

Fiscal Year 2023 NOAA Chesapeake B-WET Program - School District Programming

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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 2023 NOAA Chesapeake B-WET Program - School District Programming

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2023-2007599

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.457, Chesapeake Bay Studies

Dates: The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 10, 2023 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 2023 Chesapeake B-WET funding announcement will be held on November 21, 2022 at 1:00 PM Eastern Time and November 30, 2022 at 11:00 AM. To register for these webinars, please visit:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/8833601088603866894>. Note that the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office's B-WET Coordinator will be available to answer questions Monday through Friday, 7:30AM-4:00PM Eastern Time excluding federal holidays.

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 states. MWEEs involve learning both outdoors and in the classroom as students engage in issue definition, outdoor field experiences, synthesis and conclusions, and environmental action projects. The goal is to increase understanding and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and 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 funding announcement has two priorities, numbered without regard to importance for funding: 1) Implementing MWEEs in School Districts and 2) Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy. Note that a separate funding announcement through B-

WET for Regional Environmental Literacy Capacity Building is also available on [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov).

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 for students in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12). 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.

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

Successful B-WET projects provide formal education that supports the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/goals/environmental-literacy>) and NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (<https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/2021-2040-noaa-education-strategic-plan>).

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 are encouraged to 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. 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 (www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-meaningful-watershed-educational-experience). Additional MWEE information and resources are available on the Bay Backpack website (www.baybackpack.com), including:

1. An Educator's Guide to the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (the MWEE Guide);
2. The MWEE 101 and MWEE 201 online trainings;
3. The Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training; and
4. Evaluating a MWEE Resource.

The Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) is a learner-centered framework that focuses on investigations into local environmental issues and leads to informed action. MWEEs are made up of multiple components that include learning both outdoors and in the classroom and are designed to increase environmental literacy by actively engaging students in building knowledge and meaning through hands-on experiences. In these experiences, the core ideas and practices of multiple disciplines are applied to make sense of the relationships between the natural world and society. MWEEs help connect students with their local environment and equip them to make decisions and take actions that contribute to stronger, sustainable, and equitable communities.

The MWEE consists of four essential elements and four supporting practices that build upon each other to create a comprehensive, student-centered learning experience. Throughout the MWEE, teachers provide structure, support, and encouragement as students use their curiosity and creativity to investigate and take action to address a local environmental issue. To support teacher implementation of MWEEs, B-WET has also included six characteristics that are recommended to be included in teacher professional development activities.

MWEEs are appropriate for all grade levels with content and practices growing in complexity and sophistication across the grades — starting with teacher-guided investigations and progressing to student-led inquiry. Using the MWEE framework helps educators create an engaging program to achieve their learning objectives (i.e., the

knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should be able to exhibit following instruction). Learning objectives should address academic standards, but might also include other objectives, such as teamwork, social-emotional learning, and civic responsibility.

1. MWEE Essential Elements

The MWEE consists of four essential elements that describe “what students do:” Issue Definition, Outdoor Field Experiences, Synthesis and Conclusions, and Environmental Action Projects. These elements, together with the supporting practices, create a learner-centered framework that emphasizes the role of the student in actively constructing meaning from the learning experiences. The essential elements are not meant to be linear. In fact, some elements, such as Synthesis and Conclusions, occur repeatedly throughout the MWEE.

1.1 Issue Definition

During Issue Definition, students learn about an environmental issue by planning and conducting background research and investigations. An environmental issue is an environmental problem, often with observable phenomena, to which community members bring a variety of perspectives. To provide structure for their exploration of the issue, students focus on a driving question that is defined by the teacher. This question is the “big picture” question that sparks curiosity and organizes student inquiry and investigations, which ultimately informs environmental actions. It should be open-ended, relevant to students’ lived experiences, and meet learning objectives. To support youth voice and deepen the learning, students are actively involved in co-developing supporting questions with teachers to better understand the driving question and environmental issue.

