

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Office of the Under Secretary (USEC), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

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

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: SEC-OED-2009-2001648

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

Dates: Proposals must be submitted by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on January 26, 2009. See Sections IV C and F of this announcement for more information on submission requirements.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA B-WET is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment. Funded projects provide meaningful watershed educational experiences for students, related professional development for teachers, and helps to support regional education and environmental priorities in the Pacific Northwest, the northern Gulf of Mexico and 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 experiential learning through local competitive grant awards in specific geographic regions. Prior to 2008 NOAA B-WET Programs were established for the Chesapeake Bay, California, and the Hawaiian Islands. As of 2008, three new programs are in place in New England, the northern Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest.

In FY09, it is anticipated that funds will be available for each of these three regions. Proposals are currently being solicited from the Pacific Northwest region, the northern Gulf of Mexico region, and the New England region. For the purposes of this solicitation, these three regions are defined as follows: a. Pacific Northwest- the states of Oregon and Washington; b. Northern Gulf of Mexico- the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas; c. New England- 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 experiences driven by rigorous academic learning standards, engendering discovery and wonder, and nurturing a sense of community will further connect students with 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, have been shown to increase interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), thus contributing to NOAA's obligations under the America COMPETES Act (33 USC 893a(a)).

B. Program Priorities

This Federal funding opportunity meets NOAA's Mission Goal to protect, restore and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystems-based management.

Proposals should address one of the three areas of interest: (1) Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students; (2) Professional Development for Teachers related to Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences; (3) Exemplary Programs combining Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students.

In addition to the three program priorities above, two additional factors will be taken into consideration in making funding recommendations: (4) Regional priorities of the National B-WET Program (see below); and (5) Whether the applicant is a

smaller, community-based organization.

1. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students to participate in a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. The marine and estuarine environment and the surrounding watershed provide an excellent opportunity for environmental education. 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 the environment. In other cases, the environment can be brought alive to the classroom through a strong complement of outdoor and classroom experiences. The watershed environment can provide a genuine, locally relevant source of knowledge that can be used to help advance student learning skills across the entire school curriculum.

Proposals submitted under this area should address the specific elements and types of activities that define a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. The definition of a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience can be found at the NOAA Office of Education website at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET>.

2. Professional Development for Teachers related to Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide teachers opportunities for professional development in the area of environmental education. As the purveyors of education, teachers can ultimately make meaningful environmental education experiences for students by weaving together classroom and field activities within the context of their curriculum and of current critical issues that impact the watershed. Systematic, long-term professional development opportunities will reinforce a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources.

Proposals submitted under this area should be designed so that teachers not only understand what a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience is, but why this type of pedagogy is important. The goal is to ensure that professional development experiences for the teacher ultimately benefit the student. Projects should be designed so that teachers are capable of conducting a meaningful watershed educational experience and provide the resources and necessary technical support needed to implement an experience in their classroom.

3. Exemplary Programs combining Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for exemplary projects that combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students. Systematic, long-term professional development for teachers coupled with multiple meaningful watershed experiences for students that are fully supported in the classroom by their teachers will ensure that the concepts of watershed education are fully reinforced throughout the school year.

4. B-WET Regional Priorities

The NOAA B-WET Program responds to regional education and environmental priorities through local implementation. Therefore, in addition to addressing one of the three programmatic priorities, applications should support regional priorities in the areas of the Pacific Northwest, the northern Gulf of Mexico, or New England to deliver or enhance meaningful watershed educational experiences for students and/or high-quality professional development for teachers. Though regional education priorities will be refined in subsequent years, in FY09 programs are asked to employ meaningful watershed educational experiences that address the coastal resource priorities outlined by the major regional policy workgroups: the Northeast Regional Oceans Council (NROC), Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health.

Northeast Regional Ocean Council

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council is a state and federal partnership with the goal of engaging in regional protection and balanced use of ocean and coastal resources. NROC's coordinated approach reaches across state boundaries to find and implement solutions to the region's most pressing ocean and coastal issues.

Priority Areas:

- Ocean energy resource planning and management
- Ocean and coastal ecosystem health
- Maritime security
- Coastal hazard response and resiliency

Gulf of Mexico Alliance

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is a partnership of the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, with the goal of significantly increasing regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. The five U.S. Gulf States have identified six initial priority issues that are regionally significant and can be effectively addressed through increased collaboration at local, state, and federal levels.

Priority Areas:

- Water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds
- Wetland and coastal conservation and restoration
- Environmental education
- Identification and characterization of Gulf habitats
- Reducing nutrient inputs to coastal ecosystems
- Coastal community resiliency

West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health

On September 18, 2006 the Governors of California, Oregon and Washington announced the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health. The Agreement launched a new, proactive regional collaboration to protect and manage the ocean and coastal resources along the entire West Coast, as called for in the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission.

Priority Areas:

- Ensuring clean coastal waters and beaches
- Protecting and restoring ocean and coastal habitats
- Promoting effective implementation of marine ecosystem-based management
- Reducing adverse impacts of offshore development
- Increasing ocean literacy
- Expanding scientific information, research, and monitoring
- Fostering sustainable economic development in coastal communities

For more information about these regional priorities please visit the NOAA Office of Education B-WET website at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET>.

5. Smaller, Community-Based Organizations

Approximately 10% of the total amount available will be awarded to smaller, community-based organizations that work at a local level to provide Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences.

C. Program Authority

Under 33 USC 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 \$2,000,000 will be available in FY2009 for new awards. The distribution of available funds among the three regions will depend on the number of high-quality proposals received from each region.

NOAA anticipates making approximately 5 to 15 new awards during FY 2009. NOAA will consider only projects with duration of 1 to 3 years. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$100,000 per year and

\$300,000 for all years of the proposed project. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for all years is \$50,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than \$50,000 total or more than \$100,000 per year and \$300,000 total for the duration of the project will not be considered for funding.

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.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before October 1, 2009. Applications should cover a project period between 1 and 3 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 to include in your project description the flexibility of the requested start date.

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 or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments.

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 service underserved areas.

While applicants do not need to be from the targeted geographical regions specified in the program objectives, they must be working with target audiences in these areas.

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. Funds from other Federal awards may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash vs. in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration during the review process. Priority selection is given to proposals that propose cash rather than in-kind services.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

N/A

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic application packages are strongly encouraged and are available at: <http://www.grants.gov/>. Paper application packages are available on the NOAA Grants Management website at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/forms.cfm>. If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, the applicant should contact: Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, by phone at 202-482-6797 or email at bronwen.rice@noaa.gov.

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal. 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. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must be complete and must follow the format described in this notice. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Office of Education or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. If applying by paper application, applicants are required to submit one copy of the full proposal with original signatures on all required forms.

Federal Forms:

- (1) Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424. Funding on this form should reflect the total of all years of funding requested in the application.
- (2) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A. Separate SF 424A budget forms should be submitted for each year of requested funding.
- (3) Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B
- (4) Additionally, the following Department of Commerce forms may be required:
- (5) Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511
- (6) Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

In addition to the Federal Forms outlined above, proposals must include the following information. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Proposals must be in at least a 10-point font, be double-spaced, and not exceed 12 pages in length (excluding allowable appendices as explained below).

- (1) Project summary (1 page):
 - * Organization title.
 - * Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
 - * Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
 - * Area of interest for which you are applying (i.e., Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students; Professional Development for Teachers related to 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 entire project period (including 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 each year).
 - * Budget Information:
 - Total Federal funding requested this fiscal year.
 - Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether

contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.

- Total project cost this fiscal year.
- Cost per student and/or teacher.

(2) Project description: Describe in detail what your project will achieve. Project Design: Proposals should outline how the project proposes to implement the various components of a meaningful watershed educational experience, including alignment with state standards.

(3) Organization and Personnel: Proposals should demonstrate 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.

(4) Partnerships: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project are required with the application package (see "(10) Appendices" below). Wherever reasonable, proposals should include partnerships with school 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 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 Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

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

(6) Benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities this project period and over the entire prospective project. Include the number of students and/or teachers directly affected by this grant this project year. Also, include a per-teacher and/or per-student calculation for this project year.

(7) Budget Justification: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and includes contributions and donations from sources other than NOAA. The budget justification submitted with the application must match the dollar amounts on required SF-424 and SF-424A forms. For multi-year projects: Ensure that there is a detailed budget narrative explaining the budget requested for each year matching the SF-424A form. Applicants should use the NOAA B-WET Budget Justification Spreadsheet and the budget guidelines available online at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET>.

It is anticipated that grant recipients will be asked to attend a two-day National B-WET conference to be held in the Washington, DC area at some point during the award period. The conference will be an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients from all B-WET Programs to present their B-WET projects. Your budget should include, in the travel category, funds for airfare and transportation (rental car, shuttle, or taxi). The B-WET Program will provide food and lodging.

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 is required as well.

(8) Need for government financial assistance: List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project and the status of each request. If no other funding has been sought, explain.

(9) Project evaluation: Evaluation here 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 use the California B-WET website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/news/bwet/welcome.html>. In addition, grantees will be required to participate in a national level B-WET evaluation as a condition of funding.

(10) Appendices may be included as follows and are not included in the 12 page limit: sample curriculum and lesson plans (5 pages), resumes (5 pages), letters of endorsement (encouraged from users and other non-partner entities - unlimited page limit), and/or letters of support (required from partner organizations - unlimited page limit). Additional informational material will be discarded prior to review.

C. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for applications is 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, January 26, 2009. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the Office of Education. (Note that late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., ET January 26, 2009 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time, and if the proposals are received in Office of Education by 5 p.m., ET, no later than 2 business days following the closing date. Hard copies of applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g, Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.).

No email and/or facsimile pre-proposals and/or full applications will be accepted. Applications that are late or are received by fax or email will not be considered for review.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates

Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award, or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 25 percent may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. 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. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

Do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

* New applicants should not begin submission of Grants.gov the date this announcement closes.

* To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). You should allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

* Applications must comply with any page limit requirements described in this notice.

