

Dated: February 2, 1998.

**Henry L. Longest, II,**

*Acting Assistant Administrator for Research and Development.*

[FR Doc. 98-3315 Filed 2-9-98; 8:45 am]

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5964-6]

### Investigator-Initiated Grants on Futures: Detecting the Early Signals

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The purpose of this document is to solicit public comment on the appropriateness of the research topic, "Futures: Detecting the Early Signals," described in the draft Request for Applications (RFA). The Agency's Science Advisory Board has recommended EPA should move towards using futures research and analysis in its programs and activities, particularly strategic planning and budgeting. The draft RFA is part of EPA's response to this recommendation. In the draft RFA EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) invites research grant applications to develop innovative, scientific approaches for solving current and future environmental problems and to improve our understanding of environmental risk.

**DATES:** Comments are requested on the wording, scope, and appropriateness of the research topics presented in this draft RFA. Comments must be received on or before March 12, 1998. EPA plans to issue the RFA a month after the close of the comment period.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For questions or comments regarding the solicitation process, contact Dr. Robert Menzer, telephone number (202) 564-6849, EPA (8701R), 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460, electronic mail address:

menzer.robert@epamail.epa.gov. For questions or comments regarding the specific research topics, contact Dr. Roger Cortesi, telephone number (202) 564-6852, EPA (8701R), 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460, electronic mail address:

cortesi.roger@epamail.epa.gov.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** EPA's National Center for Environmental Research and Quality Assurance (NCERQA) is preparing to issue a solicitation for research on futures. Funding for this solicitation will be

provided by EPA for a total of approximately \$1 million. We plan to award 6-8 grants, each with a project period of 1 year, under this solicitation.

NCERQA will receive, process, and distribute the proposals to the peer reviewers; convene the peer review sessions in conformance with existing EPA guidelines; and record the review discussion for each proposal. No EPA employees will serve as peer reviewers.

The description of the request for applications is as follows:

#### Futures: Detecting the Early Signals

##### Background

The question often arises whether serious environmental problems could be detected so that preventive or remedial actions could be generated sooner than they had been heretofore. Early awareness of an environmental problem would result in the ability to cope with a less serious problem, one easier and cheaper to handle. The possibility and value of early detection of environmental problems were the subject of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science Advisory Board's 1995 report, *Beyond the Horizon: Using Foresight to Protect the Environmental Future*. The report discusses why thinking about the future is important, possible systems of inquiry, and recommends that "... EPA should move towards using futures research and analysis in its programs and activities, particularly strategic planning and budgeting. . . ." Specifically:

- "As much attention should be given to avoiding future problems as to controlling current ones," and
- "EPA should establish a strong environmental futures capability that serves as an early warning system for emerging environmental problems."

In its planning process the Office of Research and Development (ORD) has committed itself to "establish capability and mechanisms within EPA to anticipate and identify environmental or other changes that may portend future risk, integrate futures planning into ongoing programs, and promote coordinated preparation for and response to change."

##### Scope of Research

In this announcement EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) invites research grant applications to develop innovative, scientific approaches for identifying future environmental problems. EPA, in order to perform its mission better, wishes to find ways to identify possible emerging environmental problems and to start working on them before headlines have

emerged. This solicitation aims to try an approach to looking ahead in two areas: in the natural sciences and in socio-economics.

Specifically, EPA requests applications in:

**A. Natural Sciences.** The applicant should choose an area where there is scattered scientific data that could portend a future environmental problem, examine these scattered data, and write a synthesis giving possible interpretations. This paper should suggest which questions raised by the data need answering and which of these questions can be resolved by research. Key features in proposal evaluation will be: (1) the balance in the identified potential problem between seriousness of the problem and its "Chicken Little factor," and (2) the value of the possible proposed synthesis even if the suspected problem turns out to be minimal.

Examples of problems which might have profited from such early examination in the past include:

- acid rain
- stratospheric ozone depletion
- DDT and thin bird egg shells
- PCBs, environmental persistence and its effects

**B. Socio-Economics.** The applicant should examine possible changes in the way we (the USA, the industrialized nations, the world, etc.), in the next five to twenty years, will think, do things, live, consume, invent, reproduce, etc., and what effects these changes will have on environmental problems, on our mind set, on how we handle them, on the tools we will have available to handle them, on the costs and benefits of handling them, etc. Socioeconomic analyses can cover a variety of subjects (e.g., demographic changes, economic changes, environmental value changes, land use changes, etc.)

A key feature of the evaluation of the proposals will be the usefulness of the analyses and the analytical methods developed even if the views of what the future will bring turn out to be seriously wrong. The proposed studies and syntheses should, if possible, offer suggestions about what possible changes are important and identify such changes to the environment that could be monitored for early detection and correction.

It is anticipated that projects funded under this solicitation will involve literature investigation and analysis, discussions with colleagues, perhaps computer modeling, and crystal-ball gazing. The final product of the research will be a paper setting forth the problem, approaches to its solution, and an estimate of the resources needed to

effect the solution (e.g., the outline of a research plan).

