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Local small business awarded \$1m to dive into technology education

TUCSON – Thanks to the National Science Foundation (NSF), 90 science teachers from Tucson and around the nation will have an opportunity to explore how scientists use technology to monitor the ecology of ocean coastlines during the next three years. The federal agency has awarded Science Approach, a local small educational development company, \$1,035,022 to help bring geospatial technology to 7th-12th graders on both East and West coasts.

The project's goal is for 30 teachers each year to learn to use geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS) to investigate ocean research conducted by scientists at four sites of NSF's Long-term Ecological Research (LTER) network. Since 1980 NSF has been monitoring 26 marine LTER sites, scattered across coastal United States, Antarctica, and French Polynesia. The confirmed *CoastLines* locations include Florida Coastal Everglades, Moorea Coral Reef just north of Tahiti, and Santa Barbara Coastal LTER. Teachers will use data from the Moorea site as a baseline to compare ecological information from the U.S. locations.

During their time with the *CoastLines* project, the teachers will participate in online conferences and will attend a two-week summer institute at one of the three mainland LTER sites. They will then return to their schools having developed classroom activities using the new technologies. Students who reside in each coastline area will also have an opportunity to participate in the on-site institute.

Dr. Steven Moore, CEO of Science Approach, said, "Having teachers create activities that use geographic thinking will help students understand the importance of science and information technology as tools for solving problems and improving conditions on our planet." He added that the recruitment efforts will target minority, inner-city, rural, and low-income schools as a part of NSF's goal to improve the diversity and training of future generations of information technologists and scientists.

Because GIS uses powerful databases to link geographic information (where things are) with descriptive information (what things are), a map using GIS can present many layers and different kinds of information—simultaneously. Geospatial technologies are one of the targeted industries for the current administration's High Growth Training Initiative. The project is part of NSF's Information Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) program.

Teachers interested in applying for the program can find more information at <http://www.coastlines.ws>.

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Science Approach, LLC, based in Tucson, Arizona, is dedicated to making formal and informal education engaging, effective, and fun. In support of this vision, Science Approach develops educational materials, offers professional development workshops for teachers and other professionals, evaluates educational projects and products, conducts research, and develops new technologies. For more information, go to <http://www.science-approach.com>.