To explore the driving and supporting questions, students gather information by making observations, finding and reading credible sources, talking to experts, and carrying out field investigations. Students also consider environmental policies and community practices and reflect on personal, stakeholder, and societal values and perspectives to develop a comprehensive picture of the root causes of the environmental issue.

1.2 Outdoor Field Experiences

Students participate in multiple Outdoor Field Experiences to explore the driving question and strengthen their connection to the natural world. 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. Field experiences allow students to interact with their local environment and contribute to learning in ways that traditional classroom or laboratory settings may not. During field experiences, students can use their senses, scientific equipment, and technology to make observations,

collect data or measurements, and conduct experiments necessary to answer their supporting questions and inform environmental action. Students who have opportunities to learn in, thrive in, and appreciate the outdoors can become informed and engaged champions for our natural resources.

Outdoor Field Experiences can take place on school grounds or at locations close to schools, such as streams or local parks. They can also take place at off-site locations such as state or national parks, wildlife refuges, marine protected areas, or nature centers that are often staffed by experts and may provide access to field equipment and facilities. A range of partners, including environmental educators, natural resource professionals, or trained volunteers, can help facilitate field experiences; however, they should be co-developed and co-taught with teachers so that field experiences support learning objectives. Teachers and partners should ensure an accessible outdoor learning environment for all participants, including students with a range of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social abilities. They should also prepare students by providing information and discussing what students can expect to see, feel, or experience during their time outdoors to ensure students feel safe and comfortable during their field experiences.

1.3 Synthesis and Conclusions

During Synthesis and Conclusions, students reflect on each experience and investigation in relation to the issue, and share their claims and conclusions with each other. Teachers should plan for this to occur regularly throughout the MWEE. This learning and frequent reflection provide the foundation for the development of claims and environmental action that address the driving question and connect to the environmental issue. Throughout this process, students should demonstrate understanding of their investigations and conclusions with their peers or the school community. This could involve multiple disciplines and a variety of formats including discussion, journaling, presentations, graphing, performing skits or songs, or creating art.

1.4 Environmental Action Projects

As a result of their investigations, students identify solutions and develop Environmental Action Projects that directly address the issue within their school, neighborhood, or community. Students are actively engaged in and, to the extent possible, drive the decision-making, planning, and implementation of the action project. Teachers facilitate this process by forming groups, moderating, and answering questions. Students reflect on the value of the action and determine the extent to which it successfully addressed the issue.

This essential element allows students to understand that they personally have the power to bring about change by taking action to address environmental issues at the personal,

community, or societal level. Taking action instills confidence in students and can contribute to students becoming environmental stewards in their communities.

Environmental Action Projects can take many forms and may fall into the following types:

-Restoration or Protection: actions that assist in the recovery or preservation of a watershed or related ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Examples include: 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. Examples include: refuse/reduce/reuse/recycle; 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. Examples include: give presentations 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 Engagement: actions that identify and address issues of public concern. Students acting alone or together to protect societal values or make a change or difference in a student's school, neighborhood, or community. Examples include: present to school principal or school board; attend, speak, or present at town meetings; write to local or state decision makers or elected officials.

2. MWEE Supporting Practices

The MWEE also includes four supporting practices that describe “what teachers do,” along with their partners, to ensure successful implementation with students. The supporting practices are Teacher Facilitation, Learning Integration, Sustained Experiences, and Local Context.

2.1 Teacher Facilitation

MWEEs require that teachers support student learning for the duration of the MWEE, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers balance roles of facilitation, direct instruction,

and coaching to create a student-centered learning experience where the essential elements of the MWEE come together to support goals for learning and create opportunities for students to take active roles in the learning process. Teachers provide space for student choice and voice by creating learning experiences that center on what students value. Even when activities or lessons occur at partner sites or are primarily led by partners at the school, teachers should be actively engaged. Teachers should connect these experiences to prior learning, foster critical thinking, and lead reflection after the experience so, regardless of the facilitator, the entire MWEE experience feels cohesive to the students.

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 MWEE Professional Development Characteristics for specifics).

