

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Funding Opportunity Description.....	3
A. Program Objective.....	3
B. Program Priorities.....	7
C. Program Authority.....	9
II. Award Information.....	9
A. Funding Availability.....	9
B. Project/Award Period.....	10
C. Type of Funding Instrument.....	10
III. Eligibility Information.....	10
A. Eligible Applicants.....	10
B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.....	10
C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility.....	11
IV. Application and Submission Information.....	11
A. Address to Request Application Package.....	11
B. Content and Form of Application.....	11
C. Submission Dates and Times.....	15
D. Intergovernmental Review.....	16
E. Funding Restrictions.....	16
F. Other Submission Requirements.....	17
V. Application Review Information.....	17
A. Evaluation Criteria.....	17
B. Review and Selection Process.....	19
C. Selection Factors.....	21
D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates.....	21
VI. Award Administration Information.....	22
A. Award Notices.....	22
B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	22
C. Reporting.....	24
VII. Agency Contacts.....	24
VIII. Other Information.....	25

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY16 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ONMS-2016-2004696

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.429, Marine Sanctuary Program

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on January 29, 2016 to be considered for funding. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply online 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 an applicant does not have Internet access or if Grants.gov has technical issues that prohibit submission, hard copy applications will be accepted. Hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery, but must be received (not postmarked) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 29, 2016. Hard copy applications arriving after the deadline given above will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time. In any event, hard copy applications received by ONMS later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (Great Lakes Region) is seeking proposals under the Great Lakes B-WET Program. The Great Lakes B-WET Program 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 Great Lakes watershed. Successful projects provide Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) for students and related professional development for teachers, while advancing regional Great Lakes education and environmental priorities. This program addresses NOAA's Long-Term Goal of "Healthy Oceans: Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity are sustained within healthy and productive ecosystems" and "NOAA's Engagement Enterprise Objective for An engaged and educated public with an improved capacity to make scientifically informed environmental decisions".

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Great Lakes NOAA Bay-Watershed Education and Training (Great Lakes B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that supports experiential K-12 learning through local competitive grant awards. Great Lakes B-WET is part of the national B-WET Program found in each of the following geographic regions: Chesapeake Bay, California, Hawaiian Islands, New England, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific Northwest, and Great Lakes. The Great Lakes B-WET program was established in 2011 with funding provided by the EPA through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

For the purposes of this solicitation, the Great Lakes region includes counties in the Great Lakes watershed in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Applicants may be physically located in any U.S. state; however, education projects must target teachers and/or students in the above defined Great Lakes watershed.

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)).

DEFINING THE MEANINGFUL WATERSHED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (MWEE)

The primary delivery of B-WET is through competitive funding that promotes Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). MWEEs are multi-stage activities that include learning both outdoors and in the classroom, and aim to increase the environmental literacy of all participants. Teachers should support students to investigate topics both locally and globally that are of interest to them, learn they have control over the outcome of environmental issues, identify actions available to address these issues, and understand the value of those actions. More information about the MWEE can be found here:

http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/docs/MWEE_Definition-final2015-7-29v3.pdf. MWEEs are defined as follows:

1. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) for Students

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.

> 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.

> 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.

> 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, storm water 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); and Civic Action (e.g., town meetings, voting, writing elected officials/decision makers, advocating for policy change).

> 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) with Students

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

> 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.

> 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.

> 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.

> 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.

> 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:

> 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.

> 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.

> 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.

> 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.

> 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.

For more information on the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience, visit:

<http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet.html#page=about>.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must 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, one additional factor will be taken into consideration in making funding recommendations: (4) Regional Priorities of the Great Lakes B-WET Program. Each of these four priorities is described below.

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 (definition above).

