

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: FY16 NOAA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-NCBO-2016-2004732

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.457, Chesapeake Bay Studies

Dates: The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 4, 2016 when submitting through www.grants.gov (Grants.gov). PLEASE NOTE: for applicants that submit through Grants.gov, it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. If use of Grants.gov is impractical for technical or other reasons, paper copy applications will be accepted only as described in Section IV.C.

Informational webinars about the FY 2016 B-WET Chesapeake funding announcement will be held on December 11, 2015 at 10:00 AM Eastern Time and December 15, 2015 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time. To register for these webinars, please visit <http://go.usa.gov/cjnAY>.

Funding Opportunity Description: Funding Opportunity Description: B-WET Chesapeake is a competitive grant program that supports existing, high-quality environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new, innovative programs, and encourages capacity building and partnership development for environmental education programs throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Successful projects advance the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan by providing hands-on environmental education about issues affecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed for students and related professional development for teachers, administrators, and other educators who serve formal K-12 audiences. These Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) integrate field experiences with classroom activities and instruction in NOAA-related science content.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

a. OVERVIEW

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) environment. B-WET was established in 2002 in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and currently exists in seven regions: Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, New England, California, Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, and Great Lakes.

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support K-12 environmental literacy programs that provide students with meaningful watershed educational experiences (MWEEs) related to the Chesapeake Bay and related professional development for in-service teachers, administrators, or other educators serving K-12 students. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are an excellent resource for environmental education. Its tidal and non-tidal waters and the surrounding landscape provide hands-on, place-based laboratories where students can see, touch, and learn about the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the greater environment.

Successful B-WET projects provide formal education that supports the Environmental Literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program Agreement (<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/chesapeakebaywatershedagreement/page>) and NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (<http://go.usa.gov/cjnMQ>)

B-WET Chesapeake 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. Environmentally literate individuals can become effective future workers, problem solvers, and thoughtful community leaders and participants.

b. DEFINING THE MEANINGFUL WATERSHED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (MWEE)

MWEEs for students should be learner centered and focused on questions, problems, and issues to be investigated through collecting, analyzing and sharing data; learning protocols; exploring models; and examining natural phenomena. These activities, grounded in best practices and the context of the local community and culture, help increase student interest, motivation, and attitudes toward learning, and achieve environmental stewardship. As a result of the MWEE activities students should have an understanding of basic watershed concepts, as well as the interaction between natural systems (e.g. wildlife, plants, and water cycle) and social systems (e.g. communities, transportation systems, and schools), highlighting the connection between human activity and environmental conditions. MWEEs consist of multiple components as defined below.

1. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)-Student Components

1.1 Issue definition and background research

Students focus on an environmental question, problem, or issue requiring background research and investigation. They learn more about the issue through classroom instruction, the collection of data, conducting experiments, talking to experts and reviewing credible publications. This process should be age appropriate with practices growing in complexity and sophistication across the grades, starting with educator guided investigation and progressing to student-led inquiry.

1.2 Outdoor field activities

Students participate in multiple outdoor field activities sufficient to collect the data or make observations required for answering the research questions and informing student actions, or as part of the issue definition and background research. Students should be actively involved in planning the investigation, taking measurements, or constructing the project within appropriate safety guidelines, with teachers providing instruction on methods and procedures, data collection protocols, and proper use of equipment as needed. These activities can take place off-site and/or on the school grounds.

1.3 Stewardship action projects

Students participate in an age appropriate project during which they take action to address environmental issues at the personal or societal level. Participants in B-WET MWEE activities should understand they have control over the outcome of environmental issues, be encouraged to identify actions to address these issues and understand the value of those

actions. Examples of stewardship activities include:

- Watershed Restoration or Protection (e.g., create schoolyard habitat, planting trees or grasses, invasive species removal, community cleanup, stormwater management)
- Everyday Choices (e.g., reduce/reuse/recycle/upcycle, composting, energy conservation, water conservation)
- Community Engagement (e.g., presentations, social media, event-organizing, messaging at community events/fairs/festivals, mentoring, PSAs, flyers, posters)
- Civic Action (e.g., town meetings, voting, writing elected officials/decision makers, advocating for policy change)

1.4 Synthesis and conclusions

Students analyze and evaluate the results of projects and investigations. Students synthesize and communicate results and conclusions to an external audience such as other classrooms, schools, parents, or the community.

2. Support for Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)

In addition to the components identified above, NOAA recommends that the following elements are in place to fully support successful MWEE implementation with students.

2.1 Teacher participation for the duration of the MWEE

While external partners are entirely appropriate to support MWEEs, teachers should support the experience in the classroom and in the field. Teachers are in the best position to help students make connections and draw on past lessons, serve as environmental role models, and enhance students overall outdoor education experience and should be involved in all components of the experiences detailed above. To support them in this role, teachers should have appropriate knowledge of environmental issues and watershed concepts, skill in connecting these issues to their curriculum, and competency in environmental education pedagogy, including the ability and confidence to teach outdoor lessons and to lead students in critical thinking about environmental issues.

