

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2013-2003467

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.469, Congressionally Identified Awards and Projects

Dates: Full proposals must be received by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 22, 2012. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. No fax or email applications will be accepted. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA B-WET is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment. Projects awarded through this grant competition provide meaningful watershed educational experiences for students and related professional development for teachers, and help to support regional education and environmental priorities in New England.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that supports outdoor, experiential learning through competitive grant awards in specific geographic regions. Prior to 2008, NOAA B-WET Programs were established for the Chesapeake Bay and Monterey, CA areas, and the Hawaiian Islands. In 2008 three new programs began, in New England, the northern Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest. In New England, funds for new and ongoing B-WET projects were available in FY10 and FY12. Only continuing projects were funded in FY11. It is anticipated that funds for new projects will again be available under the New England B-WET program in FY13. Proposals are currently being solicited for the New England B-WET program under this funding opportunity. For the purposes of this solicitation, the New England region is defined as the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

NOAA recognizes that knowledge and commitment built from firsthand experience, especially in the context of one's community and culture, is essential for achieving environmental stewardship. Carefully selected place-based experiences driven by rigorous academic learning standards, engendering discovery and wonder and nurturing a sense of community, enable students to understand their place in their watershed, help reinforce an ethic of responsible citizenship, and promote academic achievement. Experiential learning techniques, such as those supported by the NOAA B-WET Program, can increase interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), thus contributing to NOAA's obligations under the America COMPETES Act (33 U.S.C. § 893a(a)).

B. Program Priorities

This Federal Funding Opportunity supports NOAA's Mission to protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management, and furthers NOAA's vision of "an informed society that uses a comprehensive understanding of the role of the oceans, coasts, and atmosphere in the global ecosystem to make the best social and economic decisions" (see NOAA's Education Strategic Plan at www.education.noaa.gov/plan/09_NOAA_Educ_Strategic_Plan_Color.pdf). Proposed projects should address one of the two priority project types, described more fully below: (1) Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE) for students, or (2) Exemplary

Projects combining teacher professional development with long-term classroom-integrated MWEEs for students. Two additional factors, described more fully below, will be taken into consideration in making funding recommendations: (3) how the project addresses New England B-WET Regional priorities; and (4) requests for smaller grants (less than \$30,000/year) that are intended to support small community-based organizations.

The two priority project types are:

1. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences

The New England B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students to participate in Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE). The marine and estuarine environment, major hydrological systems, and the surrounding watersheds of New England provide ideal outdoor classrooms for watershed education lessons supporting the Ocean and Climate Literacy Principles (http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/literacy/ocean_literacy.pdf, <http://downloads.climate-science.gov/Literacy/Climate%20Literacy%20Booklet%20Low-Res.pdf>). In many cases, tidal and non-tidal waters and the landscape around them can provide "hands-on" laboratories where students can see, touch, and learn about their environment, and learn how their place is connected through watersheds to the ocean. Classroom lessons on the environment and watershed can also be brought alive through a strong pairing of outdoor and classroom experiences. Because we all live in, affect, and are affected by watersheds, watershed studies provide a genuine, locally relevant context to help advance student learning skills across the entire school curriculum. Proposals submitted under this priority project type should address the specific elements and types of activities that define a MWEE; more information is available at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/mwee.html>.

2. Exemplary Projects

The NOAA B-WET Program also seeks proposals for Exemplary Projects that combine teacher professional development with long-term classroom-integrated MWEEs for students. Systematic, continuing professional development opportunities reinforce a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of the natural

resources associated with watersheds and oceans. Teachers are the ideal providers of meaningful place-based environmental education experiences for students because they can weave together classroom and field activities within the context of their curriculum and current critical issues that impact their watershed. Coupling professional development for teachers with student watershed experiences tied to classroom learning will ensure that the MWEE best practices (see above) are fully supported and reinforced throughout the school year. Proposals submitted under this priority project type should be designed so that teachers not only understand what a MWEE is, but also why this type of pedagogy is important and how to implement MWEE programs. The professional development for teachers should ultimately benefit their students, so Exemplary Projects should be designed to provide the resources and necessary technical support so that teachers are capable of, and confident in, conducting MWEEs with their classes. Teachers are more likely to become comfortable offering outdoor field experiences after the professional development training has ended if field experiences are conducted with their classes during the teacher training experience.

