

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: NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2011-2002569

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

Dates: The deadline for applications is 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), October 8, 2010. 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.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA B-WET is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment. A funded project provide meaningful watershed educational experiences for students, related professional development for teachers, and helps to support regional education and environmental priorities in New England.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that supports outdoor, experiential learning through local competitive grant awards in specific geographic regions. Prior to 2008 NOAA B-WET Programs were established for the Chesapeake Bay, Monterey, CA and the Hawaiian Islands. In 2008, three new programs were begun in New England, the northern Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Northwest. In FY11, it is anticipated that funds will again be available for each of these three new regional programs. Proposals are currently being solicited for the New England B-WET program under this funding opportunity. For the purposes of this solicitation, the New England region is defined as the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. NOAA recognizes that knowledge and commitment built from firsthand experience, especially in the context of one's community and culture, is essential for achieving environmental stewardship. Carefully selected experiences driven by rigorous academic learning standards, engendering discovery and wonder, and nurturing a sense of community will further connect students with their watershed, help reinforce an ethic of responsible citizenship, and promote academic achievement. Experiential learning techniques, such as those supported by the NOAA B-WET Program, have been shown to increase interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), thus contributing to NOAA's obligations under the America COMPETES Act (33 USC 893a(a)).

B. Program Priorities

This Federal funding opportunity supports NOAA's Mission Goal to protect, restore and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystems-based management, and will further NOAA's vision of "An informed society that uses a comprehensive understanding of the role of the oceans, coasts, and atmosphere in the global ecosystem to make the best social and economic decisions".

Proposals should address one of the three areas of interest: (1) Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students; (2) Professional Development for Teachers related to Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences; (3) Exemplary Programs combining Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students. Applicants can refer to the definition of MWEE at the New England B-WET Program

website at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/>.

In addition to the three program priorities above, two additional factors will be taken into consideration in making funding recommendations: (4) New England

Regional priorities (see below); and (5) whether the applicant is a smaller, community-based organization.

1. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students to participate in an outdoor Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. The marine and estuarine environment and major hydrological system 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 (MWEE).

2. Professional Development for Teachers related to MWEE.

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 MWEE 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 MWEE 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 MWEE for their Students.

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for exemplary projects that combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated MWEEs 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 New England 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 New England priorities in the delivery or enhancement of MWEEs for students and/or high-quality professional development for teachers. In FY11, programs are asked to employ MWEE that address the coastal and/or watershed priorities outlined by the NOAA North Atlantic Regional Team (NART).

North Atlantic Regional Team (NART) Priorities

The NART is a collaboration between NOAA programs and offices that works to identify priority issues and provide integrated solutions to improve NOAA's the services it provides to a particular region. The NART, which incorporates the New England Region, meets with the public, non-governmental organizations, state and local officials and other interested parties to identify and understand regional priorities and constituents needs in the region and to help ensure these needs and priorities are taken into account in NOAA's planning, budgeting and decision-making. Through this process, the NART has identified several regional priorities that are taken into account in the New England B-WET and other NOAA programs:

- Ecosystem conservation
- Coastal hazard response and resiliency
- Climate change challenges
- Integrated water resources
- Coastal and Ocean Uses

Ecosystem conservation for the purposes of this announcement refers to an understanding of the interconnectedness of systems that support life. Ecosystem based approaches demonstrate ecological relationships, physical and chemical requirements as well as the human dimension that comprise a system, such as a watershed or sub watershed. Watersheds and their connection to estuaries, bays and oceans offer many opportunities for

creative proposals that reveal these linkages through any number of science disciplines - ecology, hydrology, meteorology, biology, for example.

Coastal hazard response and resiliency refers to both the set of processes that put river and coastal communities at risk, e.g., storms, sea level rise, wetland buffer loss, and the mitigating actions that communities could implement to reduce risk. Projects that teach students how to use ocean, weather, climate, and/or river observations and forecasts, identify areas and infrastructure threatened by coastal hazards (e.g. tropical cyclones, Nor'easters), or that conserve/create 'green' infrastructure to help river and coastal communities respond to and/or be more resilient to natural hazards are encouraged.

