

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: FY 2011 B-WET Chesapeake

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-NCBO-2011-2002654

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

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT on October 15, 2010. PLEASE NOTE: When submitting through Grants.gov, you will receive 2 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 (2) business days to validate or reject the application and send you a second email. 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 5 p.m. on October 15, 2010.

Informational webinars will be held on July 7, 2010 at 3pm and July 13, 2010 at 10am. To receive call-in information about these webinars, please register at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet-workshops.html>.

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 goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan and Citizen Stewardship components of Chesapeake Bay Executive Order by providing hands-on environmental education about issues affecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed for students, related professional development for teachers, and/or capacity building for watershed education. These Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) integrate field experiences with classroom activities and instruction in NOAA-related content.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

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

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support K-12 environmental education programs that provide students with meaningful watershed educational experiences (MWEEs) related to the Chesapeake Bay and related teacher professional development and capacity building. 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 NOAA Education Strategic Plan and the Citizen Stewardship objectives of Chesapeake Bay Executive Order. 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 America COMPETES.

NOAA B-WET 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.

For purposes of this solicitation, MWEEs are defined as follows:

Experiences are investigative or project oriented.

Experiences should be centered around questions, problems, and issues and be investigated through data collection, observation, and hands-on activities. Experiences should stimulate observation, motivate critical thinking, develop problem-solving skills, and instill confidence in students. Where appropriate, technology such as computers, probeware, and GPS equipment, should be integrated throughout the instructional process. Experiences such as tours, gallery visits, simulations, demonstrations, or nature walks may be instructionally useful, but alone do not constitute a meaningful experience.

Experiences are an integral part of the instructional program.

Experiences should be clearly part of what is occurring concurrently in the classroom.

The experience should be part of the curriculum and aligned with the academic standards. Experiences should occur where and when they fit into the instructional sequence. Experiences do not have to be based solely on science disciplines. Experiences could involve the use of materials, resources, and instruments to address multiple topics, such as maritime heritage, history, economics, math, English, art, and the cultural significance of our natural resources. Experiences make appropriate connections between subject areas and reflect an integrated approach to learning.

Experiences are part of a sustained activity.

Meaningful experiences are part of a sustained activity that stimulates and motivates the student from beginning to end. Though a watershed experience itself may occur as one specific event occurring in one day, the total duration leading up to and following the experience should involve a significant investment of instructional time. An experience should consist of three general parts - a preparation phase; an action phase; and a reflection phase. Projects should provide teachers with the support, materials, resources, and information needed to conduct these three parts.

* The preparation phase should focus on a question, problem, or issue and involve students in discussions about it.

* The action phase should include one or more outdoor experiences sufficient to conduct the project, make the observations, or collect the data required. It is strongly encouraged that the action phase includes restoration projects or activities that result in the

environment changing.

* The reflection phase should refocus on the question, problem, or issue; analyze the conclusions reached; evaluate the results; assess the activity and the learning; and include sharing and communication of the results.

Experiences consider the watershed as a system.

Meaningful watershed educational experiences should make a direct connection to the marine or estuarine environment. Experiences do not have to be water-based activities; as long as there is an intentional connection made to the watershed, water quality, and the coastal and marine environment, watershed experiences may include terrestrial activities (e.g., erosion control, buffer creation, groundwater protection, and pollution prevention).

Experiences are enhanced by NOAA products, services, or personnel.

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 outdoor experiences. For example, NOAA data can be used to supplement or contextualize the information collected by students. In addition, the inclusion of NOAA products and services in classroom activities will increase awareness of the agency's vast resources and may lead to better understanding of its mission. NOAA personnel have technical knowledge and experience that can serve to complement the classroom teacher's strengths and augment the array of resources for the learning. Additionally, these professionals can serve as important role models for career choices and as natural resources stewards, thus promoting science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers.

Information on the B-WET Chesapeake program, including examples of education partnerships that have been funded to date, can be found on the world wide web at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet.html>. Potential applicants are invited to contact the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Education Coordinator (contact information in Section VII) before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of partnership ideas to B-WET goals and objectives.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must address either (1) Integrated MWEEs, or (2) Capacity Building. Programs may also address (3) Integration of Data and Technology, or (4) Systemic MWEE

Implementation.

In addition, all proposals must advance the objectives of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan and utilize NOAA assets and/or content in program delivery.

1. Integrated MWEEs: These projects combine teacher professional development 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 in duration, 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 on or near school grounds.

