

Fiscal Year 2021 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

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NOTICE OF 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: Fiscal Year 2021 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2021-2006735

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

Dates: The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM Eastern Time on March 1, 2021 and applications must be submitted using www.grants.gov (Grants.gov). PLEASE NOTE: it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Due to limited staffing of federal offices, hardcopy applications will not be accepted.

Informational webinars about the FY 2021 Chesapeake B-WET funding announcement will be held on January 7, 2021 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time and January 19, 2021 at 11:00 AM. To register for these webinars, please visit: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/5640848003659402256>.

Funding Opportunity Description: Chesapeake B-WET funds locally relevant, authentic experiential learning for K-12 audiences through Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. MWEEs involve learning both outdoors and in the classroom as students engage in issue definition, outdoor field experiences, synthesis and conclusions, and stewardship and civic action. The goal is to increase understanding and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and its local watersheds, including the rivers, upland streams, and natural habitats found throughout the region. Projects advance the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the NOAA Education Strategic Plan.

This year's funding announcement is focused on Systemic MWEE Implementation and School District Capacity Building.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

a. OVERVIEW

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

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

Every year, the B-WET National Program supports environmental education programs for thousands of students and teachers. These programs engage youth in meaningful watershed educational experiences that provide memorable hands-on, experiential learning that are not typically available within traditional classrooms. It also plays a significant role in providing professional development to classroom teachers nationwide that increases their content knowledge, skills, and pedagogical expertise.

However, this year, COVID-19 has significantly impacted the ability of environmental education providers to engage with schools and therefore meaningfully reach students and teachers. The loss of programs will have lasting repercussions on the targeted audiences of these programs and to the institutions who provide these services. The NOAA B-WET Program recognizes that support is needed to bridge this gap that has been created by the loss of revenue, the cancellation of programs, and the inequities that are being exacerbated by the pandemic.

With challenges though, come opportunities. School districts and their partners have a unique moment to reflect on and reevaluate environmental literacy programs and to move

forward with increased direction, alignment, and commitment. New learning and practices from recent shifts from in-person to virtual can be applied to enhance programs' sustainability and applicability.

As a major contributor to environmental education programs, the NOAA B-WET Program is committed to responding to the immediate needs of this pandemic and supporting these critical institutions that provide exceptional experiences for youth at all levels while building towards equitable and resilient environmental literacy programs.

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

Successful B-WET projects provide formal education that supports the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/chesapeakebaywatershedagreement/page>) and NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (<https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/noaa-education-council/strategic-planning-evaluation>).

b. DEFINING THE MEANINGFUL WATERSHED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (MWEE)

All seven regions throughout the country use the MWEE as an approach to delivering high quality environmental education (<https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-meaningful-watershed-educational-experience>). It is based on the MWEE definition developed by the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup, which follows. Additional MWEE information and resources are available on the Bay Backpack website (<http://baybackpack.com/mwee/what-is-a-mwee>), including:

- ¿ An Educator's Guide to the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (the MWEE Guide);
- ¿ The MWEE Toolbox;
- ¿ The MWEE 101 and MWEE 201 online trainings; and
- ¿ The Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training.

MWEEs are learner-centered experiences that focus on investigations into local environmental issues that lead to informed stewardship actions. They are composed of multiple elements that include learning both outdoors and in the classroom, and are designed to increase the environmental literacy of all student participants. All students, regardless of where they live or their social or economic status, should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from MWEEs.

The MWEE model applies multidisciplinary practices in order for students to understand how the environmental systems they are investigating relate to their community's social and economic systems. MWEEs help connect students with their local environment and enable them to take actions and make decisions that contribute to stronger, more sustainable, and equitable communities. These experiences, grounded in best practices for learning, academic standards, and the context of the local watershed and community, help increase student interest and engagement for learning, support student achievement, promote 21st Century skills, and achieve environmental stewardship.

The MWEE consists of four essential elements and four supporting practices that build upon each other to create this comprehensive learning experience for students. This process should be tailored to each audience and be age appropriate with practices growing in complexity and sophistication across the grades, starting with teacher-guided investigations and progressing to student-led inquiry. Teachers should support and assist students in their inquiry and investigations of local environmental issues that are of interest to them throughout the MWEE. To support teacher implementation of MWEEs, B-WET has also included five practices that are recommended to be in place for teacher professional development activities.

1. MWEE Essential Elements

1.1 Issue Definition

Teachers and students work together to define a locally relevant environmental issue or phenomenon affecting watershed, coastal, or ocean ecosystems. Throughout the MWEE, students focus on a driving question that guides their inquiry and investigations of the defined issue and leads to stewardship actions. During Issue Definition, students learn about the issue through classroom instruction and are actively involved in planning and conducting background research and investigations focused on understanding the driving question (e.g., making observations and/or measurements; carrying out investigations; talking to experts or relevant stakeholders; reviewing credible resources; reviewing current environmental policies or community practices; exploring models; using tools). Students also reflect on

personal and public values and perspectives related to the driving question. Teachers should ensure that the driving question is open-ended, relevant to the students' lives, and meets their learning objectives.

1.2 Outdoor Field Experiences

Students participate in multiple outdoor field experiences sufficient to investigate the driving question. Within appropriate safety guidelines, students are actively involved in planning and conducting the field investigations, including developing supporting questions to explore the driving question in the field. During field experiences students use their senses to make first-hand observations, gain experience using equipment or technology to collect data or measurements, and conduct experiments necessary to answer their supporting questions and inform student stewardship actions.

Outdoor field experiences can take place on school grounds or at locations in close proximity to schools, such as streams or city parks. They can also take place at offsite locations such as state parks, wildlife refuges, or education centers that are staffed by experts and have access to field education materials and facilities. A range of individuals, including teachers, environmental educators, natural resource professionals, or trained volunteers, can help facilitate field experiences and ensure a safe outdoor learning environment. However, facilitators should co-develop and co-teach instruction with teachers so that field experiences are supportive of their learning objectives and/or academic standards.

Outdoor field experiences allow students to interact with their local environment and contribute to learning in ways that traditional classroom or laboratory settings may not. Projects should employ methodologies used in fieldwork so students learn how to work in a natural uncontrolled environment. Students who have opportunities to learn in, thrive in, and appreciate the outdoors can become informed and engaged champions for our natural resources.