Additional factors taken into consideration in making funding recommendations are:

3. New England B-WET Regional Priorities

The NOAA B-WET Program advances regional education and environmental priorities specific to different areas of the U.S. by implementing program activities through several regional NOAA offices. New England B-WET is managed by the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Within New England, the function of this line office is to study, manage, protect and restore fisheries, endangered species and marine mammals, and watershed, coastal, and marine habitats. These functions align well with all of the Ocean Literacy Principles, particularly Principles Five (the ocean supports a great diversity of life and ecosystems) and Six (the ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected). The regional importance of educational programming built around these principles is evidenced by a recently formed regional network, the New England Ocean Science Education Collaborative (NEOSEC), which includes the participation of several NOAA programs. NEOSEC leverages regional ocean science and educational assets to advance the public's understanding of the connections between people and the ocean through promotion of the Ocean Literacy Principles. The Climate Literacy Principles, particularly as they relate to our oceans, are also regional priorities of New England B-WET. New England B-WET's advancement of the Ocean and Climate Literacy Principles has become a valuable

tool to regionally promote the science and stewardship missions underlying the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office and other NOAA programs in the region.

In proposing one of the two types of priority projects (MWEE and Exemplary, described above), applicants in FY13 should put forward projects that include scientific studies and stewardship projects that investigate, protect, or restore New England watershed, coastal, and ocean resources within the context of the Ocean and/or Climate Literacy Principles. Science curricula currently taught in schools can be enriched by using the rigorous academic standards and best practices that define MWEEs and emphasizing connectivity and interrelationships inherent in the ocean and climate literacy principles. Proposed projects are expected to reflect the grade level of the students.

4. Smaller, Community-Based Organizations

At least 10% of the total amount available for grants will be awarded to smaller grants of \$10,000 to \$30,000 per year. This reserved funding amount is established to promote capacity building and sustainability in environmental education programs offered by smaller, community-based organizations that work at a local level to provide MWEEs.

C. Program Authority

Under 33 U.S.C. § 893 a (a), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is authorized to conduct, develop, support, promote, and coordinate formal and informal educational activities at all levels to enhance public awareness and understanding of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, and atmospheric science and stewardship by the general public and other coastal stakeholders, including underrepresented groups in ocean and atmospheric science and policy careers. In conducting those activities, the Administrator shall build upon the educational programs and activities of the agency.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

It is anticipated that approximately \$300,000 may be available for new awards in FY2013. If funding is available, NOAA anticipates making approximately four to eight new awards during FY 2013. Projects with duration of one to three years will be considered.

The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$80,000 per year in any year, and \$240,000 in total. The minimum Federal amount that can be requested from NOAA for one year is \$10,000 and \$30,000 for three years. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than \$10,000 in any year or more than \$80,000 in any year and \$240,000 total for the duration of the project will not be considered for funding.

Proposals for small grants (those with annual federal requests from \$10,000 up to \$30,000 per year in all years and not exceeding \$90,000 for all years) will be reviewed and ranked separately from large grants (those with annual federal requests of up to \$80,000 in any year and up to \$240,000 for all years cumulatively). See Section I.B. Program Priorities and Section V.B. Review and Selection Process for more information.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made.