Responsiveness to the climate change challenge means projects that help students describe and understand the state of the climate system, including atmospheric factors and feedbacks that contribute to changes in Earth's climate. Understanding how climate change, combined with current stresses, could affect the services humans are accustomed to receiving from watershed systems and their marine links, such as clean water, food, recreation, etc. is an important priority in the New England region, and projects that focus on this description of climate change challenges are encouraged.

Integrated water resources focuses on the hydrological and meteorological characteristics of watershed systems. In the New England region, NOAA relies on these sciences to forecast floods, and to predict phenomena such as the timing of "ice out", ice jams, river sedimentation and droughts. Projects that teach students about the sciences of hydrology or meteorology or that link river processes to effects in coastal, estuary and ocean waters would be consistent with this regional priority.

NOAA's mission includes working with other entities to balance the demands of coastal and ocean uses and to minimize their impacts on living marine resources. Coastal and marine spatial planning helps society to better manage those uses so that resources are used sustainably for future generations. This planning approach examines the characteristics and interactions of all ocean uses, e.g., energy production, transportation, recreation, conservation, fishing, etc. and resources occurring in a particular space. The scientific, social and economic information needed is wide ranging and inclusive of the impacts of land-based activities on watershed systems that ultimately impact the ocean, coasts and Great Lakes. Geo-referenced information, spatial tools like GIS and mapping capability are among the technological advances that will be indispensable to coastal and marine spatial planning.

Studying the above priority topics can be complex, but projects need not be. For instance, for ecosystem conservation, earlier grades might focus on an aspect of the ecosystem, such as associating an organism with its habitat, observing and noting biodiversity or learning the difference and connection between a fresh and salt water

environment. Because ecosystem conservation is a broad topic, it should be relatable to almost any science curricula taught currently in schools, but with an added emphasis on connectivity and interrelationships. Similarly, simple proposals that convey an understanding of the science underpinning the other priority areas are possible and proposed projects are expected to reflect the grade level of the students. These issues areas can also be used for context in which to set the overall lesson and curricula.

5. Smaller, Community-Based Organizations

At least 10% of the total amount available will be awarded to smaller, community-based organizations that work at a local level to provide MWEEs.

C. Program Authority

Under 33 USC 893 a (a), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is authorized to conduct, develop, support, promote, and coordinate formal and informal educational activities at all levels to enhance public awareness and understanding of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, and atmospheric science and stewardship by the general public and other coastal stakeholders, including underrepresented groups in ocean and atmospheric science and policy careers. In conducting those activities, the Administrator shall build upon the educational programs and activities of the agency.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

It is anticipated that approximately \$300,000 will be available in FY2011 for new awards. NOAA anticipates making approximately 2 to 5 new awards during FY 2011. NOAA will consider only projects with duration of 1 to 3 years. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$80,000 per year and \$240,000 for all years of the proposed project. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for one year is \$10,000 and for all years is \$30,000. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than \$10,000 for one year or more than \$80,000 per year and \$240,000 total for the duration of the project will not be considered for funding. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may

have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before May 1, 2011. Applications should cover a project period between 1 and 3 years. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire period. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended to include in your project description the flexibility of the requested start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the amount of involvement by the federal government in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if the NOAA B-WET Program shares responsibility for management, control, direction, or performance of the project with the recipient. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are K-12 public and independent schools and school systems, institutions of higher education, community-based and nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments. The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of underrepresented groups such as historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that service underserved areas. Participation by these groups and institutions will be taken into consideration during review. While applicants do not need to be from the targeted geographical region specified in the program objectives (i.e., the New England states), they work with target audiences in these areas.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NOAA B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants include a 25% or higher match. Funds from other Federal awards may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash vs. in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration during the review process. Priority selection is given to proposals that propose cash rather than in-kind

services.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

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/>. Paper application packages are available on the NOAA Grants Management website at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/forms.cfm>. If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, the applicant should contact: Kathi Rodrigues, New England B-WET Program Manager, by phone at 978-281-9324 or email at: kathi.rodrigues@noaa.gov

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

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

Federal Forms:

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

(2) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A. Separate SF424A

budget forms should be submitted for each year of requested funding.

(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)

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

(1) Project summary (1 page):

- * Organization title.
- * Principal Investigator(s).
- * Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- * Area of interest for which you are applying (i.e., Meaningful Watershed

Educational Experiences for Students; Professional Development for Teachers related to Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences; or Exemplary Programs.