2. Capacity Building: These projects build the capacity of agencies and organizations to develop, deliver, and sustain comprehensive STEM or environmental education programs that advance the MWEE at the state or regional level. Capacity building proposals may focus on one state or multiple states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Capacity building may include establishing, developing, or implementing a state environmental literacy plan; training pre-service, in-service or non-formal educators; or developing curriculum/resource guides or workshops where a demonstrated gap in content can be demonstrated. Capacity building requires networking among educational organizations and to the extent possible should aim to coordinate and/or link major education or natural resource agencies and organizations throughout a state or region.

Capacity building is a complex, long-term effort that can take years to successfully design and implement. Therefore, all capacity building proposals must indicate how the project identified in the proposal is part of a larger state or regional capacity building effort.

Applications must address either Integrated MWEEs or Capacity Building as defined above; they may also address one or more of the following priorities:

3. Integration of Data and Technology

These projects incorporate data and innovative technologies into watershed education that supports of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). NOAA encourages the use of data from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System (CBIBS) - a system of buoys that transmits real-time oceanographic, meteorological, and water-quality data (<http://www.buoybay.org>) and the NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve System (<http://www.estuaries.gov/estuaries101/ScienceData/Home.aspx>). In Summer 2010, NOAA will launch a new high school science curriculum based on real-time data from the CBIBS and NERRS systems (<http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/chesapeake-exploration.html>). Any project that proposes to collect data should plan to upload data to National Geographic FieldScope (<http://www.fieldscope.us>), a web-based mapping, analysis, and collaboration tool. Therefore, funding for web-based data capabilities will not be supported unless strongly justified.

This priority is not limited to the products and services listed here. Any innovative project using data and/or technology to deliver integrated MWEEs or contribute to capacity building will be considered.

4. Systemic MWEE Implementation

Systemic MWEE programs strive to reach the entire student and/or teacher population in one or more grades in an entire school system 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. A system can be a division, region, county, city, or even state. Applications for systemic programs can come from any applicant type, not just school divisions and departments of education. Programs 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 of the school system that can come in the form of mandating MWEEs, schoolyard habitats, or other relevant topics in the curriculum; providing funding for teacher substitutes, resource teachers, equipment, or

buses; mandating MWEE professional development; and more. School systems creating partnerships with multiple environmental education providers is often necessary to ensure all students receive outdoor learning experiences. High-level system support from superintendents, school boards, and principals is reflective of a successful systemic program.

C. Program Authority

Under 33 USC 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

This solicitation announces that approximately \$3.5M may be available in FY 2011 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds. Funding is anticipated to maintain partnerships for up to 3 years duration, but is dependent on funding made available annually by Congress. The NCBO anticipates that typical awards for B-WET will range from \$50,000 to \$200,000 annually.

Applications with budgets in which the total Federal share requested from NOAA for all years of the project is more than \$675,000 or less than \$150,000 for the direct and indirect costs of the proposed project will not be considered for review. Projects requesting less than \$50,000 annually or more than \$225,000 annually will not be considered for review. No single organization (as determined by tax identification number) is eligible to receive more than 10% of the funds awarded in any given year.

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. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications for partnerships should cover a project period between 1 and 3 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.

Multi year project period requests may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but once awarded, multi year partnerships will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years. NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in subsequent years. A recommendation to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) to continue an award in subsequent years, or to extend the period of performance, is at the total discretion of the selecting official based on recommendations by the Federal Program Officer.

Single year requests or projects that NOAA chooses to fund for only one year will be required to re-compete in subsequent years. Any continuation of the award period 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 grant or 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, liaison activities between the grantee and NOAA personnel who are contributing data or expertise to the project.

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 in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For-profit organizations, foreign institutions, foreign organizations and foreign government agencies are not eligible to apply. 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 NCBO encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NCBO strongly encourages applicants to match federal funds with at least 25% in non-federal funds. Funds from other Federal sources may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the review process with preference given to proposals that have a cash match.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None.

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 requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide you intend to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your application. If submitting a collaborative project (see section B.1. below) each submitting institution has to be registered in Grants.gov. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or

support@grants.gov.

If the applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact Kevin Schabow, Education Coordinator, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410-295-3145 or kevin.schabow@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

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

1. Application Form

The page margin on standard letter-size paper must be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right. All pages should be numbered. The typeface must be standard 11-point size or larger and must be clear and easily legible. All narrative sections of the application should be single spaced and consist of the sections described in Section IV.B.2.

The entire narrative portion of the Work Plan (which includes the Project Summary, Project Description, Sustainability, Outreach and Education, and Project Evaluation) shall not exceed 10 pages - the Project Summary (1 page) and up to 9 pages total for the Project Description, Sustainability, Outreach and Education, and Project Evaluation. The Detailed Budget and Appendices (i.e., Budget Justification, Timeline, Logic Model, Technical Expertise and Qualifications, Partnership Commitment Letters, and Results from Prior NOAA Support) are not included in the page limit. Additional informational material will be discarded prior to review.

2. Application Content

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: SF-424
- * Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A
- * Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

Additionally, the following Department of Commerce forms will be required if proposal is selected for funding:

- * Certifications Regarding Lobbying: CD-511
- * Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable, see instructions on form)

(i) Project Summary: (1 page):

- * Project Title

- * Priority Area(s): i.e., Integrated MWEEs, Capacity Building, Integration of Data and Technology, Systemic MWEE Implementation

- * 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 topic 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.

* **Delivery Method:** Explain how you will reach your audience, such as workshops, field trips, interactive programs, conferences, 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)

(ii) **Project Description:** 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, identify the NOAA B-WET program priority your project supports, and discuss how it supports the NOAA Education Strategic Plan. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

* **Why:** Describe the need for your project, including a description of any state, regional, or national initiatives that the project supports. Cite timely studies or sources, where appropriate, that verify the need for your project. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria 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. Demonstrate an understanding of the needs of that audience, including anything that makes your target audience unique, and alignment with state standards. Be sure to include how many students and/or teachers are involved in your project. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria 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 criteria V.A.2 (Technical merit).

(iii) **Sustainability:** Discuss a plan for sustainability of project beyond NOAA funding. Explain why other funding sources, including school and/or school division, cannot fund all of the proposed work. 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 criteria V.A.4 (Project Costs).

(iv) **Outreach and Education:** Projects should include significant external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages students and/or teachers to share their experiences with peers and with the environmental education community. 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, or the community that advances the goal of environmental stewardship. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria V.A.5 (Outreach and Education).

In addition, grantees will be required to attend the B-WET National conference during the Summer of 2013 if their project period extends through June 2013. Applicants should budget for a flight in the Continental U.S., lodging, and incidentals. The location for this conference has not yet been determined.

(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 criteria 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 <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet-evaluation.html>. In addition, grantees will be required to participate in a programmatic B-WET evaluation as a condition of funding.

(b) APPENDICES (not included in 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). Applicants are encouraged to use the B-WET budget template found at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/applying-for-a-grant.html>. The budget justification submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on required SF-424 and SF-424A forms. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria 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 SF-424A form.

(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 criteria 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 and instructions are available at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet-evaluation.html>. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria 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 3 one-page resumes. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(v) **Partnership Letters of Commitment:** If the applicant organization has partners, such as schools, 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 and/or direct tie to part of a larger state or regional capacity building effort. Letter must be received as part of application submission or will not be considered in evaluating proposals. This section will be scored using evaluation criteria V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(vi) **Results from prior NOAA support:** If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received support from NOAA in the past 5 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.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT or received (not postmarked) by mail or in person by 5 p.m. EDT on October 15, 2010. Hard copies and electronic submissions received after the deadline will not be considered for funding. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates

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

2. 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 Office of Management and Budget 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." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>.

Additional information about Grants.gov submissions:

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 plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the Central Contractor Registration website (<http://www.ccr.gov/>).

The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only "validated" applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application is submitted 48 hours prior to the submission deadline.

Additional information about hard copy submissions:

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 copy applications must be submitted with completed forms containing the original signature of the submitting institution's authorized representative and an electronic copy of the entire application on CD, including scanned signed forms. If the applicant has completed the entire application in Grants.gov but is unable to submit it via Grants.gov, then this application package should be provided via CD along with printed and signed versions of forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. The authorized representative should sign and date these forms over the printed signature that will appear in the signature box.

Hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery, but must be received (not postmarked) by 5 p.m. on October 15, 2010. Applications will be accepted by: NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; Education Coordinator; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A; Annapolis, Maryland 21403. Facsimile transmissions and e-mail submission of proposals will not be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/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 B-WET Program this may include the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate a need for the project? Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the target community? Does the effort align with state, regional, or national environmental education or STEM initiatives? What is the likelihood that the proposed environmental activities will increase student, teacher, and/or participant stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed? Does the project support the NOAA Education Strategic Plan?