Projects that are awarded as multiyear (two or three year) awards will receive funding for only the first year of the award in FY13. Funding for future years is dependent on the program budget and priorities in those years, and out-year funding for grant awards is not guaranteed. It is recommended to include in your project description discrete deliverables that would be complete at the end of each year of the project in case funds for future years are not available.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not be earlier than May 1, 2013. Applications should cover a project period between one and three years. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire period. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended that the flexibility of the requested start date be stated in the project description. See Section II. A. Funding Availability for more information on funding for multiyear awards.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the amount of involvement by the federal government in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if the NOAA B-WET Program shares responsibility for management, control, direction, or performance of the project with the recipient. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are K-12 public and independent schools and school systems; institutions of higher education; community-based and nonprofit organizations; state, county, local, or Indian tribal government agencies; and regional organizations.

While applicants do not need to be located in the targeted geographical region specified in the program objectives (i.e., the New England states), they do need to focus the work proposed to be conducted under the award on target audiences in this geographical region in order to be a qualified applicant.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. The B-WET Program encourages proposals from or involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NOAA B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants include a 25% or higher match. The match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits, as described in Section IV. E. "Funding Restrictions." Federal funds may not be considered matching funds. Matching funds cannot be used to match other funding sources and must be available and used within the project period stated in the application.

The amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration during the review process. Applicants whose proposals are selected for NE B-WET funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants must be prepared to carefully document matching contributions.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If the application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Deirdre Kimball (deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov, 978-281-9290).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the Grants.gov website, which is the clearinghouse for federal financial assistance. A complete standard NOAA grant application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document.

Each application should contain the following:

* Required Federal Application Forms, including:

- Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 (7/03 version or newer). Funding on this form should reflect the total of all years of funding requested in the application, and include the federal request and proposed matching funds.

- Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A. Separate SF424A budget forms should be submitted for each year of requested funding. In Section B, use separate columns to indicate how federal funds and matching funds are broken down by cost category.

- Assurances, Non-construction Programs: SF-424B

- Certifications Regarding Lobbying: CD-511

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

* A project summary (described below, 1 page, in same document as the project narrative);

* A project narrative (described below, 10 page limit);

* A detailed, narrative budget justification (described below, 4 page limit, separate document from the summary and project narrative);

* Appendices with other relevant attachments including the curriculum vitae or resume of each of the primary project personnel, letters of support, and other documents the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as sample curriculum and lesson plans.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a hard-copy application with the SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511 signed in ink (blue ink is preferred) must be mailed to the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office (see Section IV. F. "Other Submission Requirements" for complete mailing information). No fax or e-mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound or stapled in any manner.

Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in effectively processing the proposals. However, applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the New England BWET Program Office or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Proposals must be in at least a 10-point font, be double spaced, and not exceed the noted page limits.

(1) Project summary (1 page):

- Organization title.
- Principal Investigator(s).
- Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- Priority project type for which you are applying (Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences or Exemplary Programs).
- Project title.
- Project duration (12 to 36 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month). Specify whether the project is being submitted with the intention of continuation beyond the first year.
- Summary of work to be performed during the project period: 3-5 sentences that succinctly describe the activities of the entire project period, including the number of teachers/students reached. This will be used as a project summary in funding reports for NOAA B-WET.
- List primary objectives for entire anticipated project period, broken out by year (include number of teachers and/or students to be reached, anticipated contact hours and deliverables each year).
- Budget Information:
 - o Total Federal funding requested this fiscal year.
 - o Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.
 - o Total project cost this fiscal year.
 - o Cost per student and/or teacher.

o Total Federal funding requested and total Cost-sharing proposed for entire award (if applying for a multiyear award)

(2) Project Narrative (limit 10 pages):

- Benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities each year, and through the project overall. Include the number of students and/or teachers directly affected by the grant in each year of the project. Also include a per-teacher and/or per-student calculation for each project year that includes anticipated cost, contact hours, hours outdoors, and other relevant metrics.

- Project description and design: Describe in detail what your project will achieve and the methods/activities proposed to achieve these goals. Proposals should explain how the project proposes to implement the various components of a meaningful watershed educational experience (including alignment with state standards) and/or professional development. Please refer to the Evaluation Criteria described in Section V.A. to ensure you understand how reviewers will judge your proposal.