1.3 Synthesis and Conclusions

Students identify, synthesize, and apply evidence from their investigations to draw conclusions and make claims about the issue, problem, or phenomenon. They convey data and information about their investigations, conclusions, and claims to audiences ranging from classrooms to the larger public community. The focus in this stage is on explaining their investigation rather than inspiring action. Synthesis and conclusions is an iterative process and should happen regularly throughout the MWEE. Students use the conclusions drawn from each investigation to generate a claim about the issue to inform action. The claim evidence reasoning (CER) model can be a helpful mode of bridging these two

elements.

1.4 Stewardship and Civic Action

Students identify and implement a stewardship action as a solution that directly addresses the defined issue or phenomenon within their school, town, neighborhood, or community.

Students are actively engaged and, to the extent possible, drive the decision-making, planning, and implementation of the stewardship action while teachers play a facilitation role by forming groups, moderating, and answering questions. Students reflect on the action and determine the extent to which the action successfully addressed the issue or phenomenon.

This element allows students to understand that they personally have the power to bring about change to environmental issues, take action to address these issues at the personal or societal level, and understand the value of that action. This can instill confidence in students and can contribute to students becoming environmental stewards in their communities.

Stewardship actions can take many forms and may fall into the following categories:

- ¿ Watershed Restoration or Protection: actions that assist in the recovery or preservation of a watershed or related ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed (e.g., plant or restore protective vegetation/trees; restore a local habitat; remove invasive plants; clean up litter at local beaches, parks, or school grounds; develop a school garden, natural history area, community garden, or other sustainable green space; install rain gardens to help manage stormwater).
- ¿ Everyday Choices: actions that reduce human impacts on watersheds and related ecosystems and offer ways to live more sustainably (e.g., reduce/reuse/recycle/upcycle; monitor and save water in the face of potential drought or reduction in water availability; compost food or yard waste; research and implement energy efficient strategies or energy alternatives at school and/or at home).
- ¿ Community Engagement: actions that inform others about how to address community-level environmental issues (e.g., give presentation to local organizations; organize community events; record or broadcast public service announcements; share information on social media; post flyers in community; share posters at community events/fairs/festivals; mentoring).
- ¿ Civic Action: actions that identify and address issues of public concern. Students acting alone or together to protect public values or make a change or difference in a student's school, town, neighborhood, or community (e.g., present to school board or school principal; attend, speak, or present at town meetings; write or meet with decision makers/elected officials of a students' school, town, neighborhood, or community).

2. MWEE Supporting Practices

The MWEE also includes five supporting practices that describe “what teachers do.” B-WET recommends that these supporting practices be in place to ensure successful MWEE implementation with students.

2.1 Active Teacher Support

MWEEs depend on teachers facilitating and supporting student learning for the duration of the MWEE. Teachers help students make connections and draw on past lessons, serve as environmental role models, and ensure that the essential elements of the MWEE come together to support goals for learning. Even when environmental educators or other professionals are leading elements of the MWEE, the teacher should be actively engaged in answering questions and relating the experience back to the full arc of the MWEE.

To support this level of engagement, teachers should have access to professional development opportunities that support their content knowledge, understanding of the MWEE framework, and confidence and intention to implement MWEEs independently (see Teacher Professional Development for MWEEs for specifics).

2.2 Classroom Integration

To be effective, MWEEs need to be embedded into what is already occurring in the classroom. MWEEs should be anchored to state and national academic standards and support goals for learning and/or student achievement. They are not meant to be something extra, but rather an educational approach that helps teachers meet their learning objectives. They can provide authentic, engaging interdisciplinary learning that crosses traditional boundaries between disciplines.

2.3 Local Context

MWEEs use the local environment and community as a context for learning. Situating the MWEE within local contexts promotes learning that is rooted in the unique culture, history, environment, economy, literature, and art of a students’ school, neighborhood, town, or community. To enrich MWEEs, local resources (e.g., partners; expertise; field sites) should be incorporated. Partnerships, such as those with local community-based organizations, allow students to engage with members of their community of diverse cultures, values, and expertise for a more equitable and inclusive experience.

Emphasizing local contexts enables students and teachers to develop stronger connections and appreciation for their local environments and communities. This also enables students and teachers to explore how their individual and collective decisions affect their immediate surroundings and how their immediate surroundings affect larger ecosystems and watersheds.

2.4 Sustained Activity

MWEEs have multiple experiences that engage students from beginning to end. While a lesson may focus more heavily on one essential element, it does not stand in isolation from the others. Each essential element builds upon and reinforces the others to provide rich learning opportunities spread over the course of a unit or multiple units. All students should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from each essential element.

2.5 Includes NOAA assets, including personnel and resources

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

3. Teacher Professional Development for MWEEs

Professional development should empower teachers to confidently and competently use the MWEE approach to support standards-based learning that supports local education agency initiatives. In order to gain and maintain environmental education competencies, teachers need access to sustained, high quality professional development that includes ongoing support and feedback. Teachers should gain confidence in the value of MWEEs and strategies for conducting them so that they will conduct MWEEs after the B-WET supported program has ended. Teacher professional development should be offered for all teachers whose students will be engaged in MWEEs. Based on educational research findings and preliminary evidence from the B-WET national evaluation system, the B-WET program recommends that professional development include at least 30 hours of training, including at least 10 hours spent outdoors. These targets are expected to support teacher change and increase the likelihood that teachers will implement MWEEs. Specifically, the following elements are recommended for professional development to support teachers implementing MWEEs:

3.1 Increases teachers' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues

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

3.2 Models MWEE framework

Facilitators should utilize the same techniques and experiences in professional development that teachers are expected to use with their students, such as hands-on, place-based, outdoor field experiences, and environmental issue investigation and action. Professional development should deliver training on both content and instruction, include year-long support for teachers, and include time for teachers to plan for how the student MWEEs will be implemented. Where appropriate, professional development should include tools for teachers to implement MWEEs on their school grounds. Resources exist to support the effective hands-on implementation of MWEEs and the development and continued use of integrated, sustainable indoor and outdoor environmental learning projects that provide substantial benefit to both students and the school environment. Please see the School Grounds for Learning resources available at:

http://baybackpack.com/schoolyard_projects/about. 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. For more information on effective ways to model professional development see the Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training linked on Bay Backpack (<http://baybackpack.com/mwee/what-is-a-mwee>).

3.3 Allows for adequate instructional time

Professional development should be multi-day, occurring consecutively or over the course of several weeks or months. Professional development should include ample opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and plan for how to use knowledge and skills gained from professional development in the classroom. Opportunities to share ideas and challenges with colleagues in a cohort creates space for dialogue that can provide teachers with additional support and inspiration.

3.4 Provides ongoing teacher support and appropriate incentives

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

3.5 Meets jurisdictional guidelines for effective teacher professional development

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

If funding requested under this priority area is dedicated solely to providing teacher professional development (i.e. grant dollars are not directly supporting any student MWEE activities), applicants must demonstrate how trained teachers will implement student MWEEs, and what resources (funds, staff, facilities, partner organizations, etc.) exist to support student components of the MWEE. Successful applicants under this priority will be asked to document the number of students receiving MWEEs and number of teachers being trained on MWEEs as a direct result of the project.

Information on the Chesapeake B-WET program, including examples of education partnerships that have been funded to date, can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/chesapeake-bay/past-and-current-chesapeake-b-wet-projects>.

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

B. Program Priorities

B-WET projects funded under this announcement will support the integration of MWEEs into curricular programs and direct implementation during the grant period.

Chesapeake B-WET is intended to serve audiences within the boundaries of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, therefore, only school districts with more than 25% of their land mass falling within the Chesapeake Bay watershed are eligible for funding. A map of school districts meeting this criteria can be found online at the Resources for Prospective Chesapeake Bay B-WET Grantees webpage:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/content/resources-prospective-chesapeake-bay-b-wet-grantees>. In addition, while any school district in the watershed can be served through this funding announcement, NOAA is interested in expanding the support offered by B-WET into school districts that demonstrate both higher needs for environmental literacy programming and impact low-income and high percent-minority communities. A composite layer on the CBW Public School Stream BMP Evaluation Tool (<https://swrc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=42d5bd660f5c4cff83327cb795b149e4>) labeled “EQUITY - Environmental Literacy Equity metric” (the Environmental Literacy Equity Map) demonstrates this.

Additionally, a list of school districts that have previously received or been served by systemic B-WET grants can be found on the Chesapeake B-WET webpage: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/chesapeake-bay/school-districts-reached-chesapeake-b-wet>. In states where individual school districts are very small, Intermediate Units or clusters of school districts may be a more appropriate scale for projects.

1. Proposals to this announcement must address one of the following Priority Areas:

Systemic MWEE Implementation

Chesapeake B-WET focuses on the development and integration of MWEEs into curricular programs and implementation of systemic MWEEs in school districts throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Systemic MWEEs reach the entire student population in one or more grades within a school district or Intermediate Unit with teacher-supported MWEEs and ensure that the teachers of these students receive high quality professional development to give them the content knowledge and pedagogical skills for implementing all aspects of the MWEE. Systemic MWEEs support student learning outcomes and are ideally embedded into the district curriculum either prior to or during the implementation of the project. Projects that are systemic encourage ownership from a broad range of constituents and promote long-term sustainability of the MWEE project in a school district. These programs require leadership and support from the school district, however, because of the broad reach of systemic projects, partnerships with multiple partners are often required to ensure all

students receive all components of a MWEE and meaningful professional development for teachers is provided. We encourage applicants to review the Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training and the MWEE 201 online course, both of which are available on Bay Backpack (<http://baybackpack.com/mwee/what-is-a-mwee>), and to explain in the proposal how you will incorporate or reference aspects of these resources.

Proposals and supporting materials should include details about where the project fits within the scope and sequence of school district curriculum, and applicants should clearly understand and convey the primary learning objectives. Multi-disciplinary objectives are encouraged. Letters of support from curriculum supervisors and science, social studies, and other relevant subject coordinators at the district level can be effective in communicating such details.

Whenever possible, MWEEs should be embedded across an entire grade level or levels, or be part of a broader systemic program in a school district to reach every student. For example, projects may reach only half of a grade level's teachers and students if the application includes documentation from the school district and other partners that the proposed project is a component of a larger systemic effort that reaches the entire grade level. If this is not feasible, applicants should explain why it is not feasible and how they will build toward systemic implementation over the course of the grant and into the future.

Applications for projects can come from any applicant type, however, substantial coordination and support from the school district is required. To document the appropriate level of support and engagement from school districts, official letters from superintendents, school boards, and/or school district curriculum supervisors are requested with proposals.

While Chesapeake B-WET strongly believes in systemic MWEE implementation, the program recognizes there are organizations and school districts across the watershed that strive to implement high quality MWEE programming, but face challenges in developing and implementing systemic projects that are hard to overcome in a single grant cycle. While every organization faces some barriers to project implementation, these districts have greater challenges due to lack of local resources or partners, policies that conflict with outdoor education, or limited internal capacity. Not being able to become fully systemic over the course of the 3-year grant cycle should not discourage school districts and their partners to apply under this funding announcement as long as they can create meaningful programs with the elements described above.

In addition, this year applicants may be struggling to deal with uncertainty related to COVID-19 on programming. Systemic proposals may detail a range of approaches to adapt

to COVID-19 restrictions and uncertainty impacting schools throughout the watershed. Funding should support MWEE professional development for teachers and MWEE programming for students including any mix of virtual, blended, at-home, or in-person learning but should be accessible to all participants, following guidance from the school district. Given uncertainties, applicants may describe more than one scenario in their proposal, however the objectives of the scenarios should aim for a common outcome. One such approach may include providing more extensive professional development in the first year of the award with full student implementation occurring in years two and three, though applicants should apply a model that is most responsive to the needs of their school district. Specifically applicants should:

- Know audience limitations: Because pandemic restrictions and limitations vary by jurisdiction, school, and household, applicants should demonstrate awareness of their target audiences' capabilities (such as access to the technology needed to participate in virtual programming). Applicants should describe on-going communication with school partner administrative staff about how best to engage their audiences.
- Describe alternate methods: Applicants should provide options and examples of how the MWEE framework will be addressed through alternative approaches and methods, such as virtual programming and at-home activities.
- Describe project flexibilities: Because pandemic responses are fluid over time, applicants should describe what flexibilities their project plan possesses and their ability to adjust methods mid-stream, if needed, and still carry on their project plan. They should also describe how approaches may shift as restrictions are lifted and what elements will be able to translate between formats.