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 B-WET Program this may include the following questions: Is the project hands-on for the students, teachers, and/or participants? Is the project part of a sustained activity (e.g. preparation, outdoor action, and reflection for students or meaningful, sustained professional development activities for teachers)? Is the project design investigative (use equipment, take measurements, and make observations to reach conclusions) or project oriented (restoration, monitoring, protection)? Is the project fully integrated into the classroom (e.g. does this project provide a meaningful way for teachers to meet state standards of learning in science and other disciplines) or teach/support methods to integrate the meaningful bay experience into the classroom in an integrated manner? Is the project part of the division curriculum or are the applicants attempting to create division curriculum in cooperation with the schools to fill a recognized gap? Does the applicant utilize NOAA staff, products, or services in the delivery of this project? Are the objectives 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 logic model show good understanding of desired outputs and outcomes for the project? Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? For Integrated MWEEs only: Does the project meaningfully combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students. For capacity building proposals scoring criteria will focus on whether or not the project advances the objectives as outlined in the questions above and will specifically ask: Will the proposed work increase the quantity and/or enhance the quality of Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences? Will the scope of work lead to broader MWEE implementation (greater than an individual school district or division)?

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 B-WET Program this may include the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant document past collaborations with in depth understanding of schools or school systems? Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the proposal include partnerships (not just sub-contracting or financing of project)? Are the partnerships working relationships with all entities meaningfully contributing to the project? Are there letters of support from all partners necessary to carry out the project? Does the applicant partner with a school division or school system, individual schools, or teachers? Are there letters from the participating school divisions or school systems, individual

schools, or teachers?

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 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 a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and/or teachers in contact with the environment? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed 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? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind; if it is in-kind are all contributions reflected accurately? Does the applicant demonstrate that the project is sustainable after NOAA funding? Is the proposed budget suitable to the geographic area?

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 B-WET Program this may include the following question: Does the project involve significant external sharing and communication? Participation in the B-WET National conference should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criteria.

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

Once a full application has been received by NCBO, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Panel Review

All applications that meet the eligibility and minimum requirements will be evaluated and scored by one or more panels of independent reviewers. Up to four separate review

panels may be held depending on number, geography, and type of applications received. Reviewers may be Federal or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in the subject matter and/or geography of the applications under review. The reviewers will score each application using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual review ratings shall be averaged for each application to establish rank order. Scores from separate panels will not be combined to establish an overall rank order. No consensus advice will be given by the review panels.

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

C. Selection Factors

The B-WET Chesapeake Program Manager will, in consultation with NCBO staff, review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel and make recommendations to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon 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/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in section I.A. and B.
5. Applicant's prior award performance

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

Projects considered for continuation under multi-year funding will be evaluated by the Selecting Official, in consultation with the B-WET Chesapeake Program Manager and other NCBO staff, to determine whether or not the award should be continued based upon the advice of the B-WET Chesapeake Program Manager. If there has been satisfactory prior award performance, projects considered for continuation may take priority over new proposals.

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 preliminary notification will occur in February 2011. No date prior to July 1, 2011 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise authorized by the Program Officer (see agency contact in Section VII) or to ensure no funding gap for those applicants requesting continuation of grants.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division by February 2011. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued by e-mail from Grants Online to the Authorized Representative of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation or was not reviewed because it did not meet minimum requirements prescribed in Sections IV.B. and IV.C. in February 2011.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data. The Program uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

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 applications 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 application. 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.

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

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements: Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). A copy of the notice may be obtained at

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html>.

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

Paperwork Reduction Act

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

Executive Order 12866

It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due every six months from the start date of the project. Progress reports should be submitted electronically through the NOAA Grants Online system and are due for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final

comprehensive report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports should detail the accomplishments that have occurred during the reporting period, correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the project narrative and provide specific, project-related information. A suggested template for project reports will be provided to grantees.

Federal Cash Transaction reports, form SF-425, should be submitted electronically through the NOAA Grants Online system and are due semi-annually on October 30th and April 30th for the preceding 6-month period (April 1st to September 30th and October 1st to March 30th) or portion thereof if the project start- or end-date falls in the middle of one of these intervals. Financial reports are due for all award recipients no later than 30 days after each 6-month period. The Final Financial Status report, form SF-425, is a comprehensive financial report that is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the B-WET website for further information at:
<http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet.html> or contact Kevin Schabow, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, 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