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 and 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. Regional Priorities of the Great Lakes B-WET Program

The Great Lakes B-WET Program responds to regional education and environmental priorities through local implementation. Therefore, in addition to addressing one of the three programmatic priorities, programs are asked to employ meaningful watershed educational experiences that address the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Action Plan II. The Action Plan II summarizes the actions that federal agencies plan to implement during FY15-19 using Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding—actions to protect and restore the largest fresh surface water system in the world. These actions will build on restoration and protection work carried out under the first GLRI Action Plan, with a major focus on:

- Cleaning up Great Lakes Areas of Concern
- Preventing and controlling invasive species
- Reducing nutrient runoff that contributes to harmful/nuisance algal blooms
- Restoring habitat to protect native species

This second iteration of the GLRI Action Plan incorporates a science-based adaptive-management framework that has among its objectives: Educate the next generation about the Great Lakes ecosystem. To achieve this goal, the Action Plan II builds on the successful implementation of a number of efforts to promote Great Lakes-based environmental education and stewardship in the first five years of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, including the Great Lakes B-WET Program. Under the heading of Foundations for Future Restoration Actions: “Federal agencies and their partners will continue to promote Great Lakes-based ecosystem education and stewardship for K-12 school students and other

interested audiences (e.g., courses at parks, nature centers, museums and zoos). GLRI partners will work with existing environmental education programs to foster the growth of new programs, and align new and/or existing curricula with the Great Lakes Literacy Principles (<http://greatlakesliteracy.net/>) as well as state and national academic learning standards. There will be an emphasis on training educators in order to maximize the number of students engaged over time. Federal agencies that are stewards of lands and waters important to the Great Lakes ecosystem will also provide place-based experiential learning to the public. GLRI projects will include an evaluation component to ensure that the education programs directed towards educators are ultimately implemented in the classroom.” <http://glri.us/actionplan/pdfs/glri-action-plan-2.pdf>.

C. Program Authority

Under 33 U.S.C. § 893a(a) America Competes Act, 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 \$540,000 will be available in FY 2016 to fund eligible applications. NOAA anticipates making approximately 7 to 15 new awards. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$75,000. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA is \$25,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA for more than \$75,000 or less than \$25,000 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 September 1, 2016. The period of awards may be for a maximum period of up to 18 months. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended to include the flexibility of the requested start date in your project description.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement depending upon the amount of collaboration, participation, or involvement of NOAA in the management of 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, nonprofit organizations, for profit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments. Applicants may be physically located in any U.S. state; however, education projects must target teachers and/or students in the Great Lakes watershed. Additionally, priority will be given to applicants who 1) show prior experience in working in the Great Lakes region, 2) show prior experience with Great Lakes regional issues, or 3) demonstrate partnerships with local organizations in the Great Lakes region on proposed projects.

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. The NOAA B-WET program encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NOAA B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants share as much of the costs of the award as possible. 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 with cash being the preferred method of contribution. Other Federal funds cannot be used as cost share/match.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply online through Grants.gov. Application packages are available through Grants.gov. If applicants do not have internet access, application packages may be requested from: Cathy Green, Great Lakes B-WET Program Manager, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Great Lakes Region. 500 W. Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 47909. (989)356-8805 ext.10, cathy.green@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals should follow the content and format described below. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

1. Format Requirements:

All pages should be single-spaced and should be composed in at least 11 point font with one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. The project description should not exceed 15 pages, exclusive of project summary, literature cited, budget information, resumes of investigator, letters of support, data sharing plan, and federal forms. Any attachment included in an electronic application should meet the above format requirement when printed out. All documents submitted as electronic application elements should be PDF (rather than MS Word, Excel, or other files types). Additional informational material should not be submitted.

2. Content Requirements:

The following Federal Forms are required and must be submitted with applications.

(1) Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424. Funding on this form should reflect the total funding requested in the application.

(2) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A.