School District Capacity Building

Proposals submitted under the School District Capacity Building priority seek to enhance support systems within one or more school districts (or one or more Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania) and their community partners with the ultimate goal of embedding systemic MWEs into curriculum to establish a sustainable environmental literacy program. NOAA recognizes the importance of building strong partnerships, institutionalizing teacher professional development, promoting the value of environmental literacy programs at all levels, developing environmental literacy plans, and supporting coordinators of environmental literacy as key ingredients to ensuring long-term sustainability of systemic programming. Examples of activities that may be funded under this priority include but are not limited to: developing a network of school district and local partners focused on advancing environmental literacy through collective impact; creating a district-wide environmental literacy plan that includes policies, practices, and metrics for ensuring

equitable access to environmental literacy programming for all students and training for all involved teachers; establishing and implementing a comprehensive plan for professional development that institutionalizes high quality continued learning for teachers, educators, and staff; building resilience into environmental literacy planning by establishing clear pathways between schoolground-based MWEEs and Sustainable Schools efforts; and creating an environmental literacy coordinator position at the district that supports development and implementation of MWEEs and other environmental literacy elements. Proposals should describe how capacity building efforts will be sustained for the long-term and describe how the project will ultimately contribute to systemic MWEEs implementation. If the proposal includes teacher professional development, it should occur after the development of the environmental literacy plan or strategy and serve the function of carrying out the plan for systemic implementation. Additionally, we encourage applicants to review the Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training and the MWEE 201 online course on Chesapeake Exploration and to explain in the proposal how you will incorporate or reference aspects of these resources. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is actively engaged in district level capacity building using the collective impact framework across the watershed. NCBO will support grantees in connecting and sharing practice between other districts engaged in such efforts.

NOAA SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS

Any proposal to this announcement must meet the Priority Area described in the previous section. NOAA also has an additional Special Interest Area that applicants may wish to address if they choose, which is: Community Partnerships. More information on the special interest area is provided below. While applicants are not required to address a NOAA Special Interest Area, projects that do so are encouraged because they capitalize on a specific NOAA resource or issue area that is a priority to the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office.

(1) Community Partnerships. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is interested in projects that partner specifically with community organizations and institutions that are run by and/or serve marginalized groups, particularly minority communities. Projects are strongly encouraged to develop meaningful and mutually-beneficial partnerships that honor the strengths of these community organizations. It is recommended that these organizations be programmatically and financially recognized for their contributions to programming. Applicants are encouraged to apply NAAEE's Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence (https://cdn.naaee.org/sites/default/files/community_engagement_-_guidelines_for_excellence.pdf) in developing their project plans for engagement of target audiences.

Community partnerships are likely to look different across proposals but may include the following: for the Systemic MWEE Implementation priority, community partnerships could help to shape the issue, problem, or phenomenon explored by bringing in local expertise on existing environmental issues. They may enhance the local context and cultural relevance of professional development for all teachers. In the School District Capacity Building priority, community partnerships may be a significant driver in ensuring equity and inclusion in environmental literacy planning activities or may bridge pathways between in-school MWEE implementation and complementary out-of-school activities.

C. Program Authority

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

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Under this announcement, NOAA anticipates that approximately \$1,600,000 may be available in FY 2021 to fund new applications, subject to the availability of appropriations. NOAA anticipates making 10-15 new awards. Projects should not exceed \$150,000 annually in Federal funds. Performance periods may be up to three years, but funding beyond the first increment, usually one year, is subject to the incremental funding policy described in Section II.B of this Announcement.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before July 1, 2021. Applications should cover a project period of between one and three years. Projects that request multi-year funding must include in their submission a full description of the activities and estimated budget by line item (e.g. personnel, equipment, supplies) for all proposed work for each year.

When a multi-year project is awarded, the scope of work and budget for all years is approved at the time of the award, but funding is usually provided only for the first year of the project with the remainder of the award subject to incremental funding, usually annually. NOAA anticipates continuing these multi-year awards for the entirety of their project periods;

however, the agency has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with the award beyond the initial funding increment. Continuation of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance beyond the initial funding increment is at the sole discretion of NOAA and will be contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the NOAA mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

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

Single-year awards and awards for which NOAA shortens the period of performance are required to re-compete for continued funding after the initial period of performance. Any renewal of the project will depend on the submission of a new proposal subject to review, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding.

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

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through a cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Applications funded through cooperative agreements will include substantial involvement of the Federal government, which may include, but is not limited to, collaboration on the scope of work, such as liaison activities between the grantee and NOAA personnel who are contributing data or expertise to the project. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is currently available at: <https://go.usa.gov/xpR9e>.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are K-through-12 public and independent schools and school systems, institutions of higher education, community-based and nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments. For profit organizations, foreign organizations, and foreign public entities are not eligible to apply; however, for-profit and foreign organizations and foreign public entities may

participate with an eligible applicant as a project partner. Likewise, Federal agencies are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners.

Only school districts with more than 25% of their land mass falling in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are eligible, as described in Section I.B., Program Priorities.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (NCBO) encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

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

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic application packages are required and are available at: <http://www.grants.gov/> (Grants.gov).

If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, they should contact Elise Trelegan at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office by email at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office does not have a direct telephonic device for the deaf, however, TDD capabilities can be accessed through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800-735-2258, between the hours of 8 AM-4:30 PM.

Information on the Chesapeake B-WET program, including examples of currently supported projects, can be found on NOAA's website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/noaa-chesapeake-bay-watershed-education-and-training-program>. Potential applicants may

contact NCBO before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to B-WET goals and objectives.

B. Content and Form of Application

Required Elements for Applications:

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

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

(i) Project Summary (1 page):

- ¿ Project Title
- ¿ Priority Area: Systemic MWEE Implementation or School District Capacity Building
- ¿ Special Interest Area: Community Partnerships (optional)
- ¿ Project duration: 12 to 36 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month.
- ¿ Organization and Partnerships: Briefly describe your organization and list your key partners for this grant, if applicable. Partnerships are encouraged.
- ¿ Summary: Provide a brief statement that explains the need for your project and its goals and objectives. In addition, identify what NOAA priority you will address. Your summary should use layman's terms to provide reviewers with an understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of your educational project, including total number of students engaged

in a MWEE for each year of the project, total number of teachers engaged in professional development for each year of the project, and the total number of professional development hours provided to each teacher. Please address whether the proposal will reach every student within the grade band in the district (i.e. whether or not it is systemic or not). A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read this paragraph and grasp your plan. More information about NOAA assets and educational resources can be found at: <http://www.education.noaa.gov/>.

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

¿ Audience: Describe the demographics of your target audience including the school district(s) and the number and types of participants you expect to reach, such as the number of teachers and students reached annually, and the grade level of those participants. Identify whether the entire grade band(s) will be reached through systemic implementation, and if not, what percentage of the grade band will be reached.

¿ Budget Information: Total federal funding requested this fiscal year; total non federal match for this fiscal year. Total multi-year request and match (if applicable). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars. Note that match is not required for this funding opportunity and will not affect scoring.

(ii) Project Description (up to 12 pages): Describe in detail what your project will achieve with the following headings: What, 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 are defined in Section V.A. for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B. for the School District Capacity Building Priority.

¿ What: Explain the goals and objectives for your project. Include information about how the project contributes to greater understanding and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, identify the NOAA B-WET program priority and NOAA special interest area (if applicable), and how your project incorporates NOAA resources and assets. Describe how the project supports the Chesapeake Bay Program's Environmental Literacy Goal, including providing a curricularly-integrated MWEE at least once in elementary, middle, and high school. If your project may trigger consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as described in the NOAA NEPA policy in Section VI.B.4. of this Announcement, applicants should provide relevant information in the project description. Any applicable supporting documents may be included as attachments that do not count

toward the page limit. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.1 for the School District Capacity Building Priority. (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. For Systemic MWEE proposals, please include specifics of how many students are receiving MWEEs annually in your project, and how many teachers are receiving professional development annually. For School District Capacity Building proposals, describe the nature of the capacity building effort including the key partners. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.2 for the School District Capacity Building Priority. (Technical merit)

¿ How: This is the logistical work plan for your project and should be the most in-depth section of the project description. Clearly define the activities that will be conducted during this project, and their frequency. Reviewers must be able to determine the duration and frequency of student MWEE activities in the classroom and outdoors, as well as the amount and type of professional development each teacher is receiving. If multi-year, provide objectives for each year. Detail how the project meets or supports the definition of the MWEE as defined in this funding opportunity and what NOAA products, services, or staff will be used in program delivery. This section addresses the technical merit of the proposal. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.2 for the School District Capacity Building Priority. (Technical merit)

(iii) Sustainability: Discuss a plan for sustainability of the project beyond NOAA funding. Explain how requested funding can build a project that can be sustained after NOAA grant funds expire. List other sources of funding that have been sought for the project and the status of those requests. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.4 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.4 for the School District Capacity Building Priority. (Project Costs).

(iv) Outreach and Education: Projects should include external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience. Projects should include mechanisms that encourage teachers, school administrators, educators, and other partners to share about their experience implementing and supporting Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences and other environmental literacy activities to their colleagues through professional development opportunities, conferences, or other media outreach about the project. This section will be

scored using evaluation criterion V.A.5 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.5 for the School District Capacity Building Priority. (Outreach and Education).

(v) Project Evaluation: Evaluation here is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about your project's outcomes in order to improve the project's effectiveness, guide judgments about its impact, and/or inform decisions about future programming or funding. In this section, you must explain your plans for meeting the goals and objectives of your project and for tracking and measuring progress on your outputs and your short-term outcomes. If your medium- and long-term outcomes can also be measured within the project period, explain your plans for that evaluation as well. Evaluation plans may be quantitative and/or qualitative and may include, for example, evaluation tools, observation, or outside consultation. No more than 10% of the budget can be spent on the evaluation component of your proposal. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.2 for the School District Capacity Building Priority (Technical Merit).

If funded by NOAA, grant recipients must be willing to report evaluation results to NOAA. For detailed information on how to create an evaluation plan visit NOAA's website at <https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources>.

Participation in B-WET National Evaluation:

In addition to project evaluation, grantees will be asked to participate in data collection for the national B-WET evaluation. The B-WET national evaluation consists of two parts; part 1 is for all recipients of B-WET grants while part 2 is only for programs that work with teachers. The B-WET national evaluation is intended to monitor program implementation and outcomes on an ongoing basis. Results of this evaluation will be used to improve the B-WET program, document its value, and better tailor it to program audiences. Grantees with teacher participants will be able to view a summary of responses from their participating teachers. Success of this effort depends on grantee participation, so applicants are strongly encouraged to review the information about the national evaluation system (available here: <https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources/national-evaluation>) and consider how they can support it as part of their projects.

National Evaluation Part 1 (for all B-WET grantees): As part of this evaluation system, one individual from each recipient organization will be asked to voluntarily complete an online questionnaire once per year of the award. The questionnaire should be able to be completed within 30-60 minutes (depending on the nature of the program) and may require some

internal data compilation.

National Evaluation Part 2 (for programs with teacher professional development): For projects that work extensively with teachers, the teacher-participants will be asked to complete one questionnaire at the close of their professional development and one after implementing MWEEs with their students (at the end of the following school year). Each teacher questionnaire should be able to be completed within 30 minutes. Along with completing the recipient questionnaire, grantees will be asked to provide the email addresses of participating teachers (after notifying teachers that their email will be shared) and to encourage teachers to participate in the national evaluation.

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

All applicants should provide information about how they plan to support this national evaluation system, incorporate it into the project timeline, and ensure responses from participating teachers as part of their application. Applicants may incorporate staff time required to complete the B-WET national evaluation in their budget proposal. More information, including all of the survey instruments, is available on the NOAA B-WET National Evaluation website here: <https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources/national-evaluation>.