2.2 Integration with classroom curriculum

Experiences should be integrated into what is occurring in the classroom, and can provide authentic, age appropriate, engaging multi-disciplinary content to address academic standards. Specifically, elements of science and social studies standards related to questioning and investigation, evidence-based analysis and interpretation, model and theory

building, knowledge of environmental processes and systems, skill for understanding and addressing environmental issues, and personal and civic responsibility align well with MWEEs. Non-school activities may enrich traditional classroom curriculum when needed, though this need should be documented and supported by local education agencies.

2.3 Use of the local context for learning

The local community and environment should be viewed as a primary resource for student MWEEs. Place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a students' schoolyard, neighborhood, town or community, and thus offering students and teachers the opportunity to explore how individual and collective decisions impact their immediate surroundings. Once a firm connection to their local environment is made, students are better positioned to expand their thinking to recognize the far-reaching implications of the decisions they make to the larger national and global environment.

2.4 Experiences are a set of activities over time

The MWEE includes the full duration leading up to and following the outdoor field experiences. Each component should involve a significant investment of instructional time, incorporate time for reflection, and include all students. Experiences such as tours, simulations, demonstrations, or nature walks may be instructionally useful, but alone do not constitute an entire meaningful watershed educational experience as defined here.

2.5 Includes NOAA assets, including personnel and resources

NOAA has a wealth of applicable products and services as well as a cadre of scientific and professional experts that can heighten the impact of environmental instruction both in the classroom and in the field. Additionally, environmental professionals can serve as important role models for career choices and stewardship. For more on NOAA assets for education please see: http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/NOAA_assets.html

3. Teacher Professional Development for Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)

Teachers should be skilled in using environmental education and MWEEs to address multiple subjects' curriculum standards and local education agency initiatives. In order to gain and maintain environmental education competencies, teachers need access to sustained, high quality professional development that includes ongoing support and feedback. Teachers should gain confidence in the value of MWEEs and strategies for conducting them so that they will conduct MWEEs after the B-WET supported program has ended. Specifically, the

following elements are recommended for professional development to support teachers implementing MWEEs:

3.1 Increases teachers' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues

Teachers must have an adequate level of content knowledge for their MWEE topic area specific to their grade level and discipline, including an understanding of basic watershed concepts and the human connection to the watershed. Recognizing that environmental issues often include different perspectives and opinions, teachers must also have a deep understanding of the facts related to environmental issues along with an understanding of the various stakeholder values. In addition, teachers who demonstrate environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors may be role models for their students and increase their ability to guide students in actions to address complex environmental issues.

3.2 Models environmental education pedagogy

Facilitators/trainers should utilize the same techniques and experiences in trainings that teachers are expected to use with their students, such as hands-on, place-based, outdoor field experiences and environmental issue investigation and action.

3.3 Allows for adequate instructional time

Professional Development trainings should be multi-day, occurring consecutively or over the course of several months. Trainings should include ample opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and planning for how to use knowledge and skills gained from professional development in the classroom.

3.4 Provides ongoing teacher support and appropriate incentives

Even in cases where teachers participate in robust multi-day trainings, such as a summer or weekend courses, it is still essential that professional development providers have a structure in place for on-going teacher support and enrichment. This can take the form of follow up meetings, creating web-based forums for communication and feedback, establishing mentor teachers who can serve as points of contact, or including teams of teachers from one particular school. Continuing education credits and stipends can be used to encourage participation in on-going professional development opportunities. Outreach and training opportunities for school administrators may help increase high level support for both environmental education and continuing teacher professional development for teachers.

3.5 Meets jurisdictional guidelines for effective teacher professional development

Each jurisdiction has established guidance and recommendations germane to all forms of teacher professional development. When possible, professional development opportunities in environmental education should adhere to these general guidelines set forth by local

education agencies.

Information on the B-WET Chesapeake program, including examples of education partnerships that have been funded to date, can be found at <http://go.usa.gov/cjnuA>.

Potential applicants may contact the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (contact information in Section VII) before submitting an application with questions about applicability of project activities to B-WET goals and objectives.

The definition of the MWEE included in this funding announcement is taken from the B-WET National Program and is used by all seven B-WET regions throughout the country. It is based largely on the MWEE definition adopted by the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup and available at: http://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/Revised_MWEE_definition_-_FINAL.pdf

B. Program Priorities

B. Program Priorities

a. All B-WET projects support the delivery the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE). In addition, B-WET Chesapeake is intended to serve audiences within the boundaries of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. While a portion of project participants may be outside these boundaries, preference is given to projects whose audience is within the Bay watershed. To the extent possible, field investigations should occur within the Chesapeake watershed. If they cannot occur within the Chesapeake watershed or an experience outside the watershed is more appropriate for the project, applicants must adequately justify the reasons for this.

b. The following “Priority Areas” describe the types of MWEEs that B-WET Chesapeake is supporting in FY16. Proposals must address one of these two priorities areas: 1. Systemic MWEE Implementation, or 2. Emerging MWEE Projects.

Please specify which of the two priority areas you are addressing in the application.

1. Systemic MWEE Implementation

Systemic MWEE programs strive to reach the entire student and teacher population in one or more grades in an entire school system (i.e. school “district” or “division”) or recognized sub-unit of a school system. Systemic education does not target one school (unless it is the only school at that level in a school system) or a percentage of schools from multiple systems. Applications for systemic programs can come from any applicant type, not just school divisions and departments of education. Projects that are systemic encourage ownership from a broad range of constituents and promote long-term sustainability of the MWEE program in a school division.

Systemic programs require substantial involvement and support from the school system that can come in the form of including MWEEs, schoolyard habitats, or other relevant topics in the curriculum; providing funding for teacher substitutes, resource teachers, supplies, or buses; requiring MWEE professional development; and more. School systems creating partnerships with multiple environmental education providers may be necessary to ensure all students receive all components of a MWE. High-level support from superintendents, school boards, and/or school system curriculum supervisors is important to a systemic project.

Under Systemic implementation, teacher professional development should be combined with long term K-12 classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) for the students of these trained teachers. Professional development opportunities must be at least 3 days (24 cumulative hours) in duration-either consecutively or over the course of a school year, deliver training on both content and instruction in the outdoors, include year-long support for teachers, and include a plan for how the teachers will be involved in implementing watershed education with their students. This kind of in-depth professional development reinforces a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources. Students should receive multiple outdoor experiences that are fully supported in the classroom by their teachers to ensure that the concepts of watershed education are reinforced throughout the school year. Outdoor experiences can occur in a broad suite of areas, including on or near school grounds.

In situations where a school division has existing resources to support student MWEE components, or if teachers are fully responsible for MWEE development and delivery, funding requested under this priority area may be dedicated solely to providing teacher professional development (i.e. grant dollars are not directly supporting any student MWEE activities). In this case, applicants must strongly demonstrate how trained teachers will implement student MWEEs, and what resources (funds, staff, facilities, partner organizations, etc.) exist to support student components of the MWEE. Successful applicants under this priority will be asked to document the number of students receiving MWEEs as a direct result of the project.

Projects that do not directly reach all students and teachers in one or more grade levels in an entire system may still be eligible under this priority if the applicant clearly documents that the proposed project is part of a broader systemic program in a school division. For example, projects may reach only ½ of a grade level’s teachers and students if the application includes documentation from the school division and other partners that the proposed project is a component of a larger systemic effort that reaches the entire grade level. In addition, projects that “scale up” throughout multiple years are acceptable-- meaning the proposed project need not be fully systemic after the first year of the project, but would build toward systemic implementation over three years.

2. Emerging MWEE Projects

B-WET Chesapeake recognizes there are many organizations across the watershed that strive to implement high quality MWEE programming, yet face significant challenges in meeting the rigor of Systemic MWEE Implementation. While every organization faces some barriers to project implementation, some have greater challenges due to lack of local resources or partners, policies of schools divisions, or limited internal capacity. The Emerging MWEE priority is also intended to support projects that propose an innovative approach to MWEEs that is not appropriate for systemic implementation at this time.

In order to cultivate projects and partners in underserved areas not traditionally served by B-WET, NOAA is encouraging new applicants, or those who have not received B-WET funding in the last five fiscal years (FY 2011 to FY 2015), to apply as Emerging Projects.

Projects must still deliver MWEEs as defined in this announcement, and could include a focus on teacher professional development, student programming, or a combination of both. While these projects are not “systemic” as defined in this funding announcement, projects should still meet state and local learning standards and fully integrate into what is occurring in the formal classroom. At a minimum, Emerging Projects must include and document teacher participation as defined in section I.A.2.1 of this announcement. Documentation of interest/support from a school division is requested in Emerging Projects.

Applicants who have never applied to NOAA, or have not done so in the last five fiscal years, are not restricted to applying as an emerging project. If a proposed project will be implemented systemically as described in this announcement, it should be categorized as such, and NOT an Emerging Project. Proposals under the emerging priority should discuss why the project cannot feasibly be implemented systemically.

Note, while we welcome applications from previous B-WET grantees under this priority area, the specific project being proposed must not have been previously funded by the Chesapeake B-WET. If an Emerging Project application was submitted to the FY15 competition but not selected, you are welcome to re-apply under Emerging Projects again. Please contact the B-WET Chesapeake coordinator if you have questions about what constitutes an emerging project.

c. NOAA SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS

Any proposal to this announcement must meet one of the priority areas described in the previous section. NOAA has additional special interest areas that applicants may wish to address if they choose, which are: (1). GLOBE Program, and (2). Hands-on restoration on school grounds. More information on each special interest area is provided below. While applicants are not required to address a NOAA special interest area, projects that do so are particularly encouraged because they specifically capitalize on a NOAA supported educational program, or habitat priority.

(1) Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) Program

GLOBE is a worldwide hands-on, primary and secondary school-based science and education program with a vision to promote and support students, teachers and scientists to collaborate on inquiry-based investigations involving the collection and/or analysis of data

about the environment and the Earth system. The successful implementation of GLOBE relies on partnerships with organizations that undertake efforts to recruit schools, train teachers, and mentor those teachers and their students in their efforts to implement GLOBE and engage in GLOBE research activities. Projects can package GLOBE training, programming and content in support of MWEE programming and further engage the formal education community in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The intent of this Special Interest Area is to increase the implementation of GLOBE in the Chesapeake Region through the identification and/or development of new GLOBE partners and the training of educators in the GLOBE program. For more information about the GLOBE Program, visit: www.globe.gov. Information on connecting to an existing GLOBE Partner or becoming a Partner is available at: www.globe.gov/community/partners

(2). MWEEs with Habitat Restoration on School Grounds.

There are over 12,800 public schools serving over 7 million students in the states that drain into the Chesapeake Bay, and many private schools as well. These schools are collectively responsible for the management of tens of thousands of acres of land, and opportunities for hands-on restoration projects abound. Under this Special Interest Area, NOAA is interested in projects that include student participation in restoration of habitat on school grounds or lands immediately adjacent to schools.

Each component of the MWEE (issue investigation, outdoor learning, action projects, and synthesizing information) can occur in the school and on its grounds. Projects addressing this topic area need not confine the entire student MWEE to school grounds, but the action project should include hands-on habitat restoration such as planting and maintenance of stream buffers, school forests, wildlife habitat, or the creation of outdoor learning environments. Projects that remove impervious surface, install barrels, or plant rain gardens are some other possibilities, but applicants are encouraged to suggest other types of projects. Projects that are replicable and actively involve students in the planning, maintenance, and analysis of restoration projects will be most competitive.

This special interest area supports the Sustainable Schools Outcome of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, which provides an unprecedented opportunity to work with these schools and school divisions to implement environmentally sustainable practices that improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, offer authentic stewardship experiences for students, and reduce energy and maintenance costs for schools. Sustainable Schools can also become local examples of responsible environmental practices, reaching into communities and families in ways that few other organizations are able.

For more information about the Sustainable School outcome of the Chesapeake Bay Program Agreement, visit:

http://www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies/strategy/sustainable_schools

C. Program Authority

Under 33 U.S.C. § 893a(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

Under this announcement, NOAA anticipates that approximately \$500,000 may be available in FY 2016 to fund approximately three to seven new applications, subject to the availability of appropriations. Systemic MWEE projects should not exceed \$150,000 annually in Federal funds, and Emerging MWEE should not exceed \$75,000 annually in Federal funds, with performance periods of up to three years, but funding beyond the first increment, usually one year, is subject to the incremental funding policy described in Section II.B of this Announcement. The distribution of funding between Systemic MWEE and Emerging MWEE projects will depend on the nature, quality, and number of meritorious proposals, and the Selection Factors in Section V.C. of this Announcement.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before July 1, 2016. Applications should cover a project period of between one and three years. Projects that request multi-year funding must include in their submission a full description of the activities and estimated budget by line item (e.g. personnel, equipment, supplies) for all proposed work for each year.

When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding will usually be provided only for the first year of the project, and the award will be subject to incremental funding, usually annually. Once an incremental or multi-year project is awarded, the multi-year scope of work and budget is approved but funding beyond an initial increment is not provided. Future funding is anticipated to maintain such awards for project periods of up to three years; however, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in

connection with that award beyond the initial funding increment awarded. Continuation of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the sole discretion of NOAA and will be contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the NOAA mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

Recipients of incrementally-funded projects will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years, and current recipients seeking continued funding of previous awards issued under the incremental funding policy do not need to apply to this funding announcement.

Single-year requests or awards in which an applicant proposed a multi-year project but NOAA limited the period of performance to a shorter time period will be required to re-compete for further funding in subsequent years. Any renewal of the project will depend on the submission of a new proposal subject to review, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding.

Future opportunities for submitting proposals to the B-WET competitive process are anticipated, but will depend on funding levels and resources available to support new projects.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through a cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Applications funded through cooperative agreements will include substantial involvement of the Federal government, which may include, but is not limited to, collaboration on the scope of work, such as liaison activities between the grantee and NOAA personnel who are contributing data or expertise to the project. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is currently available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNJd>.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are K-through-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. For-profit organizations, foreign organizations, and foreign public entities are not eligible to apply; however, for-profit and foreign organizations and foreign public entities may participate with an eligible applicant as a project partner. Likewise, Federal agencies are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners.

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 underserved areas. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (NCBO) encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Projects whose sole audience is outside the Chesapeake watershed are not eligible.

Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. Applications that are lacking any of the required elements of the application or do not follow the form prescribed in IV.B of this Announcement may not receive merit review as described in Section V.B.

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/> (Grants.gov).

If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, they should contact Kevin Schabow, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 207, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-295-3145, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via email at Kevin.schabow@noaa.gov. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office does not have a direct telephonic device for the deaf, however, TDD capabilities can be accessed through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800 735 2258, between the hours of 8 AM-4:30 PM.

Information on the B-WET Chesapeake program, including examples of currently supported projects, can be found on NOAA's website at <http://go.usa.gov/cjnhk>. Potential applicants may contact the NCBO before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to B-WET goals and objectives.

B. Content and Form of Application

Required Elements for Applications:

(a) At the time of application submission, all applicants anticipating direct funding shall submit the following forms with signatures of the authorized representative of the submitting institution. (Note: submission through Grants.gov results in automatic electronic signatures on these forms.):

- * Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424
- * Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A
- * Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: Form SF-424B
- * Certifications Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511
- * Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable, see instructions on form)

(i) Project Summary (1 page):

- * Project Title
- * Priority Area(s): Systemic MWEE Implementation or Emerging MWEE Projects
- * Project duration: 12 to 36 month project period starting on the first of the month and

ending on the last day of the month.

* **Organization and Partnerships:** Briefly describe your organization and list your key partners for this grant, if applicable. Partnerships are encouraged.

* **Summary:** Provide a brief statement that explains the need for your project and its goals and objectives. In addition, identify what NOAA priority you will address and/or NOAA assets you will use. Your summary should use layman's terms to provide reviewers with an understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of your educational project. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read this paragraph and grasp your plan. More information about NOAA assets and educational resources can be found at: <http://www.education.noaa.gov/>.

* **Delivery Method:** Explain how you will reach your audience, such as workshops, field experiences, interactive programs, summer institutes, classroom outreach, etc.

* **Audience:** Describe the demographics of your target audience including the school division(s) and the number and types of participants you expect to reach, such as teachers and students and the specific grade levels, environmental educators, principals, etc.

* **Budget Information:** Total Federal funding requested this fiscal year; Total Non Federal match for this fiscal year. Total multi-year request and match (if applicable). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars.

(ii) **Project Description (up to 12 pages):** Describe in detail what your project will achieve with the following headings: What, Why, Who, and How. Explain each aspect of your proposal clearly and address each topic below. Please address all of the following to ensure that grant reviewers can fully comprehend and score your project correctly. Specific Evaluation Criteria is defined in Section V.A.

* **What:** Explain the goals and objectives for your project. Include information about how the project contributes to greater understanding and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, identify the NOAA B-WET program priority and NOAA special interest area, if applicable, your project supports, and discuss how it supports the Environmental Literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program and NOAA Education Strategic Plan. If your project may implicate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as described in the NOAA NEPA policy in Section VI.B.4. of this Announcement, applicants should provide relevant information in the project description. Any applicable supporting documents may be included as attachments that do not count toward the page limit. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

* Why: Briefly describe the need for your project, including a description of any state, regional, or national initiatives that the project supports. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

* Who: Identify the target audience, and give a precise location of the project and area(s) to be served. Be sure to include how many students are receiving MWEEs annually in your project, and how many teachers receiving professional development annually. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

* How: Outline your objectives and a plan of action of how the proposed objectives will be accomplished. If multi-year, provide deliverables for each year. Detail how the project meets or supports the definition of the meaningful watershed educational experience as defined in this funding opportunity and what NOAA products, services, or staff will be used in program delivery. This section addresses technical merit of the proposal. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical merit).

(iii) Sustainability: Discuss a plan for sustainability of project beyond NOAA funding.

Explain how requested funding can build a project that can be sustained after NOAA grant funds expire. List all other sources of funding that have been sought for the project and the status of those requests. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.4 (Project Costs).

(iv) Outreach and Education: Projects should include significant external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience (typically students and teachers). Projects should include mechanisms that encourage students and/or teachers to share their knowledge with peers, their school, and their local community. This can include presentation of project design and evaluation at conferences or media outreach about the program, but should also include sharing with other students, teachers, administrators, and the community that advances the goal of environmental stewardship. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.5 (Outreach and Education).

(v) 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. In this section, you must explain your plans for meeting the goals and objectives of your project and for tracking and measuring progress on your outputs and your short-term outcomes. If your medium- and long-term outcomes can also be measured within the project period, explain your plans for that evaluation as well. Evaluation plans may be quantitative and/or qualitative and may include, for example, evaluation tools, observation, or outside consultation. No more than 10% of the budget can be spent on the evaluation component of your proposal. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical Merit).

If funded by NOAA, grant recipients must be willing to report evaluation results to NOAA. For detailed information on how to create an evaluation plan visit NOAA's website at <http://go.usa.gov/cjQqF>.

Participation in B-WET National Evaluation:

In addition to project evaluation, grantees are asked to participate in data collection for the national B-WET evaluation. B-WET has created a cross-region, internal evaluation system to monitor program implementation and outcomes on an ongoing basis. Results of this evaluation will be used to make adjustments to B-WET Federal Funding Opportunities (FFOs) and activities in order to improve the B-WET program, document its value, and better tailor it to program audiences. Furthermore, the system will generate a data set that will be valuable to researchers and has the potential to inform the field of environmental education more broadly. Success of this effort depends on grantee participation, so applicants are strongly encouraged to review the information about the national evaluation system (available here: http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet_eval.php) and consider how they can support it as part of their projects.