* Project title.

* Project duration (12 to 36 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month). Specify whether the project is being submitted with the intention of continuation beyond the first year.

* Summary of work to be performed during the project period: 3-5 sentences that succinctly describe the entire project period (including number of teachers/students reached). This will be used as a project summary in funding reports for NOAA B-WET.

* List primary objectives for entire anticipated project period broken out by year (include number of teachers and/or students to be reached each year).

* Budget Information:

- Total Federal funding requested this fiscal year.

- Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether

contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.

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

(2) Project description: Describe in detail what your project will achieve. Project

Design: Proposals should outline how the project proposes to implement the various components of a meaningful watershed educational experience, including alignment with state standards.

(3) Organization and Personnel: Proposals should demonstrate knowledge and experience in delivering the type of project requested in this application or otherwise explain why this organization can reasonably be expected to succeed in the delivery of this project. It is recommended that resumes be appended to the application.

(4) Partnerships: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project are required with the application package (see "(10) Appendices" below). Wherever reasonable, proposals should include partnerships with school divisions and/or the state department of education (if the applicant is not one of these entities).

Projects are also encouraged to collaborate with NOAA entities as partners.

NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National

Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuary Program, National

Sea Grant College Program, National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices, National Marine Fisheries Service Programs, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, NOAA Cooperative Institutes, and Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

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

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

(7) Budget Justification: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to

accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and includes contributions and donations from sources other than NOAA. The budget justification submitted with the application must match the dollar amounts on required SF-424 and SF-424A forms. For multi-year projects: Ensure that there is a detailed budget narrative explaining the budget requested for each year matching the SF-424A form.

Applicants should use the NOAA B-WET Budget Justification Spreadsheet and the budget guidelines available online at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/>. It is anticipated that grant recipients will be asked to attend a two-day National B-WET conference to be held in the Washington, DC area at some point during the award period. The conference will be an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients from all B-WET Programs to present their B-WET projects. Your budget should include, in the travel category, funds for airfare and transportation (rental car, shuttle, or taxi), lodging and per diem.

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

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

(9) Project evaluation: Evaluation here is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about your project's outcomes in order to improve the project's effectiveness, guide judgments about its impact, and/or inform decisions about future programming or funding. Although a range of budgets for project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10% of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project. For detailed information on how to create an evaluation plan, please use the California B-WET website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/news/bwet/welcome.html>. In addition, grantees will be required to participate in a national level B-WET evaluation as a condition of funding.

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

C. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for applications is 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), October 8, 2010. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Regional Office (Attn: New England B-WET Program). Note that late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EDT October 8, 2010 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time, and if the proposals are received NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Regional Office by 5 p.m., EDT, no later than 3 business days following the closing date. Applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.). No email and/or facsimile pre-proposals and/or full applications will be accepted. Applications that are late or are received by fax or email will not be considered for review.

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. Paper applicants should allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

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 an approved indirect cost rate above 25 percent of the total proposed direct cost may use the amount above the 25 percent level up to the 100 percent level as part of the non-federal share. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

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

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

* To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the

Central Contractor Registry (CCR). You should allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

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

* After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number.

* Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by two automated receipts of the date and time of submission (the first confirms receipt; the second confirms that there are no errors with your application submission and it has been forwarded

to NOAA for further processing). If you do not receive both notifications you need to follow up with both the Grants.gov helpdesk and the New England B-WET program manager (Kathi Rodrigues at 978-281-9324, or at kathi.rodrigues@noaa.gov) to confirm receipt of your submission.

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

*If an applicant does not have Internet access or if Grants.gov is overwhelmed with traffic or inaccessible, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, original forms in hard copy 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.

*Paper applications should be delivered to: Kathi Rodrigues, New England B-WET Program Manager, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930.

* Facsimile transmissions and e-mail submission of proposals will not be accepted.

Electronic application packages are strongly encouraged and are available at: <http://www.grants.gov/>. Paper application packages are available on the NOAA Grants Management website at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/forms.cfm>. If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, the applicant should contact: Kathi Rodrigues, New England B-WET Program Manager, by phone at 978-281-9324 or email at: kathi.rodrigues@noaa.gov. Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

Hard copy applications may be submitted to: New England B-WET Program, NOAA Fisheries, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2276. Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Regional Office (Attn: New England B-WET Program). Late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., EDT October 8, 2010 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposals are received NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Regional Office by 5 p.m., EDT, no later than 3 business days following the closing date. Applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.).