Grantees should review the information available and take this into consideration in the planning for their project evaluations. For example, grantees may not need to include questions that will be answered through the teacher instrument in their own evaluations. Wherever possible grantees should try to incorporate participation in the evaluation system into existing requirements for professional development program completion. For example, on completion of the teacher professional development survey, teachers will receive some program incentive.

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

Additional information about this project, including background, FAQs, survey instruments,

and suggested text for communicating with your teacher participants about this project, is available here: <https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources/national-evaluation>.

(b) APPENDICES (not included in 12-page limit):

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

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

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

Grant recipients may be encouraged to attend a state or regional B-WET meeting once during the duration of their grant. This will be an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B-WET projects and learn from each other. This meeting may be part of an existing state conference environmental or science education conference to minimize travel expenses. Budgets should include, in the travel category, estimated funds for this meeting (such as meals, lodging, and transportation including rental car, shuttle, or taxi). No more than \$1,000 should be budgeted for this expense.

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs, which are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. See 2 C.F.R. 200.56-.57 and 200.412-.415 at <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>. An applicant may also propose all allowable project charges as direct costs.

An applicant requesting indirect costs should provide a current approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement established with its cognizant Federal agency or an acknowledgement

letter from the cognizant agency to which the applicant has submitted a proposed rate. In addition, if an award recipient has never established an indirect cost rate with any Federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimus rate described at 2 C.F.R. 200.414 or it may negotiate a new rate with the Department of Commerce. The negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by the NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, <https://go.usa.gov/xRuaF>, require that within 90 days of the award start date, recipients submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation, plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to establish a new rate to the address listed below.

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

(ii) Timeline: Include a project schedule that indicates when each action, event, milestone, product development, and evaluation will occur. Timelines should be detailed enough for reviewers to ascertain the number and duration of teacher and student contacts. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.2 for the School District Capacity Building Priority (Technical Merit).

(iii) For proposals addressing the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority: Environmental Literacy Model for MWEE Integration: Include a document that illustrates how the proposed project will meet the full definition of the MWEE, including being embedded into school curriculum, using issue investigation, and conducting a stewardship/civic action project. The document should include brief (2-3 sentence) descriptions about how the proposed project will address the following information. A template can be found at:

<http://baybackpack.com/assets/documents/ELM.pdf>. Note: you may reference lesson plans or curriculum but do not embed these resources into the proposal.

¿ Defining the Learning Objectives and Curriculum Connection: Curricular indicators, performance expectations, and/or student learning objectives to be reached during the MWEE

¿ Identifying the Driving Question: A broad, open-ended, life-relevant question based on the standards/learning objectives. Guides inquiry for the investigation(s) and prompts the development of actionable claims.

¿ Describing the Local Context: The life-relevant issue that will serve as the context for learning.

¿ Defining the issue to be investigated and develop focused questions that are relevant for investigation

- ¿ Planning and conducting student investigations
- ¿ Analyzing and interpreting data from their investigations
- ¿ Constructing, communicating, and refining explanations about findings from their investigations
- ¿ Developing a claim and identifying solutions about their investigations
- ¿ Designing a plan and taking informed actions to address their issue
- ¿ Evaluating the effectiveness of the action taken to address their issue

For proposals addressing the School District Capacity Building Priority: Include a logic model that articulates the short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes resulting in programming that support systemic and curricularly embedded MWEEs.

This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.2 for the School District Capacity Building Priority (Technical Merit).

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

(v) Partnership Letters of Commitment: If the applicant organization has partners, such as school districts, 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 from school district personnel demonstrating support and/or articulating where MWEEs will align with the district curriculum. Letters should be received as part of application submission. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3 for the Systemic MWEE Implementation Priority and Section V.B.3 for the School District Capacity Building Priority (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(vi) Results from prior NOAA support: If any principal investigator (PI) or co-PI identified on the project has received support from NOAA in the past five years, information on the

prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:

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

(vii) Data Sharing Plan: Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages. This Data Management Plan does not count against the 12-page Project Description page limit. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the NOAA B-WET Data Management Guidance provided below and will be considered as part of proposal review. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

Data Management Guidance to Applicants

The NOAA B-WET program has developed this guidance to help grant applicants plan to share quality environmental data collected as part of their B-WET funded projects, where applicable. Environmental Data are defined by NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 212-15: Management of Environmental Data and Information as recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans, atmosphere, space environment, sun, and solid earth, as well as correlative data such as socio-economic data, related documentation, and metadata. Digital audio or video recordings of environmental phenomena (such as animal sounds or undersea video) are included in this definition. Numerical model outputs are included in this definition, particularly if they are used to support the conclusion of a peer-reviewed publication. Data collected in a laboratory or other controlled environment, such as measurements of animals and chemical processes, are included in this definition. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative

agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely-used or international standards.

Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements apply to the proposed project and will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan will be considered as part of the proposal review. Note that the Federal Program Officer may require revisions to the applicant's Data Management Plan prior to recommending the application for funding. Applicant Data Management Plans should be aligned with the following Data Management Guidance.

If environmental data collected/generated as part of the project are primarily for education and/or the practice of making observations using scientific techniques/methods (e.g. measuring pH of water with a refractometer, measuring atmospheric humidity with a sling psychrometer, measuring percent vegetative cover using a transect, etc.) and are not intended to be shared with scientists outside of the educational program, applicants may request permission not to make data publicly accessible and obtain approval from the Federal Program Officer, if funded. In this case, this element of the application should consist of a paragraph (under the heading "Data Management Plan") describing the intended use of the data and that an exemption from data sharing is requested.

If environmental data collected/generated as part of the project are for purposes beyond education and/or the practice of making observations using scientific techniques/methods, applicants should describe (up to 2 pages, under the heading "Data Management Plan") how data will be shared, based on the following guidance:

Contents: A typical Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The plan should describe or reference the data quality control techniques that will be used or note that the data will not be quality controlled. Data that is not quality controlled should include a description on the limitations of the data or an indication of degree of uncertainty.

Technical recommendations: The NOAA B-WET program does not offer specific technical guidance. Applicants should describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged.