- Project evaluation: For the B-WET program, project evaluation is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about your project's outcomes in order to improve the project's effectiveness, guide judgments about its impact, and/or inform decisions about future programming or funding. Although a range of budgets for project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10% of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project. For detailed information on how to create an evaluation plan, please refer to the California B-WET website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/evaluation/welcome.html>. Grantees who propose conducting a project evaluation during the award period will be asked to submit a report on the evaluation (for guidance, see www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/EvaluationReports.html).

In addition, all B-WET grantees will be required to participate in a national level B-WET evaluation as a condition of funding.

- Organization and Personnel: Proposals should demonstrate the applicant organization's knowledge and experience in delivering the type of project requested in this application or

otherwise explain why this organization can reasonably be expected to succeed in the delivery of this project. It is recommended that resumes be appended to the application.

- Partnerships: Describe any partnerships with other organizations and/or schools which are integral to this project. Wherever reasonable, proposals should include partnerships with school districts or divisions and/or the state department of education if the applicant is not one of these entities. Projects are also encouraged to collaborate with NOAA entities as partners. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the NOAA Fisheries Science Center or Regional Office, National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, National Sea Grant College Program, National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, NOAA Cooperative Institutes, and the Northeast Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

Letters of support from each partner making a significant contribution to the project are required with the application package (see "Appendices" below).

If you anticipate collaborating with other regional B-WET grant recipients to conduct a regional conference, to allow former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B-WET projects or confer on regional B-WET programming, this should be described in your narrative and your budget should include, in the travel category, funds for transportation (airfare, rental car, shuttle, or taxi), lodging, and per diem. Although this is considered an outreach and education opportunity, it should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criteria; local communication with the public is required as well (see Outreach and Education bullet below).

- Outreach and Education: Projects should include a significant external sharing and communication mechanism that encourages students and/or teachers to share their experiences with the public, peers, and the environmental education community. These mechanisms could include media (newspaper articles, websites, etc), mentoring opportunities, and presentations at conferences, in-school service days, or other public forums.

(3) Budget Narrative (limit 4 pages):

The narrative budget justification should include a detailed breakdown by cost category (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal shares. The source of any matching funds or in-kind contributions should be explained.

The dollar amounts and object classes in the narrative should match those on the SF-424A. Applicants should use the NOAA B-WET Budget Justification Spreadsheet to clarify their narrative and refer to the NOAA Budget Guidelines for more information on the level of detail needed in the justification; both are available online at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/>. For multi-year projects, ensure that there is a detailed budget narrative explaining the budget requested for each year matching the SF-424A form.

Explain the need for government financial assistance. Also explain the total project costs needed to accomplish this project, if there are costs beyond the federal request and non-federal match proposed in this application. List all other sources of funding that will be or have been sought for the project and the status of each request. If no other funding has been sought, explain.

The NOAA Grants Management Division will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic.

(4) Appendices may be included as follows: sample curriculum and lesson plans (5 pages), resumes (5 pages), letters of endorsement (encouraged from those the project benefits and from other non-partner entities - unlimited page limit), and/or letters of support (required from partner organizations - unlimited page limit).

C. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 22, 2012. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after the deadline will not be considered for funding.

Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No fax or email applications will be accepted.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any state or local government submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations" (2 CFR, Part 230); A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions" (2 CFR, Part 220); A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments" (2 CFR, Part 225); and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 CFR, Subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be May 1, 2013. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed activities.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate should be submitted prior to receiving an award, and a copy of this documentation and the related cover letter should be included with the application.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Applicants should note that it takes approximately 3 weeks to complete the registration process for Grants.gov, and registration is required only once. Applicants should consider the time needed to register with Grants.gov and begin the registration process well in advance of the application due date. Registration steps are outlined at: <http://grants.gov/assets/OrgRegUserGuide.pdf>

Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications

submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by two automated receipts of the date and time of submission (the first confirms receipt; the second confirms that there are no errors with your application submission and it has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If you do not receive both notifications, you should follow up with both Grants.gov Customer Support and the New England B-WET Federal Program Officer (Deirdre Kimball at 978-281-9290 or deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov) to confirm receipt of your submission.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a hard-copy application package (as outlined in Section IV. B. "Content and Form of Application") must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 22, 2012, and sent to:

Deirdre Kimball

NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office

55 Great Republic Drive

Gloucester, MA 01930

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

(1). Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

- Does the project increase understanding of the connection between the watershed and the greater marine or estuarine environment? (5 pts)

- Does the project make an intentional connection between actions within the watershed or hydrological system affecting the marine, estuarine or watershed environment? (5 pts)

- What is the likelihood that the proposed activities will improve students' general understanding of the environment? (3 pts)

- Does the educational experience focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to the New England region, such as the application of ocean and other environmental literacy principles to the study, protection, and restoration of fisheries, endangered species and marine mammals, or watershed, coastal, and marine habitats? (3 pts)

- Does the applicant utilize NOAA programs, science, lesson plans, or a curriculum focused on watershed, marine, estuarine or hydrological system issues? Does the applicant use NOAA personnel to enhance their project? (5 pts)

- Does the applicant show a knowledge and understanding of the NOAA Education Plan (www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)? Does the applicant demonstrate how their project is aligned with and supports the goals and strategies of the NOAA Education Plan? (2 pts)

- Is the project aligned with the Ocean or Climate Literacy principles? (note: estuarine and watershed concepts should be tied to the Ocean Literacy Principles) (2 pts)

(2) Technical merit (38 points). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

- Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the instructional program? (4 pts)

- Does the project focus on an aspect of science, technology, engineering and/or math (STEM)? (1 pt)

Priority-specific questions (only one will apply, depending on project type): (10 pts)

* For exemplary projects only: Does the project combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE, as defined at: www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/mwee.html) for the students?

* For student MWEE projects only: Is the project aligned with academic learning standards in science and other disciplines? Does it meet the definition of a MWEE (as defined at: www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/mwee.html)?

- Are the proposed activities project-oriented, hands-on, investigative, and part of a sustained activity? (5pts)
- Does the project include a service or stewardship component? (2 pts)
- Does the project include pre- and post-field work activities? (5 pts)
- Does the project address multiple disciplines? (2 pts)
- Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? (3pts)
- Are the project outcomes measurable and are they likely to have significant and lasting benefits for teachers and students? (2 pts)
- Does the evaluation component of the project focus on measuring changes in participants? Changes can be in knowledge, attitudes, skills or stewardship attitudes and conservation actions (2 pts)
- Do the changes measured in participants (outcomes) match the project goals and objectives, which include engaging participants in MWEEs? (2 pts)

(3) Overall qualifications of applicants (9 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses, or has partnerships with those who possess, the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

- Does the applicant show capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? (3 pts)
- Are the partners involved in the project qualified? (3 pts)
- Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? (1 pt)
- Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Content Standards for their state? (2 pt)

(4) Project costs (20 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the NOAA

B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

- Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources (i.e. are matching funds proposed)? (2 pts)
- Is the proposed budget sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class? (4 pts)
- Is the budget request reasonable? (5 pts)
- Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact with the outdoor environment? (5 pts)
- Does the applicant demonstrate sustainability beyond the project period, after NOAA funding has expired? (2 pts)
- Does the project serve to integrate ocean and environmental literacy into a school or school system on a continuing, sustainable basis? (2 pts)

(5) Outreach and education (8 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission, and for the B-WET Program, such activities specifically include education and outreach to the public, the local community, and others involved in education. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

- Does the project involve external sharing and communication by the applicant (websites, shared curricula materials, DVD production, conference presentations, etc)? (3 pts)
- Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community? (2 pts)
- Does the project involve, to a significant degree, any underrepresented organizations, including schools with a large proportion of students qualifying for free or reduced lunches, schools with a number students for whom English is a second language, or schools with a large proportion of minority students? (3pts)

B. Review and Selection Process

(1) Initial Evaluation of the Application

Upon receipt of a proposal by NOAA, an initial administrative review will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the proposal. If applications do not comply with the requirements, they will be returned without further review.