* 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 need to follow up with both the Grants.gov helpdesk and the NOAA Office of Education to confirm receipt of your submission.

* NOAA may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.

Proposals being submitted in hard copy must be received by: ATTN: National B-WET Competition Manager, NOAA Office of Education, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6863, Washington, DC 20230; Telephone: 202-482-3384. Facsimile transmissions and e-mail submission of proposals will not be accepted. Please note: Hard copies of applications submitted via the US Postal Service can take up to 4 weeks to reach this office; applicants are advised to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.).

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (30 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 make a direct connection to the greater marine or estuarine environment? Does the proposal make an intentional connection to the watershed system and how actions within that system can affect the marine and estuarine environment? What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve the general understanding of the environment? Does the experience focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to specific region? Is the project design project-oriented, hands-on, investigative, and part of a sustained activity? Does the project include pre and post-project activities? Does the project address multiple disciplines?

2. Technical merit (35 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?

* For exemplary programs only: Does the project combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students.

* For student programs only: Is the project aligned with academic learning standards in science and other disciplines?

* For teacher professional development programs only: Does the teacher receive the needed support to fully participate in the program (i.e., continuing education

credit, substitute teachers, stipends, etc.)? Is this support reasonable and necessary?

Does the applicant utilize NOAA programs, lesson plans, or a curriculum focused on marine and estuarine issues? Does the applicant use NOAA personnel to enhance their project? Does the applicant demonstrate how their project is aligned and supports the goals and strategies of the NOAA Education Plan? Does the applicant show a knowledge and understanding of the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)? Is the project aligned with environmental literacy principles (e.g. Ocean Literacy, <http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitChart.pdf> and Climate Literacy, http://climateliteracynow.org/files/Climate_Literacy_K-12.pdf) where appropriate (note: estuarine and watershed concepts should be tied to the Ocean Literacy principles)? 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? Are the project outcomes measurable and have significant and lasting benefits for teachers and students? Does the evaluation component of the project focus on measuring changes in participants (changes can be in knowledge, attitudes, skills or conservation actions)? Do the changes measured in participants (outcomes) match the project goals and objectives, which include engaging participants in meaningful watershed educational experiences?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses 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 the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the proposal include resumes of the Principle Investigators and other staff members? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Content Standards for their state? Does the applicant document past collaborations with schools or school systems? Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Are the partners involved in the project qualified?

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? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact with the environment? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project? Does the applicant demonstrate sustainability beyond the project period? Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will continue after NOAA funding has expired?

5. Outreach and education (5 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the project involve external sharing and communication? Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community?

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a proposal by NOAA, an initial administrative review will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the proposal. All proposals that meet the minimum eligibility requirements will be evaluated and scored by a panel of independent reviewers. Three separate review panels may be held - one for each geographical region described in I.B.4 of the Full Funding Opportunity.

Reviewers serving on each panel may be Federal or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in areas relevant to the priority under consideration. The reviewers will score each proposal assigned to them using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual reviewers' ratings will be averaged for each application to establish rank order for that region. No consensus advice will be given by the review panels. Scores from separate panels will not be combined to establish an overall rank order among all geographical regions.

The Program Officer will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review panels. The Program Officer will make his/her recommendations for funding based on rank order of each panel and the selection factors listed below to the Selecting Official for final funding decisions.

C. Selection Factors

The B-WET Program Managers will review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panels. The average numerical ranking from the review panel 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 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 type of institutions
 - 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.1-5 and Section III.B. of the Full Funding Opportunity;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups;
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendation for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Selected applicants may be asked to modify objectives, project plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the spring of 2009, and funding is expected to begin during October of 2009. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to October 1, 2009.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive electronic notification that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification will

be sent by e-mail from Grants Online to the institution's Authorizing Official. The official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin.

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NOAA Office of Education staff. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for funding (declined) or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements prescribed in IV.B (Content and Form of Applications).

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008(73 FR7696) is applicable to this funding opportunity.

2. Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. 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 which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program 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.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports and a comprehensive evaluation report.

1. Financial Reports

All financial reports shall be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer through the NOAA Grants Online system, <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>. Deadlines and financial forms can be found at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/finforms.shtml>.

2. Performance Reports

Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer. Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred through the NOAA Grants On-Line system, <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>. Semi-annual reports must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. A 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.

Paperwork Reduction Act: This document contains collection-of- information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism): It has been determined that this notice does

not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132. Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act: Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements for the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

VII. Agency Contacts

For the 1) Pacific Northwest, please contact Seaberry Nachbar, NOAA National Marine Sanctuary, 299 Foam Street, Monterey, CA 93940, or by phone at 831-647-4201, or via email at seaberry.nachbar@noaa.gov; 2) For the northern Gulf of Mexico, Stephanie Bennett Pacific Services Center, 737 Bishop Street, Suite 1550, Honolulu, HI 96817, or by phone at 808-522-7481, or via email at stephanie.bennett@noaa.gov; 3) For New England, Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-267-5664, or via email at shannon.sprague@noaa.gov. Questions about this opportunity may also be directed to Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, by phone at 202-482-6797 or email at bronwen.rice@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

N/A