(3) Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

Additionally, the following Department of Commerce forms may be required:

(4) Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511

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

The following information should be included.

a. Project Summary (1-page limit): It is critical that the project summary accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements and objectives of the activities. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read the summary and grasp your plan. It is imperative that applicants tie their proposals to the program priorities described in Section I.B. The project summary should include: Organization title; Principal Investigator(s); Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s); MWEE Priority addressed (i.e., Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students, Professional Development for Teachers related to Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences, or Exemplary Programs), the Great Lakes Regional Priority addressed; Project title; Project duration; Project objectives; Total Federal funding requested; Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources if any; Cost per student and/or teacher; and Succinct description of work to be performed during the entire project period including audience description information (i.e. demographics and school divisions, grade levels, number of teachers/students to be reached) and delivery method to be used (i.e. workshops, field experiences, interactive programs).

b. Project Description (15-page limit): The project description should describe and justify the project being proposed and address each of the evaluation criteria as described below in Section V.

Project descriptions should include the goals and objectives for your project. Include specific approaches to achieving those objectives, including methods, timelines, and expected outcomes. Include information about how the project contributes to greater understanding and stewardship of the Great Lakes. Describe the need for your project and cite timely studies or sources, where appropriate, that verify the need for your project.

Define the target audience(s). Specifically, project descriptions should include a precise location of the project and area(s) to be served and the number of teachers and/or students to be reached each year of the proposed project. Demonstrate an understanding of the needs of that audience, including anything that makes your target audience unique.

Project descriptions should outline how the project proposes to implement each component of a meaningful watershed educational experience (fully defined above), including alignment with state standards and classroom curricula. And, note what NOAA products, services, or staff will be used in program delivery. Discuss a plan for sustainability of project beyond NOAA funding.

In addition, project descriptions should include significant external sharing, communication, and stewardship. 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, media, or other community stewardship activities.

Project descriptions should also identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities of the entire prospective project. Project descriptions should include a two part evaluation description:

> Project Evaluation: Project evaluation is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about your project's outcomes in order to improve the project's effectiveness, guide judgments about its impact, and/or inform decisions about future programming or funding. Proposals should provide a project evaluation plan. For information on how to create a project evaluation plan, please see the California B-WET project evaluation website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/evaluation/welcome.html>.

and

> National Evaluation: In addition to project evaluation, grantees may be 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://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet_eval.php . 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://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet_eval.php .

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

c. Literature Cited: If references are cited, proposals should include a literature cited list.

d. Letters of Support/Partnerships: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project should be included with the application package.

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. More information about NOAA assets and educational resources can be found at: <http://www.education.noaa.gov/> .

e. Budget and Budget Justification: In addition to the SF424A Budget Information form, applicants should include a detailed budget justification, or budget narrative. In the budget narrative, include a per-teacher and/or per-student cost calculation for this project. Provide justification for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. Also, applicants should complete and submit the B-WET budget template found at <http://thunderbay.noaa.gov/B-WET/applying%20for%20great%20lakes%20B-WET%20grant.html>. All budget information submitted with the application should mirror the dollar amounts on required SF-424 and SF-424A forms.

It is anticipated that grant recipients will be asked to attend a two-day Regional B-WET conference to be held in one of the Great Lakes States at some point during the award period. The conference will be an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients to

present their B-WET projects and learn from each other. Your budget should include, in the travel category, estimated funds for these trips (such as meals, lodging, airfare and/or other transportation including rental car, shuttle, or taxi). Although this is considered an outreach and education opportunity, it should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criteria; local, regional or national communication is required as well.

f. Resumes (2 pages maximum for each major participant)

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

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

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

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

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on January 29, 2016 to be considered for funding. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply online through Grants.gov. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.