2.2 Learning Integration

The MWEE is an educational framework that helps teachers meet their learning objectives in an engaging way. MWEEs are not meant to be something “extra”, but rather a means of enriching lessons for deeper student learning while meeting academic standards. To achieve this vision, MWEEs should be embedded into the school curriculum to support goals for learning and student achievement. They can also provide authentic, engaging interdisciplinary learning that crosses traditional boundaries between disciplines. Finally, the MWEE essential elements can also be used by educators in out-of-school settings (for example, after school programs, clubs, or summer camps) to enrich activities and complement school-based programming.

2.3 Sustained Experience

MWEEs rely on teachers to plan and implement a series of rich and connected learning opportunities where each essential element — from asking questions during Issue Definition through implementing Environmental Action Projects — builds upon and reinforces the others. To accomplish this, MWEEs are incorporated into a unit or multiple units, where learning happens both in and out of the classroom. This provides adequate time for students to not only reflect on the individual lessons and experiences, but also on how all of the elements cohesively come together. While an individual lesson may occur in one class period or field experience, that lesson or experience should be explicitly connected to the larger learning sequence of the MWEE.

2.4 Local Context

MWEEs have teachers use the local environment and community as a context for learning that is relevant to students’ lives. 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, 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, create opportunities for students to engage with members of their community of diverse cultures, values, and expertise that can create a more equitable and inclusive experience.

Programming should be designed to be culturally relevant and make authentic connections to students' lived experiences. Cultural relevance is defined as the ability to effectively reach and engage communities and their youth in a manner consistent with the cultural context and values of that community.

Emphasizing the local context enables students and teachers to develop stronger connections to, 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 in turn affect larger ecosystems and watersheds.

3. Teacher MWEE Professional Development Characteristics

Professional development providers play a crucial role in preparing teachers to implement successful MWEEs with their students. Professional development that includes characteristics such as: relevant content; explicit modeling of educational frameworks; collaboration, feedback and modeling instruction such as student-centered teaching; adequate time for professional development including time for ongoing support; and offering participation incentives that teachers value leads to a variety of positive outcomes.

Professional development should empower teachers to confidently and competently use the MWEE framework to support standards-based learning that aligns with local education agency initiatives. Teachers should gain confidence in the value of MWEEs and strategies for conducting them so that they will be able to implement MWEEs after the professional development has ended. To set teachers up for success, the following six overarching characteristics, informed by education research and evaluation results, are recommended for inclusion in professional development to support teachers implementing MWEEs.

3.1 Increases teachers' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues

Professional development facilitators should ensure that teachers have an adequate level of content knowledge in science and specific to their grade level and discipline to support their MWEE. The content knowledge should also be connected to the interactions between natural systems and social systems, including human impacts on local watersheds and larger Earth systems. Recognizing that environmental issues often include different perspectives and opinions about the environment, teachers must also experience and build skills that enable

them to address these traditionally non-academic factors in their classrooms. When combined, this knowledge and these experiences often result in teachers who are more aware of, and more prepared for, the complexity of implementing MWEEs.

3.2 Models MWEE framework

Professional development should also provide opportunities for teachers to understand the goals and rationale behind the MWEE as a framework for fostering learning and environmental stewardship. Facilitators of teacher professional development should utilize the same techniques and experiences that teachers are expected to use with their students, such as hands-on Outdoor Field Experiences, critical thinking about environmental issues, and Environmental Action Projects.

For more information on effective ways to model professional development, download the Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training from the list of resources on Bay Backpack (<http://baybackpack.com/mwee/what-is-a-mwee>).

3.3 Includes collaboration, feedback, and models high-quality instruction

Effective professional development includes peer collaboration, time for teachers to experience, plan for, and practice model activities and lesson plans, and opportunities for reflection and feedback. Collaborative opportunities that include observing effective teaching practices and replicating these practices with expert instruction and feedback, can result in higher likelihood that teachers will apply these practices when implementing MWEEs. Such opportunities also foster exchanging ideas and create a collaborative atmosphere for changing the culture around adopting new teaching practices at multiple levels within a school system. In addition, when teachers experience high-quality instruction, such as active learning and student-centered inquiry, they are more likely to use high-quality instruction when implementing MWEEs with their own students.