As part of this evaluation system, recipients of B-WET grants and teacher-participants in grantees' professional development programs may be asked to voluntarily complete online questionnaires to provide evaluation data. One individual from each grantee organization will be asked to complete a questionnaire once per year of the award. For projects that work with teachers, the teacher-participants will be asked (using email addresses provided by the grantee organization) to complete one questionnaire at the close of their professional development and one after implementing Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences with their students (at the end of the following school year). Grantees should be able to complete their questionnaire within 30-60 minutes (depending on the nature of their program) and teachers, within 30 minutes. B-WET grantees and teachers who respond to the

questionnaires will remain anonymous to B-WET and NOAA. NOAA will only view the resulting data in aggregate at the national or regional level, however grantees will receive a password-protected report link to allow them to view data from teacher participants of their project in aggregate.

Grantees are encouraged to provide information about how they plan to support this national evaluation system, incorporate it into the project timeline, and ensure responses from participating teachers as part of their application. More information, including all of the survey instruments, is available on the NOAA B-WET national website here: <http://go.usa.gov/cjQce>.

Grantees should review the information available and take this into consideration in the planning for their project evaluations. For example:

- Grantees may not need to include questions that will be answered through the teacher instrument in their own evaluations.

- Wherever possible grantees should try to incorporate participation in the evaluation system into existing requirements for professional development program completion. For example, on completion of the teacher professional development survey, teachers will receive some program incentive.

Note that this evaluation system is not intended to fully replace project level evaluation. While grantees will have access to their teacher's data from the evaluation system, the national evaluation may not provide the level of detail needed to fully understand, describe, and improve specific grant projects. Grantees are therefore encouraged to balance these needs within their evaluation budget.

Additional information about this project, including background, FAQs, survey instruments, and suggested text for communicating with your teacher participants about this project, is available here: <http://go.usa.gov/cjQce>.

This data collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with the Paperwork Reduction Act and OMB guidelines (OMB Control No 0648-0658), and any applicable updates.

(b) APPENDICES (not included in 13-page limit):

(i) Budget Justification: Provide a detailed spreadsheet with narrative to support the requested items or activities (personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs). If applying for multiple years of funding, the budget should be broken down for each year requested. Applicants are encouraged to use the B WET budget template found at <http://go.usa.gov/cjQaG>. The budget justification submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on the required Forms SF- 424 and SF-424A. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.4 (Project Costs).

For Maryland applicants: Specify how much funding has been requested from the Chesapeake Bay Trust Environmental Education Grants Program to support the project, if such funding has been requested.

For multi-year projects: Ensure that there is a detailed budget narrative detailing the budget requested for each year matching each Form SF-424A.

Grant recipients will be encouraged to attend a state or regional B-WET meeting once during the duration of their grant. This will be an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B-WET projects and learn from each other. This meeting may be part of an existing state conference environmental or science education conference to minimize travel expenses. Budgets should include, in the travel category, estimated funds this meeting (such as meals, lodging, and transportation including rental car, shuttle, or taxi). No more than \$1000 should be budgeted for this expense.

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs, which 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. See 2 C.F.R. 200.56-.57 and 200.412-.415 at <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>. An applicant may also propose all allowable project charges as direct costs.

An applicant requesting indirect costs should provide a current approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement established with its cognizant Federal agency or an acknowledgement letter from the cognizant agency to which the applicant has submitted a proposed rate. In addition, if an award recipient has never established an indirect cost rate

with any Federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimus rate described at 2 C.F.R. 200.414 or it may negotiate a new rate with the Department of Commerce. The negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by the NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>, require that within 90 days of the award start date, recipients submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation, plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to establish a new rate to the address listed below.

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer

NOAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor

Silver Spring, MD 20910

(ii) Timeline: Include a project schedule that indicates when each action, event, milestone, product development, and evaluation will occur. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical Merit).

(iii) Logic Model: Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific outputs and outcomes. Provide a logic model that displays these expected outputs and outcomes. A basic logic model template and instructions are available at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet-evaluation.html>. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical Merit).

(iv) Technical Experience and Qualifications: Attach a description of your programmatic capabilities and ability to successfully implement and manage the proposed project including staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them to successfully achieve the goals of the project, and your organizational experience and past history in performing tasks similar to the proposed project. Also include a paragraph describing qualifications of each of the key personnel conducting the project. If you send resumes for the key personnel conducting the project, please keep them to a maximum of three, one-page resumes. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(v) Partnership Letters of Commitment: If the applicant organization has partners, such as school divisions, state agencies, or other organizations, include letters of commitment from partners explaining their role in and/or funding of the proposed project. Do not include letters of endorsement from previous participants, teachers, or others not directly involved in project implementation except letters demonstrating school or school division support. Letters should be received as part of application submission. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(vi) Results from prior NOAA support: If any principal investigator (PI) or co-PI identified on the project has received support from NOAA in the past five years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:

- * The NOAA award number, amount and period of support;
- * The title of the project;
- * Summary of the results of the completed work (including # of teachers/students);
- * If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

(vii) Data Sharing Plan: A Data Sharing Plan of no more than two pages should be attached. 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 2 years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publically available at the time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with published data. 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 decision.