(2) Merit Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will be evaluated and scored by independent reviewers in two review panels. One panel will be comprised of reviewers of small grants (from \$10,000 up to \$30,000 annual federal request in all years) and one comprised of reviewers of large grants (\$30,000-\$80,000 federal request in any year). Reviewers serving on the panels may be Federal or non-Federal experts in areas relevant to the priorities under consideration. Each proposal will be reviewed by a minimum of three reviewers. The Program Manager will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review panels.

Before the panels convene, each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A above. Scores and comments will be submitted to the Federal Program Officer and Program Manager, and the individual reviewers' rating will be averaged for each application to establish a preliminary rank order for each panel. The two panels will convene separately to review the ranking and comments, and discuss the projects as a group. During the panel meeting, reviewers can revise their scores and comments. Reviewers must individually submit final scores to the B-WET Federal Program Officer or Program Manager by the end of the panel meeting. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel members.

The reviewers' final scores will be averaged for each application to produce a rank order of the proposals for each of the two panels. The ranked lists from the two panels will not be combined to establish an overall rank order for all proposals. Rather, the ranked lists from the two panels will remain separate, and at least 10% of the available funding will be awarded to small grants.

The Federal Program Officer and Program Manager will make their recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official based on rank order of each panel and the selection factors listed below.

C. Selection Factors

The B-WET Federal Program Officer and Program Manager will review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panels. The average numerical ranking from the review panels will be the primary consideration in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order within each panel, with at least 10% of funding awarded to small grants, 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 institution or type of institutions over the life of the New England B-WET program,
 - 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 as set out in Section I.B. of the Full Funding Opportunity;
- (5) Applicant's prior award performance;
- (6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups including underrepresented or underserved groups identified under ELIGIBILITY;
- (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 NOAA Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the Fall and Winter of 2012-13 and funding is expected to begin in May-June of 2013. May 1, 2013, is to be used as the earliest proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the NOAA Federal Program Officer.

If no funds are available for the New England B-WET Program in 2013, applications received under this Funding Opportunity may be held and considered for funding in 2014.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Office. Award notification will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for funding or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements described in IV.B (Content and Form of Applications).

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl, http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

(1) Administrative Requirements

Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program, and can be found at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/policy.cfm>.

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, including the acknowledgement of support from NOAA and NE B-WET on webpages, DVDs, curricula materials, lesson plans or other materials created or supported under the B-WET grant.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys>).

(2) 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 that are seeking NOAA federal funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations,

ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under the description of project 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 feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA's Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6 month project period ends. A comprehensive final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Performance reports should detail accomplishments that have occurred during the reporting period and correspond with the goals, objectives and milestones identified in the project narrative. Recommended content and format for performance reports can be found at our website www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/.

Evaluation reports should be submitted if an evaluation was proposed in the final project narrative. Formative evaluations can be reported with semi-annual performance reports. Final evaluations should be submitted with the final performance report. If additional time is needed to finalize the evaluation, a no-cost extension can be requested at least one month before the end date of the award. Recommended content and format for evaluation reports can be found at our website www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/.

Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 to March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 to September 30 (due by October 30) throughout the award period and are submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA Grants Online system.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000.

Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package.

D. Data Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

VII. Agency Contacts

For information on the grant application process, contact Deirdre Kimball, New England B-WET Federal Program Officer, via email at deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov or phone at 978-291-9290.

For information on regional priorities or policies, contact the Program Manager, Colleen Coogan, via email at colleen.coogan@noaa.gov or phone at 978-281-6181.

Questions about this opportunity may also be directed to Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, via email at bronwen.rice@noaa.gov or phone at 202-482-6797.

VIII. Other Information

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency

priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act [5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)] or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.).

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001.