3.4 Allows for adequate instructional time and ongoing support

Professional development should be multi-day, occurring consecutively or over the course of several weeks or months and include time for ongoing support for teachers. Professional development facilitators should build in adequate time for the types of experience described above, including time to learn, practice, reflect upon, and design practices they learn during the professional development. Even in cases where teachers participate in robust multi-day workshops, such as summer or weekend courses, it is still essential that professional development providers have structures and opportunities in place for ongoing teaching support and enrichment. This can take the form of follow up meetings, web-based forums for communication and feedback, mentor teachers who can serve as points of contact, or teams of teachers from one particular school.

3.5 Offers appropriate incentives

Having appropriate incentives can increase participation in professional development programs. For example, teachers who participated in B-WET-funded professional development programs in the past reported that receiving a stipend or continuing education credits were the “most valuable” incentives enabling them to participate in those programs. While a variety of incentives can be offered to professional development program participants, it is clear that continuing education credits and stipends can enable participation in ways that other incentives might not.

3.6 Meets jurisdictional guidelines and engages leadership

Each jurisdiction has established guidance and recommendations relevant to all forms of teacher professional development. When possible, professional development opportunities for MWEEs should adhere to guidelines set forth by state and/or local education agencies. Outreach and training opportunities for school administrators will also help ensure jurisdictional alignment and increase high level support for both environmental education and continuing teacher professional development for teachers.

4. Other Considerations

4.1 Includes NOAA assets, including personnel and resources

NOAA has a wealth of applicable products, data, and services as well as a cadre of scientific and professional experts who can enhance student and teacher experiences both in the classroom and in the field. These resources complement the educator’s strengths and augment the educational resources. Additionally, NOAA personnel can serve as important role models for career choices and stewardship. For more on NOAA assets for education please see: <https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections>, NOAA in your state (<https://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/>), and NOAA in your backyard (<https://www.noaa.gov/education/noaa-in-your-backyard>).

For applicants seeking to address the Climate Change special interest area, NOAA provides data, tools, and information to understand and prepare for climate variability and change. Many resources exist that can support teachers and students including but not limited to: Climate.gov (<https://climate.gov/teaching>), the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit (<https://toolkit.climate.gov/>), Climate Explorer (<https://crt-climate-explorer.nemac.org/>), and the Chesapeake Exploration Teaching Climate Change online course (<https://cbexapp.noaa.gov/course/view.php?id=5581>). An additional list of relevant assets (<https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/elp/resilience-assets>) provide links to NOAA datasets, potential NOAA partners, and other resilience-related assets from federal and non-

federal organizations.

4.2 Meaningful Engagement of Underserved Communities and Partners

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office seeks to support projects that are led by or collaborate with community organizations and institutions that represent underserved communities. Meaningful engagement of underserved communities is intended to ensure that communities are integral to the visioning, decision-making, and leadership for environmental education programs; to ensure that the scope of such programs are inclusive of the priorities and needs of communities; and/or to ensure that the benefits of such programs flowback to underserved communities.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop and grow mutually-beneficial partnerships that honor the strengths of these communities and organizations. It is recommended that these partners be actively involved in project planning as well as programmatically and financially recognized for their contributions to programming. Organizations will be most effective in this capacity by addressing disparities of diversity, equity, and inclusion within that organization's own structure.

In addition, applicants are encouraged to apply NAAEE's Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence

(https://eeepro.naaee.org/sites/default/files/eeepro/resource/files/community_engagement__guidelines_for_excellence_0.pdf) in developing their project plans for engagement of audiences. The Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence include five key characteristics: 1. Community Centered, 2. Based on Sound EE Principles, 3. Collaborative and Inclusive, 4. Oriented Toward Capacity Building and Civic Action, and 5. