

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: Gulf of Mexico NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-SE-2011-2002610

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation

Dates: Applications must be received by 5:00 pm, Eastern Time on October 14, 2010 to 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. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected / returned to the sender without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southeast Region, is seeking proposals under the Gulf of Mexico B-WET Program. The B-WET program is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment. Funded projects provide meaningful watershed educational experiences for students, related professional development for teachers, and help to support regional education and environmental priorities in the Gulf of Mexico. This program addresses NOAA's mission goal to "Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources Through an Ecosystem Approach to Management."

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Gulf of Mexico NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that supports experiential learning through local competitive grant awards in specific geographic regions. Prior to 2008 B-WET Programs were established for the Chesapeake Bay, California, and the Hawaiian Islands. As of 2008, three new programs are in place in New England, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest.

For the purposes of this solicitation, the Gulf of Mexico is defined as the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

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

B. Program Priorities

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 National B-WET Program (see 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. The definition of a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience can be found at the NOAA Office of Education website at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET>.

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

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

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

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

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for exemplary projects that combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students. Systematic, long-term professional

development for teachers coupled with multiple meaningful watershed experiences for students that are fully supported in the classroom by their teachers will ensure that the concepts of watershed education are fully reinforced throughout the school year.

4. B-WET Regional Priorities

The NOAA B-WET Program responds to regional education and environmental priorities through local implementation. Therefore, in addition to addressing one of the three programmatic priorities, applications should support priorities to deliver or enhance meaningful watershed educational experiences for students and/or high-quality professional development for teachers. Though regional education priorities will be refined in subsequent years, this fiscal year programs are asked to employ meaningful watershed educational experiences that address the coastal resource priorities outlined by the major regional policy workgroup: The Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

Gulf of Mexico Alliance

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

Priority Areas:

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

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

C. Program Authority

Authority for the Bay Watershed Education and Training Program is provided by the following: 33 U.S.C. 893a(a) America Competes Act.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

It is anticipated that approximately \$700,000 will be available in FY2011 for new awards. NOAA anticipates making approximately 3 to 5 new awards during FY 2011. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$100,000. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA is \$25,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA for more than \$100,000 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 July 1, 2011. The period of awards may be for a maximum period of up to 24 months. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire period. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended to include in your project description the flexibility of the requested start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

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, community-based and nonprofit organizations, state or local

government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Not applicable.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available through www.grants.gov. If applicants do not have internet access, applications may be requested from: National Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Format Requirements:

All pages should be single-spaced and should be composed in at least a 12-point font with one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. The project description may not exceed 25 pages, exclusive of title page, project synopsis, literature cited, budget information, resumes of investigator, and letters of support (if any). Failure to follow the requirements will result in the rejection of the application and subsequent return.

Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirement when printed out.

2. Content Requirements:

The following information must be included. Failure to submit it will result in an application not being reviewed.

a. Signed Title Page: The title page (SF-424) must be signed by the authorized representative. Electronic signatures submitted through www.grants.gov satisfy this requirement.

b. Project Synopsis (1-page limit): It is critical that the project synopsis accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the activities. It is imperative that potential applicants tie their proposals to one of the program priorities

described in Section I.B. The Project Synopsis must identify the principal investigator(s) and a brief statement of qualifications.

c. Project Description (25-page limit): The applicant 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 clear objectives and specific approaches to achieving those objectives, including methods, timelines, and expected outcomes. Include number of teachers and/or students to be reached each year. Proposals should outline how the project proposes to implement the various components of a meaningful watershed educational experience, including alignment with state standards.

d. Partnerships: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project are required 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. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, National Sea Grant College Program, National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, NOAA Cooperative Institutes, and Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

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

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

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

education opportunity, it should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criteria; local communication is required as well.

g. Budget and Budget Justification: There should be a detailed budget justification accompanying the SF424A Budget Information form. Indicate matching funds if provided in a separate column. Provide justifications for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested.