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V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (27 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

Does the project make a direct connection from the watershed to the greater environment (e.g., marine, estuarine or hydrological system)? (5pts)

Does the proposal make an intentional connection to the watershed system and how actions within that system can affect the marine, estuarine or a hydrological system environment? (5pts)

What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve student's

general understanding of the environment? (3pts)

Does the experience focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to the New England region that were identified by the NART? (2pts)

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

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

Does the project address multiple disciplines? (2pts)

2. Technical merit (35 points). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

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

Priority-specific questions (only one will apply): (10 pts) * For exemplary programs only: Does the project combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE, as defined at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/>) for their students. * For student programs only: Is the project aligned with academic learning standards in science and other disciplines? Does it meet the definition of a MWEE (as defined at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/BWET/>). *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, science, lesson plans, or a curriculum focused on watershed, marine, estuarine or hydrological system issues? Does the applicant use NOAA personnel to enhance their project? (5pts)

Does the applicant show a knowledge and understanding of the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)? (2pts)

Does the applicant demonstrate how their project is aligned and supports the goals and strategies of the NOAA Education Plan? (2pts)

Is the project aligned with environmental literacy principles (e.g. Ocean Literacy,

<http://www.coexploration.org/oceanliteracy/documents/OceanLitChart.pdf> and Climate Literacy, <http://climate.noaa.gov/climateliteracy>) where appropriate (note: estuarine and watershed concepts should be tied to the Ocean Literacy principles). (1pt)

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? (3pts)

Are the project outcomes measurable and are they likely to have significant and lasting benefits for teachers and students? (2pts)

Does the project focus on an aspect of science, technology, engineering and/or math (STEM)? (1pt)

Does the evaluation component of the project focus on measuring changes in participants (changes can be in knowledge, attitudes, skills or conservation actions)? (2pts)

Do the changes measured in participants (outcomes) match the project goals and objectives, which include engaging participants in MWEEs? (2pts)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (9pts). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Are the partners involved in the project qualified? (6pts)

Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? (1pt)

Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Content Standards for their state? (2pt)

4. Project costs (20 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer:

Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? (2pts)

Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? (9pts)

Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact with the outdoor environment? (5pts).

Does the applicant demonstrate sustainability beyond the project period after NOAA funding has expired? (2pt)

Does the project serve to integrate ocean and environmental literacy into a school or school system on a continuing basis? (2pts).

5. Outreach and education (8 pts). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the project involve external sharing and communication? (3pts)

Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community? (2pts).

Does the project involve to a significant degree, any of the underrepresented organizations or target groups identified under ELIGIBILITY (i.e., historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that service underserved areas)? (3pts).

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a proposal by NOAA, an initial administrative review will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the proposal. All proposals that meet the minimum eligibility requirements will be evaluated and scored by a panel of independent reviewers.

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

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

C. Selection Factors

The B-WET Program Managers will review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panels. The average numerical ranking from the review panel will be the primary consideration in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically,
 - b. By institution or type of institutions over the life of the New England B-WET program,
 - c. By type of partners,
 - d. By research areas,
 - e. By project types.
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.B.1?5 and Section III.B. of the Full Funding Opportunity;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups including underrepresented groups identified under ELIGIBILITY;
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendation for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the Fall and Winter of 2010-11 and funding is expected to begin during May-June of 2011. May 1, 2011, is to be used as the earliest proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the

NOAA Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

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

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

2. Limitation of Liability

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

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 that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for

NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on

Environmental Quality implementation regulations,

http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

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

C. Reporting

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

1. Financial Reports

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

2. Performance Reports

Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer. Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred through the NOAA Grants On-Line system, <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>. Semi-annual reports must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Performance reports should detail accomplishments that have occurred during the reporting period and correspond with the goals, objectives and milestones identified in the project narrative.

VII. Agency Contacts

Kathi Rodrigues, New England B-WET Program Manager, NOAA, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2276, or via email at kathi.rodrigues@noaa.gov. Questions about this opportunity may also be directed to Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, by phone at 202-482-6797 or email at bronwen.rice@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

None