**Funding:** Approximately \$1.0 million is expected to be available in Fiscal Year 1998 for award in this solicitation. The projected award may be up to \$150,000 for one year. Applicants will be expected to budget for and participate in a workshop on environmental futures with EPA scientists, other agency officials, and other grantees in Washington, DC, to report on their research activities and to discuss issues of mutual interest.

#### Eligibility

Academic and not-for-profit institutions located in the U.S., and state or local governments are eligible under all existing authorizations. Profit-making firms and other federal agencies are not eligible to receive grants from EPA under this program. Federal agencies, national laboratories funded by federal agencies (FFRDCs), and federal employees are not eligible to submit applications to this program and may not serve in a principal leadership role on a grant.

The final RFA will also include instructions to potential applicants on the specific format to be used for applications. These instructions will be similar to such instructions found in other EPA/ORD solicitations which may be reviewed on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/ncerqa>.

Dated: January 28, 1998.

**Henry L. Longest, II,**

*Acting Assistant Administrator for Research and Development.*

[FR Doc. 98-3322 Filed 2-9-98; 8:45 am]

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5964-9]

### Notice of Teleconference, Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) Executive Committee Meeting

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Public Law 92-463, as amended (5 U.S.C., App. 2), notice is hereby given that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Research and Development (ORD), Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC), will hold a teleconference on February 25, 1998. On Wednesday, February 25, the teleconference will begin at 11:30 a.m. and will adjourn at 1:30 p.m. All times noted are Eastern Time. The purpose of

the teleconference is for the BOSC to review the draft report of ORD's, National Center for Environmental Research and Quality Assurance (NCERQA). The call-in number will be 202/260-7280; 6655# will access the teleconference. The teleconference is open to the public. Any member of the public wishing to make a presentation at the teleconference should contact Shirley Hamilton, Designated Federal Officer, Office of Research and Development (8701R), 401 M Street, SW., Washington, DC 20460; by telephone at (202) 564-6853. In general, each individual making an oral presentation will be limited to a total of three minutes.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Shirley R. Hamilton, Designated Federal Officer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, NCERQA (MC8701R), 401 M Street, SW., Washington, DC 20460, (202) 564-6854.

Dated: February 3, 1998.

**J.K. Alexander,**

*Acting Assistant Administrator for Research and Development.*

[FR Doc. 98-3323 Filed 2-9-98; 8:45 am]

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## FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

### Public Information Collection Requirements Submitted to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review

February 4, 1998.

The Federal Communications Commission has submitted the following information collection requirements to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Section 3507. Persons wishing to comment on the information collections should contact Timothy Fain, Office of Management and Budget, Room 10236, NEOB, Washington, D.C. 20503, (202) 395-3561. For further information, contact Judy Boley, Federal Communications Commission, (202) 418-0214.

**Please note:** The Commission has requested emergency review of the following collections by February 9, 1998 under the provisions of 5 CFR Section 1320.13.

**Title:** Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45 (47 CFR 36.611-36.612 and 47 CFR Part 54).

**Form No.:** N/A.

**OMB Control No.:** 3060-0774.

**Action:** Revised collection.

**Respondents:** Business or other for-profit entities; individuals or households, state.

**Estimated Annual Burden:** 5,565,451 respondents; .32 hours per response (avg.); 1,801,570 hours total annual burden for all collections. See estimates provided below for burden for requirements for which approval is sought.

**Needs and Uses:** On December 30, 1997, the Commission released the *Fourth Order on Reconsideration* in Federal-Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket 96-45, Access Charge Reform, Price Cap Performance Review for Local Exchange Carriers, Transport Rate Structure and Pricing, End User Common Line Charge, CC Docket Nos. 96-262, 94-1, 91-213, 95-72 (Order). Following publication of the Commission's May 8th *Report and Order* on Universal Service, the Commission received significant comment from the public regarding universal service in the form of petitions for reconsideration, oppositions to those petitions, and comments on those petitions. In the Order, the Commission responded to various issues raised in the petitions for reconsideration and/or clarification of the Commission's May 8th *Report and Order* on Universal Service. Several of the rules adopted in the Order reduce existing reporting requirements or impose new reporting requirements.

a. *47 C.F.R. § 54.201(a)(2)—Submission of eligibility criteria.* Pursuant to section 214(e), a carrier must be designated an eligible telecommunications carrier by a state commission before receiving universal service support in accordance with section 254. A state commission that is unable to designate as an eligible telecommunications carrier, by January 1, 1998, a carrier that sought such designation before January 1, 1998, may, once it has designated such carrier, file with the Commission a petition for waiver of paragraph (a)(1) of this section requesting that the carrier receive universal service support retroactive to January 1, 1998. The state commission must demonstrate in its petition that exceptional circumstances prevented it from designating such carrier as an eligible telecommunications carrier by January 1, 1998. (No. of respondents: 100; avg. hours per response: 4 hours; total annual burden: 400 hours).

b. *Demonstration of Reasonable Steps.* Carriers also are encouraged to file with the Commission information demonstrating that they took reasonable steps to be designated as eligible telecommunications carriers by January 1, 1998. (No. of respondents: 50; avg.