If an applicant does not have Internet access or if Grants.gov has technical issues that prohibit submission, hard copy applications will be accepted. Hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery. Mail hard copy applications to : Cathy Green, Great Lakes B-WET Program Manager, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Great Lakes Region. 500 W. Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 47909. Hard copy

applications must be received (not postmarked) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 29, 2016. Hard copy applications arriving after the deadline given above will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time. In any event, hard copy applications received by ONMS later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

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>. Applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number (www.dnb.com) and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) (www.ccr.gov). Allow a minimum of thirty days to receive a DUNS number and to be registered in CCR. Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Because first-time registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks, it is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their central contractor 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 to establish. Please consider these notes in developing your submission timeline.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs - The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if your organization has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. E. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to

the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway
9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
lamar.revis@noaa.gov

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

As of December 26, 2014, DOC adopted the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Requirements), which is codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. The OMB Uniform Guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from previous OMB circulars, including OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments."

F. Other Submission Requirements

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. Consequently, applicants should identify any impact the proposed work will have on the quality of the environment.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (15 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 Great Lakes B-WET Program, this may include the following questions: Does the project make a direct connection to the greater marine or Great Lakes environment and watershed system; and does it address how actions within that system can affect the environment? Does the applicant demonstrate a need for the project? Does the applicant demonstrate an

understanding of the target audience? What is the likelihood of the proposed educational and environmental activities to improve the general understanding and stewardship of the environment? Does the experience focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to a specific region?

2. Technical merit (50 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 Great Lakes B-WET Program, this may include the following questions:

Are the objectives and outcomes defined in the proposal focused on the stated outcome(s)?

Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives can be reached within the proposed project period? Does the project have a local context that uses the surrounding community as the primary resource for student MWEEs?

Is the project design project-oriented, hands-on, investigative, and part of a sustained activity? Is the project 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?

Consistent with the definition of the MWEE, if the project includes a student component, is such student programming part of a sustained activity that includes defining an issue, outdoor field experiences, stewardship action projects, and making conclusions?

Consistent with the definition of the MWEE, if the project includes a teacher training component, does such teacher professional development provide experiences that likely increases teachers' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues, models environmental education pedagogy, allows for adequate instructional time, provides ongoing teacher support and appropriate incentives, and meets jurisdictional guidelines for effective teacher professional development?

Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the project evaluation component of the project focus on measuring changes in participants (changes can be in knowledge, attitudes, skills or conservation actions)? Does the applicant discuss how the B-WET National Evaluation system will be incorporated into their plans for project evaluation?

Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the classroom or instructional program and does the project address multiple disciplines? Does the applicant demonstrate how their project is aligned and supports the goals and strategies of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan (<http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/leadership/edcouncil/docs/2015-Strategic-Plan-FullText.pdf>)? Is the project aligned with environmental literacy principles (e.g. Great Lakes Literacy, <http://greatlakesliteracy.net/> or Climate Literacy, http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/literacy/climate_literacy.pdf) where appropriate?

Does the applicant utilize NOAA staff, products, or services in the delivery of this project?

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 Great Lakes B-WET Program, this may include the following questions: Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the applicant 1) show prior experience in working in the Great Lakes region, 2) show prior experience with Great Lakes regional issues, or 3) demonstrate partnerships with local organizations in the Great Lakes region on proposed projects? Are the partners involved in the project qualified? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant document collaborations with schools or school systems? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Content Standards for their state?

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 Great Lakes B-WET Program, this may include the following questions:

Does the applicant adequately justify the proposed budget request? Is the budget request reasonable for the number of students, teachers, and/or participants being reached and represent a good return on investment? Is the proposed budget suitable to the geographic area? 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 project? Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project; is this a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? 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 Great Lakes B-WET Program, this may include the following questions: Does the project involve significant external sharing and communication, which could include a stewardship activity in the community? Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community? Does the project contain a Data Sharing Plan makes data and information collected under a NOAA grants or cooperative agreements visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner?

B. Review and Selection Process

After the application period has closed, we will screen received applications to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see IV.C. Submission Dates and Times); include SF 424 authenticated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible

applicant (see III.A. Eligibility Information); address one of the priorities (see I.B. Program Priorities); and include required content (see IV.B. Content and Form of Application). If your application does not conform to the requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be rejected without further consideration.

Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by a two-part review process; a preliminary technical review and a virtual panel review. Both phases are conducted by the same set of private and/or public sector expert reviewers. After the federal funding opportunity closes, applications are received and cleared for minimum requirements. Those that meet minimum requirement are moved into review. Each review phase is described in detail below.

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 section (see V.A. Evaluation Criteria) of this federal funding opportunity. No consensus advice will be given.

The Program Officer will calculate the average score for each proposal using the individually scored proposals, which will result in 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 virtual panel review will be held following the technical review process (review panelists are the same individuals who conducted the technical review). The purpose of the panel meeting is to discuss in-depth the proposals that ranked highly in the technical review process 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.

Both the average score and how the application ranked for individuals reviewers inform which proposals are discussed at the review panel meeting. If a proposal has an average score in the bottom half of all proposals, and it did not rank in the top three for any individual reviewers, it is not considered for discussion or funding.

After discussing a particular proposal, the individuals on the panel will provide comments and rate each proposal as either "Recommended for Funding" or "Not Recommended for Funding". The Panel will give no consensus advice. Using the recommendation on each discussed proposal, the Program Manager will calculate a "percent recommended" for each discussed proposal. This establishes a final rank order for funding that is provided to the Selecting Official.

In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the final rank order that are competing

for the final available funds, the technical review scores will determine the rank order. If a tie persists beyond this, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the selecting official. The selecting official will resolve any ties by selecting projects based on the selection factors listed in the evaluation criteria section (see V.A. Evaluation Criteria) of this federal funding opportunity.

C. Selection Factors

The Great Lakes B-WET Panel ratings will be provided in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on 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. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.A. and I.B.;
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.

The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for awards to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applications are usually recommended within 255 days from the date of publication of this notice. The project start date should not begin before September 1, 2016.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific ONMS cooperative involvement with the activities of each project are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the ONMS Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding by the NOAA Grants Management Division with the issuance of an award signed by a NOAA grants officer. This is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. The award will be issued to the authorizing official and the principal investigator of the project either electronically or in hard copy (though this typically comes via an email from Grants Online). Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification from the program office indicating that their proposals were not recommended for funding.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notification - The 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 solicitation and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

2. Limitation of Liability - Funding for potential projects in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. 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 Web site at www.nepa.noaa.gov, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations website at http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, applicants may be asked to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, number and species expected to be caught, 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 of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

For this funding opportunity, applicants should identify any impact the proposed work will have on the quality of the human environment, complete the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire found at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>, and attach the completed questionnaire to their application.

4. Restrictions Governing Making Grants to Corporations Convicted of Felony Criminal Violations and/or Unpaid Federal Tax Liabilities -

Sections 536 and 537 of Public Law 113-76, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, Title V (General Provisions) (the Act) prohibit funds made available by the Act from being used to enter into a cooperative agreement with or make a grant to any corporation that:

- a) was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, unless any agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interest of the Government; and/or,
- b) has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, unless an agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interest of the Government.

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representative making a certification regarding whether the corporation has Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

5. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2013),

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text->

[idx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03add6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03add6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8)

6.FOIA - In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

C. Reporting

Unless otherwise specified by terms of the award, performance and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period. Reports shall be submitted electronically via the NOAA Grants Online system (<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>).

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>), Information about federal financial reports is available at:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/grantsonline/Documents/Grantees/Manuals/FederalFinancialReports.pdf>

2. Performance/Progress Reports

Suggested content and guidance related to Great Lakes B-WET performance/progress reports can be found here: <http://thunderbay.noaa.gov/B-WET/applying%20for%20great%20lakes%20B-WET%20grant.html>

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

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding Great Lakes B-WET Program or the application process, you may contact: Cathy Green, Great Lakes B-WET Program Manager, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Great Lakes Region. 500 W. Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 47909. (989)356-8805 ext.10, cathy.green@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

None.