Data Accessibility: The NOAA B-WET program recommends that public access to grant produced data be enabled via an existing publicly accessible online data server at the funded institution is to be used to host these data (describe in application); or a public data repository appropriate to this scientific domain (describe in application). (e.g. The GLOBE Program - <http://www.globe.gov/>, CoCoRaHS Community - <http://www.cocorahs.org/>); or recipient-established data hosting capability (please describe in application's Data Management Plan).

Resources: Proposals are permitted to include the costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving in their budgets.

Questions Regarding This Guidance: Responsible NOAA Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients: Elise Trelegan, NOAA Fisheries, Elise.Trelegan@noaa.gov.

(viii) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): Consistent with Section IV.B.(a)(ii) and Section VI.B.4. of this Announcement, if any permits, permit requests, maps, or other supporting NEPA documents are applicable to your project, they may be included as attachments.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

The registration described here and in Section IV.G. implements requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Under this law, to enable the use of a universal identifier and to build the quality of information available to the public, any application awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Data Universal Numbering System and Federal System for Award Management referenced below to the extent applicable.

Each applicant (unless an exception arises under 2 C.F.R. 25) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (e.g. DUNS number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the

requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. See 2 C.F.R. Part 25, <http://go.usa.gov/cTbMk>.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov and must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on March 1, 2021. PLEASE NOTE: After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive a third email when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

Due to limited staffing of federal offices, hardcopy applications will not be accepted.

Informational webinars will be held on January 7, 2021 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time and January 19, 2021 at 11:00 AM. To register for these webinars, please visit: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/5640848003659402256>.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

Allowable Costs

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

G. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

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

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

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. After the application has been validated, this same

person will receive another email when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review, and the validation time is deemed the time NOAA received it.

If you experience a Grants.gov “systems issue” (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before an applicable funding cycle deadline, please (i) print any error message received; and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization’s computer system or equipment are not considered “systems issues.” Similarly, an applicant’s failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered Authorized Organizational Representative submits the application, or (iii) receive an email message from Grants.gov validating or rejecting its application are not considered systems issues. NOAA is not required to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause the application to be rejected or receive a poor evaluation. However, if deficiencies are identified by NOAA or the applicant, the applicant may correct any deficiencies in their application through resubmission before the deadline. A Grants.gov “systems issue” is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed “systems issue,” or a significant natural disaster affecting submission, NOAA may allow more time for applicant submission due to system problems at Grants.gov at the time of application submission that are beyond the control of the applicant.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

A. Systemic MWEE Implementation Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (22 points)

This criterion assesses whether the proposed work addresses B-WET program goals and priority areas, and if the project is relevant to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

- a. Does the project use local issues to increase student’s environmental stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and/or its watershed? (5 points)

- b. Is the MWEE systemic for a grade level (i.e. does the project reach all students and relevant teachers in a grade level at a school district or Intermediate Unit)? (6 points)
- c. Does the applicant clearly demonstrate a gap in providing three curricularly-integrated MWEEs (one in elementary, one in middle, and one in high school) as part of the school district's instructional program? (5 points)
- c. Does the applicant provide data (e.g. Environmental Literacy Equity Map) that demonstrates that the school district or Intermediate Unit to be served has a high percentage of minorities, high percentage of low-income individuals, or other indicators of inequities? (6 points)

2. Technical merit (40 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project adequately meets the full definition of the MWEE, is logistically feasible, and technically sound.

- a. Will the project result in students conducting issue identification and background research? (3 points)
- b. Will the project result in multiple outdoor field experiences for students? Are the locations for student field experiences and number of times students are learning outdoors appropriate for the project? (4 points)
- c. Will the project result in student-directed stewardship or civic action projects? (4 points)
- d. Will the project result in students engaging in synthesis and conclusions throughout the MWEE? (3 points)
- e. Ideally the project will work to embed the MWEE into district curriculum. Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will be fully embedded into district curriculum? If not, does the applicant at least demonstrate how the project is aligned with district curriculum? (3 points)
- f. Does the project include teacher leadership and/or support for all elements of the MWEE? (3 points)

- g. Does the application demonstrate teachers are receiving adequate professional development (i.e. meets criteria set forth in section 3 of the MWEE definition in this announcement)? (7 points)
- e. Does the applicant clearly describe how the project will be adapted to follow guidelines and restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic and provide options and examples of how each of the MWEE elements can be addressed during COVID-19 restrictions? (3 points)
- f. Does the applicant describe on-going and planned communication mechanisms with school districts about changes to programming that may be necessary due to national and local responses to the pandemic? (3 points)
- g. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the applicant address how they will participate in the B-WET National Evaluation? (4 points)
- h. Does the proposal demonstrate how Chesapeake Bay Program resources including the MWEE Guide (ELM planning tools and MWEE Audit tool), Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training and MWEE 101/201 online courses will be used in the project? (3 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (16 points)

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

- a. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the intended community, including in depth understanding of schools and school systems? For operations during COVID-10, does the applicant demonstrate awareness of their audiences' capabilities and limitations (i.e. access to necessary technology and natural spaces)? (5 points)
- b. Does the applicant propose to partner with a community based organization(s) that is representative of the community (or of a significant segment of the community) and works to meet the unique needs of that community? (3 points)
- c. Does the applicant demonstrate the capability and experience to successfully complete similar projects? (3 points)

- d. Does the proposal include partnerships that contribute to project implementation, and are those partners documented with support letters detailing how they'll support the project (as opposed to simply voicing support)? (5 points)

4. Project costs (18 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

- a. Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the number of participants and/or intended audience to be reached? (8 points)
- b. Does the proposal adequately address project sustainability after NOAA funding, including detailing stable or potential funding sources or strategies that will sustain the project beyond the grant period? (6 points)
- c. Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? (2 points)
- d. Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and this is a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? (2 points)

5. Outreach and education (4 points)

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

- a. Does the proposal describe opportunities for outreach and education around the value of MWEs and environmental education at events that engage school boards, public officials, parents, community organizations, other schools, or the media? (2 points)
- b. Does the proposal describe opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing for teachers, educators, and school administrators? (2 points)

B. School District Capacity Building Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (22 points)

This criterion assesses whether the proposed work addresses B-WET program goals and priority areas, and if the project is relevant to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

- a. Does the project use local issues to increase student's environmental stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and/or its watershed? (4 points)
- b. Does the applicant include the appropriate partners to ensure that the deliverables of the grant can be executed? Does this list of partners represent the full set of voices for this work to be successful and sustainable? (5 points)
- c. Does the applicant clearly demonstrate a gap in providing three curricularly-integrated MWEEs (one in elementary, one in middle, and one in high school) as part of the school district's instructional program? (7 points)
- d. Does the applicant provide data (e.g. Environmental Literacy Equity Map) that demonstrates that the school district or Intermediate Unit to be served has a high percentage of minorities, high percentage of low-income individuals, or other indicators of inequities? (6 points)

2. Technical merit (37 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project adequately meets the full definition of School District Capacity Building, is logistically feasible, and technically sound.

- a. Will the project result in the development and/or implementation of an environmental literacy plan or strategy that includes three systemic MWEEs? (7 points)
- b. Does the proposal include a logic model or similar chart that demonstrates a firm understanding of desired outputs and outcomes that result in programming and operational changes that support systemic and curricularly embedded MWEEs (short-, mid-, and long-term)? (3 points)

- c. Does the applicant provide sufficient detail to show how the proposed work will result in the stated goals and objectives (e.g. duties of a funded position, contents and function of an environmental literacy plan, or function of an environmental literacy network)? Does it describe the steps that will be taken to execute the project (i.e. duration and frequency of trainings or meetings, expected timing for creation of deliverables)? (7 points)
- d. Does the project use best practices or innovative approaches (i.e. collective impact framework or network building strategies to build relationships among community partners) to meet the stated goals? (3 points)
- e. Does the proposal include adequate commitment from each school district or Intermediate Unit that environmental literacy efforts will be embedded and sustained? (5 points)
- f. Does the proposal demonstrate how Chesapeake Bay Program resources including the MWEE Guide (ELM planning tools and MWEE Audit tool), Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training and MWEE 101/201 online courses will be used in the implementation of the environmental literacy strategy? (3 points)
- g. Does this project outline a clear strategy for ensuring equity, where higher-need schools are provided adequate structures for success? (5 points)
- h. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the applicant address how they will participate in the B-WET National Evaluation? (4 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (16 points)

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

- a. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the intended community, including in depth understanding of current challenges and opportunities within the proposed schools and school systems? (5 points)
- b. Does the applicant propose to partner with a community based organization(s) that is representative of the community (or a significant segment of the community) and works to meet the unique needs of that community, which could be a significant driver in ensuring

equity and inclusion in environmental literacy planning activities? (3 points)

- c. Does the applicant demonstrate the capability and experience to successfully complete similar projects? (3 points)
- d. Does the proposal include partnerships that contribute to project implementation, and are those partners documented with support letters detailing how they'll support the project (as opposed to simply voicing support)? (5 points)

4. Project costs (18 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

- a. Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the work proposed? (8 points)
- b. Does the proposal adequately address project sustainability after NOAA funding, including detailing stable or potential funding sources or strategies that will sustain the project beyond the grant period? (6 points)
- c. Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? (2 points)
- d. Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and this is a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? (2 points)

5. Outreach and education (7 points)

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

- a. Does the proposal describe an outreach strategy that will effectively communicate the environmental literacy plan or strategy to stakeholders, including school boards, public officials, principals, and community partners? (5 points)

b. Are there opportunities proposed to promote and share program models to potential program partners throughout the Bay Watershed? (2 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

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

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

Technical Review:

The purpose of the technical review is to evaluate each proposal's technical merit via individual evaluations of the proposals. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of three reviewers. Reviewers provide comments (which can be shared with applicants after the competition has concluded) and assign scores to the applications based on the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. and Section V.B. of this federal funding opportunity. If one or more non-Federal reviewers is used, no consensus advice will be given.

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

Panel Review:

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

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

Project Selection

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

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

Grants Management Review

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. If Federal funding will be over \$150,000 over the period of performance, NOAA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM

(currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

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

Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. NOAA also reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. In addition, NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management requirements referenced in Section VI.B. of this Announcement, and if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

C. Selection Factors

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

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - Geographically
 - By type of institutions
 - By type of partners
 - By priority areas
 - By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies
4. Program priorities and areas of interest as set out in section I. B of this FFO, including Implementation of Systemic MWEs and School District Capacity Building
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the three months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to NCBO and notification, and applicants may receive communications to negotiate a potential award in April 2021. Final issuance of awards or declinations are expected by August 2021. No date prior to July 1, 2021 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

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

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

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR c78390) are applicable to this Announcement and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

2. Uniform Administrative Guidance

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, applies to awards in this program. Refer to

<http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

3. Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for any or all qualified projects pursuant to this Announcement or that any proposal will be selected for funding. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the competition described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award funding for specific projects, or obligate available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs for awards that have not been designated as “research” unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when an award is made. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for any proposal preparation costs. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded to a meritorious applicant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Funded awards are subject to enforcement and termination provisions under 2 C.F.R. 200.338-.342.

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site at www.nepa.noaa.gov, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations website at <https://ceq.doe.gov/laws-regulations/regulations.html>.

Consequently, applicants may be asked to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, number and species expected to be caught, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and

impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the grants officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

If your project may trigger consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), identify any impact the proposed work will have on the quality of the environment by completing the NOAA NEPA Questionnaire at the following link (<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>) and include it as an appendix to your application. This NEPA appendix does not count against the 12-page Project Description page limit.

5. Felony and Tax Certification

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

6. NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards

If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities are involved in any awards funded under this announcement, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAAOperated Facilities (May 2018) found at:
http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/facilities_assault_policy.html.

C. Reporting

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

and further implemented as described below.

1. Financial Reports - Information about federal financial reports is available at:

<http://go.usa.gov/cjE4T>

2. Performance/Progress Reports - Suggested content and guidance related to Chesapeake B-WET performance/progress reports can be found here:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/funding-and-financial-services/how-manage-your-grant>

(b) The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000. Refer to 2 C.F.R. Part 170 at <http://go.usa.gov/cT8WW>.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the Chesapeake B-WET Applying for a Grant webpage:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/noaa-chesapeake-bay-watershed-education-and-training-program> or contact Elise Trelegan at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office by email at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov or by phone at 410-267-5660.

VIII. Other Information

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive

personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

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