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

i. Standard Application Forms: Please refer to the appropriate application package available through Grants.gov.

j. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, applicants are required to answer the following questions:

(1) Has any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or other environmental compliance documentation (e.g., Endangered Species Act Biological Opinion; Letter of Concurrence or Biological Assessment/Evaluation; Clean Water Act permit; State Historic Preservation Officer consultation; state environmental compliance documentation (mini-NEPA); etc.) been completed? If yes, list the environmental compliance documentation that has been completed and provide copies of the documentation as appropriate.

(2) Would the proposed activity or environmental impacts of the activity be subject to public controversy? If yes, describe the potential controversy.

(3) Would the proposed activity have potential environmental impacts that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks? If yes, describe the impacts that are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

(4) Is the proposed activity related to other activities (both NOAA and non-NOAA that together may cumulatively adversely impact the environment? For example, the proposed activity is one of a series of projects that together may cause a change in the pattern of pollutant discharge, traffic generation, economic change, flood plain change, or land use. If yes, briefly describe the other activities and discuss how the related projects would have cumulative impacts on the environment.

(5) Would the proposed activity involve a non-native species? If yes, describe how the non-native species is involved.

(6) Would the proposed activity occur within a unique geographic area of notable recreational, ecological, scientific, cultural, historical, scenic or aesthetic importance? If yes, describe the area, including the name or designation if known.

(7) Would the proposed activity affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources? If yes, describe the impact.

(8) Would the proposed activity affect public health or safety? The effects may be adverse or beneficial and temporary, long-term, or permanent. If yes, describe the effects and the circumstances that would cause these impacts.

(9) Would the proposed activity affect directly or indirectly, in an adverse or beneficial manner, any listed endangered, threatened, or otherwise protected species or their critical habitat under federal and state laws including the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act? If yes, name the species and/or habitat that will be impacted and describe the circumstances that would impact the species and/or habitat.

Applications must identify the principal participants, and include copies of any agreements describing the specific tasks to be performed by participants. Project applications should give a clear presentation of the proposed work, the methods for carrying out the project, and cost estimates as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown, by category of expenditures, with appropriate justification for both the Federal and non-Federal shares.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 5:00 pm, Eastern Time on October 14, 2010 to 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. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected / returned to the sender without further consideration.

For applications submitted through grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy submissions will be dated and time stamped when they are received in the NMFS office. Hard copy applications arriving after the closing dates 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

NMFS later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted. Faxed or emailed copies of applications will not be accepted.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any 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 EO 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.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs - If the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a Federal agency, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate. The Federal share of indirect costs proposed must not exceed 25 percent of the total direct costs identified on Standard Form 424A Budget Information. The indirect rate is fixed at 25 percent in order to maximize the funds available for this program and to allow applicants to recover a reasonable indirect cost.

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

F. Other Submission Requirements

Please refer to important information in "Submission Dates and Times" above to help ensure your application is received on time.

Applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copies with original signatures may be sent to: National Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three or more appropriate private and/or public sector experts to determine their technical merit. These reviewers will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers provide comments and assign scores to the applications based on the

following criteria, with the points shown in parentheses:

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (30 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Gulf of Mexico NOAA B-WET Program, this includes:

- Does the project make a direct connection to the greater marine or estuarine environment? (5 points)

- Does the proposal make an intentional connection to the watershed system and how actions within that system can affect the marine and estuarine environment? (5 points)

What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve the general understanding of the environment? (5 points)

- Does the experience focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to specific region? (3 points)

- Is the project design project-oriented, hands-on, investigative, and part of a sustained activity? (5 points)

- Does the project include pre and post activities? (5 points)

- Does the project address multiple disciplines? (2 points)

2. Technical merit (35 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Gulf of Mexico NOAA B-WET Program, this includes:

Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the instructional program? (5 points)

Priority-specific questions (only one will apply): (10 points)

- For exemplary programs only: Does the project combine Teacher Professional

Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students?

- For MWEE student programs only: Is the project aligned with academic learning standards in science and other disciplines?
- For teacher professional development programs only: Does the teacher receive the needed support to fully participate in the program (i.e., continuing education credit, substitute teachers, stipends, etc.)? Is this support reasonable and necessary?
- Does the applicant utilize NOAA programs, lesson plans, or a curriculum focused on marine and estuarine issues? Does the applicant use NOAA personnel to enhance their project? (5 points)
- Does the applicant show a knowledge and understanding of the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)? (2 points)
- Does the applicant demonstrate how their project is aligned and supports the goals and strategies of the NOAA Education Plan? (2 points)
- Is the project aligned with environmental literacy principles (e.g. Ocean Literacy, <http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitChart.pdf> and Climate Literacy, http://climateliteracynow.org/files/Climate_Literacy_K-12.pdf) where appropriate? (Note: estuarine and watershed concepts should be tied to the Ocean Literacy principles) (1 point)
- Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? (4 points)
- Are the project outcomes measurable and have significant and lasting benefits for teachers and students? (2 points)
- Does the evaluation component of the project focus on measuring changes in participants (changes can be in knowledge, attitudes, skills or conservation actions)? (2 points)
- Do the changes measured in participants (outcomes) match the project goals and objectives, which include engaging participants in meaningful watershed educational experiences? (2 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

For the Gulf of Mexico NOAA B-WET Program, this includes:

- Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Are the partners involved in the project qualified? (5 points)
- Does the proposal include resumes of the Principle Investigators and other staff members? (2 points)
- Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? (1 point)
- Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Content Standards for their state? (1 point)
- Does the applicant document past collaborations with schools or school systems? (1 point)

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 Gulf of Mexico NOAA B-WET Program, this includes:

- Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? (2 points)
- Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? (10 points)
- Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact with the environment? (5 points)
- Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project? (2 points)
- Does the applicant demonstrate sustainability beyond the project period? Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will continue after NOAA funding has expired? (1 point)

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 Gulf of Mexico NOAA B-WET Program, this includes:

- Does the project involve external sharing and communication? (3 points)
- Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community? (2 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

When we receive applications we will screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Submission Dates and Times); include SF 424 authenticated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant; address one of the funding priorities for federally managed species; and include a budget, statement of work, and milestones, and identify the principal investigator. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

Following the technical review, we will determine the score for each individual review and average the individual technical review scores to determine the final technical score for each application. Then, we will rank applications in descending order by their average technical scores. The top twenty applications will be forwarded to a panel for further review. Those applications that are not in the top twenty category will be eliminated from further consideration.

Those applications that meet the top twenty ranking will be presented to a panel of non-NOAA experts known as the B-WET panel. Each member of the B-WET Panel individually considers if needs of the Agency are addressed in each proposal. The individuals on the Panel provide comments and rate each of these proposals as either "Recommended for Funding" or "Not Recommended for Funding". The Panel will give no consensus advice. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of preferred funding based on the

number of Panel members recommending the proposal for funding. In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the panel's percent selected category that are competing for the final available funds, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the selecting official regardless of their peer review score. The selecting official will resolve any ties by selecting the projects that best meet immediate research needs.

C. Selection Factors

The 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 B.1-4.
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 award 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 300 days from the date of publication of this notice. The earliest start date of awards is approximately 395 days after the date of publication of this notice. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NMFS cooperative involvement with the activities of each project are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NMFS 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 recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the PI of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposals were not selected for recommendation.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Grants and Cooperative Agreements Notice

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

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.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--5--TOC.pdf>, NEPA Questionnaire, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc--ceq.htm>.

Consequently, as part of an applicants' package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

C. Reporting

Unless otherwise specified by terms of the award, performance and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Performance reports should include progress on identified milestones. Electronic submission of reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. In addition to the financial and performance reports, grant recipients will be required to submit a comprehensive final performance report 90 days after the project end date.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Jeff Brown, State/Federal Liaison Branch, (727) 824-5324, or Jeff.Brown@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

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. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through <http://www.grants.gov>.