If your proposed activities do not generate any environmental data, your application is still required to have a data sharing plan. Such a data sharing plan could include the statement that “this project will not generate any environmental data.” More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA’s Environmental data Management Committee website at: <http://www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php>.

(viii) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): Consistent with Section IV.B.(a)(ii)

and Section VI.B.4. of this Announcement, if any permits, permit requests, maps, or other supporting NEPA documents are applicable to your project, they may be included as attachments

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 4, 2016 if submitting through Grants.gov. PLEASE NOTE: When submitting through Grants.gov, you will receive two emails. An initial email will be sent to confirm your attempt to submit a proposal. This is NOT a confirmation of acceptance of your application. It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application and send you a second email confirming successful submission. NOAA considers the validation time as receipt. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

If use of Grants.gov is impractical for technical or other reasons, paper copy applications will be accepted at the address listed in Section VII. Paper copies may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery service. Applications submitted by mail must include a SF-424 form with original ink or valid electronic signature and date from an authorized recipient organization representative, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark or provided to a commercial carrier with tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 pm Eastern Time on February 4, 2016; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. Paper applications received more than three business days after the deadline will not be reviewed, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications. No email or fax copies will be accepted. To submit a hand-delivered application, applicants should make advance arrangements with NOAA by contacting the official listed in Section VII. of this Announcement, and the application must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on February 4, 2016.

Informational webinars will be held on December 11, 2015 at 10:00 AM Eastern Time and December 15, 2015 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time. To register for these webinars, please visit <http://go.usa.gov/cjnAY>.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Requirements), found at 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable." Construction costs are not allowed.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Additional Information about Grants.gov Submissions

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through <http://www.grants.gov>. In developing your submission timeline, note that validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission.

In addition, potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted, and first-time registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks or more. It is therefore strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their registration may need to be renewed prior to submitting to Grants.gov. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days or longer to establish.

To use Grants.gov, an applicant must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Number

System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM), <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>, and periodic renewals are required. Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.) Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number listed in the Executive Summary of this Announcement. Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another email when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review, and the validation time is deemed the time NOAA received it.

If you experience a Grants.gov "systems issue" (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before an applicable funding cycle deadline, please (i) print any error message received; and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization's computer system or equipment are not considered "systems issues." Similarly, an applicant's failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered Authorized Organizational Representative submits the application, or (iii) receive an email message from Grants.gov validating or rejecting its

application are not considered systems issues. A Grants.gov “systems issue” is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed “systems issue,” or a significant natural disaster affecting submission, NOAA may allow more time for applicant submission due to system problems at Grants.gov at the time of application submission that are beyond the control of the applicant.

2. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management

The registration described above in this Section implements requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note. Under this law, to enable the use of a universal identifier and to build the quality of information available to the public, any application awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Data Universal Numbering System and Federal System for Award Management referenced above to the extent applicable.

Each applicant (unless an exception arises under 2 C.F.R. 25) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (e.g. DUNS number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. See 2 C.F.R. Part 25, <http://go.usa.gov/cTbMk>.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (20 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

- a. Does the project make a clear effort to increase environmental stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed in students? (5 points)
- b. Does the applicant demonstrate understanding of the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (5 points)
- c. Is the audience served located within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed? (5 points)
- d. Does the project document support for the NOAA Education Strategic Plan? (3 points)
- e. Does the project document support for the Environmental Literacy Goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program Agreement? (2 points)

2. Technical merit (45 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and meets the definition of the MWEE, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

- a. Will the project result in student experiences that meet the full definition of the MWEE (issue identification and background research, outdoor field experiences, stewardship action projects, synthesis and conclusions)? If the project is teacher professional development only, does the proposal clearly document how it will result in student MWEEs? (10 points)
- b. Does the project include adequate teacher involvement? Is proposed professional development multi-day and meet criteria set forth in section 3 of the MWEE definition in this announcement?(10 points)
- c. Are NOAA resources an essential element of the proposed project? (5 points)
- d. Does the logic model show good understanding of desired outputs and outcomes

for the project? (5 points)

e. Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? (5 points)

f. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? (5 points)

g. For Systemic Implementation applications: does the project reach all students and relevant teachers in a school division or recognized sub-unit of a school division (“Clusters” for example)? (5 points)

a. For Emerging MWEE projects: does the proposal justify why systemic implementation of the project is not technically feasible or desired?(5 points)

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.

a. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the target community, including in depth understanding of schools and school systems? (2 points)

b. Does the applicant demonstrate the capability and experience to successfully complete similar projects? (3 points)

c. Does the proposal include meaningful partnerships that contribute to project implementation, and are those partners documented with detailed support letters? (5 points)

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.

a. Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the number of participants and/or target audience to be reached? (10 points)

b. Does the proposal adequately address project sustainability after NOAA funding? (5 points)

c. Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? (2 points)

d. Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and this is a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? (3 points)

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. Specially, does the project involve mechanisms for significant external sharing and communication about the project by students, teachers, or project staff? This includes consideration of the Data Sharing Plan described in Section IV.B.(b)(vii) of this Announcement.

a. Community Events that engage parents, other community members, etc. are proposed (2 points)

b. Peer to peer sharing for teacher and/or student (in-service days, school assemblies, etc.) is proposed (2 points)

c. Project will be publicized at Conferences and the media (1 point)

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each timely received application to assure that it is eligible, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

Applications that are cleared for meeting minimum requirements will be moved into merit review and evaluated by a two-phase review process; a preliminary technical review and a panel review meeting. Both phases are conducted by the same set of private and/or public sector expert reviewers. Each review phase is described in detail below, followed by post-merit-review procedures.

Technical Review:

The purpose of the technical review is to evaluate each proposal's technical merit via individual evaluations of the proposals. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of

3 reviewers. Reviewers provide comments (which can be shared with applicants after the competition has concluded) and assign scores to the applications based the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of this federal funding opportunity. No consensus advice will be given.

Based on the results of the individually scored proposals, the Program Officer will prepare a preliminary ranked list of proposals. This preliminary rank order will be used in the subsequent panel meeting where final funding recommendations are made.

Panel Review:

A panel review meeting will be held following the technical review process. The purpose of the panel meeting is to discuss in-depth the proposals and to get final funding recommendations from reviewers. This in-depth discussion may raise issues or answer questions that a reviewer did not have in the technical review, or it may clarify an issue. After discussing proposals, panelists will provide comments and a final score for each application, upon which a final rank order is established. If more than one non-Federal reviewer is used, no consensus advice will be given by the panel.

Up to four separate review events may be held depending on geography or type of applications received. Scores from separate review events will not be combined to establish an overall rank order.

Project Selection

The B-WET Chesapeake Coordinator may, in consultation with NCBO staff, review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel and make recommendations to the Selecting Official, who is expected to be the Director of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office or designee. The rank order from the review panel will be the primary consideration for the Selection Official in deciding which of the new proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. However, the Selecting Official will select proposals after considering the recommendations of the review panel, and recommendations of the B-WET Chesapeake Coordinator. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based Selection Factors described in Section V.C. of this Announcement. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future without re-competition, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized.

Please note that not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate or only partial funding, based on the selection factors and the merit and/or panel review written evaluations. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives and activities, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. This may result in submission of a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant and NOAA officials. Applicants should also note that modifications to projects may be necessary as a result of NOAA's efforts to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as described in Section VI.B. of this Announcement, and other legislation.

Grants Management Review

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award.

Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. NOAA also reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. In addition, NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for

Award Management requirements referenced in Section VI.B. of this Announcement, and if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

C. Selection Factors

In implementing the selection process described above in Section V.B. of this Announcement, the Selecting Official may select a proposal out of rank order if justified based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - Geographically
 - By type of institutions
 - By type of partners
 - By research areas
 - By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies
4. Program priorities and areas of interest as set out in section I. B of this FFO.
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
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 Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the three months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to NCBO and notification, and applicants may receive communications to negotiate a potential award in April 2016. Final issuance of awards or declinations are expected by August 2016. No date prior to July 1, 2016 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding with an official notice of award, the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer, and accompanying award package. The CD-450 award cover page is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNMR>. The CD-450 (including associated terms it incorporates by reference) is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin.

The award may be issued to the authorizing official and the principal investigator of the project in hard copy if necessary but will ordinarily be issued electronically via an email from NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online, at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov>. The Internet Explorer browser should be used with this system. Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification from the NOAA program office indicating that their proposals were not recommended for funding.

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. A current version of this document is available at <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental or other compliance requirements and may lead to modification of the project's scope of work, and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this Announcement and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

2. Uniform Administrative Guidance

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

3. Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for any or all qualified projects pursuant to this Announcement or that any proposal will be selected for funding. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the competition described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award funding for specific projects, or obligate available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs for awards that have not been designated as “research” unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when an award is made. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded to a meritorious applicant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Funded awards are subject to enforcement and termination provisions under 2

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by 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.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.

5. Felony and Tax Certification

Where required in accordance with applicable Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representative making a certification regarding any applicable Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

C. Reporting

(a) In addition to Evaluation Reporting described in Section IV.B.(a)(v) of this Announcement, financial and performance progress reporting requirements are described in the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and 2 C.F.R. 200.327-.200.329, referenced above in Sections VI.A. and B. of this Announcement, and further implemented as described below.

1. Financial Reports - Information about federal financial reports is available at:
<http://go.usa.gov/cjE4T>

2. Performance/Progress Reports - Suggested content and guidance related to Chesapeake B-WET performance/progress reports can be found here:
<http://go.usa.gov/cjE2B>

(b) The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. 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. Refer to 2 C.F.R. Part 170 at <http://go.usa.gov/cT8WW>.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the B-WET Chesapeake website for further information at:
<http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/bay-watershed-education-and-training-b-wet/bay-watershed-education-and-training-b-wet>, or contact Kevin Schabow, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 207, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-295-3145, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at Kevin.Schabow@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552)- Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.