis for staff-developed projects and programs for purposes including:

- Ensuring that strategic plan priorities are completed in a timely and efficient manner
- Supporting projects that complement or build on previous OPC projects
- Ensuring that opportunities to advance key strategic goals of the OPC are not missed, even if such actions are not identified in a particular year's program priorities
- Ensuring that funding is available for projects that support state departments that implement high priority programs (e.g., Marine Life Management Act and Marine Life Protection Act)

## ***3. Unsolicited Proposals***

The OPC will accept unsolicited proposals for projects and ideas on a continuous basis. The soonest a proposal may be brought by staff to the OPC for approval is the second meeting after staff receives the proposal. Proposals may, however, be held over for a future meeting based on funding availability, the completeness of information needed to develop a recommendation to the OPC, or other factors.

Proposals that fall within this category *must* be consistent with the OPC program priorities.

The OPC will not accept unsolicited proposals for:

- Projects focused solely on public education
- Projects requesting funding to make up for funds that have been lost from another source
- Projects requesting funds for ongoing monitoring

## ***4. State and Federal Agencies***

OPC staff will work with state and federal partners to develop projects of mutual interest. Agencies and departments with project ideas consistent with the OPC program priorities and strategic plan should not submit a full proposal. Agencies should send a one-page description of their project to Sam Schuchat (sschuchat@scc.ca.gov). Please note that the OPC will only consider federal projects that have a matching federal contribution.

For the purposes of the OPC grant program, academic institutions, including state colleges and universities, are not considered state agencies.

## **D. Application Instructions for Unsolicited Proposals**

All applicants for unsolicited projects must submit a pre-proposal, no longer than one page, that outlines:

- The project need (what is the problem that needs to be solved?)
- The project approach (what work will be conducted and who will be involved?)
- The OPC program priority that will be addressed
- The OPC strategic plan action that will be addressed (please site a specific action from Appendix A in the strategic plan)
- Estimated total budget

Please submit pre-proposals as electronic files to:  
Sam Schuchat, Council Secretary  
[sschuchat@scc.ca.gov](mailto:sschuchat@scc.ca.gov)

### **E. Evaluation Process**

Each pre-proposal will be reviewed by the OPC secretary to determine if it is consistent with the current program priorities, the strategic plan, and the OPC grant program objectives. If a pre-proposal is deemed consistent, applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be evaluated by a review panel established by OPC staff. When appropriate, proposals may be sent to the OPC Steering Committee members for comment or to the Ocean Science Trust and outside experts for technical review.

Each member of the review panel will review each application and score it based on the following criteria:

- **Management Relevance:** How well will this project improve our management of ocean and coastal resources?
- **Innovativeness:** Is this an approach that has not been tried or will result in a new approach to management?
- **Uniqueness:** Is this a proposal that can be/should be funded by other sources?
- **OPC Program Priorities:** How well does the proposal fulfill the OPC's program priorities?
- **Technical/Scientific Merit:** Is the project approach technically sound? What is the likelihood the project will fulfill its stated goals and objectives? How feasible will it be to determine project effectiveness?
- **Overall Qualification of Applicants:** Has the applicant demonstrated the necessary experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project?
- **Project Costs:** Has the applicant demonstrated that the project budget is appropriate to accomplish the goals?
- **Support:** Does the project enjoy public and/or state agency support?

After individual review panel members have scored the proposals, they will meet to compare scores, share expertise, and develop a consensus ranking for the proposals. The OPC staff will consider the review panel's recommendation on each proposal and *may* recommend them to the OPC for funding based upon additional program considerations that management will evaluate, including:

- Availability of funding
- Balance/distribution of funds among funding categories
- Coordination with other projects funded or considered for funding by the OPC or other state agencies

### **Conflict of Interest**

Any person involved in the evaluation of funding requests will avoid conflicts of interest as well as the appearance of any conflict of interest.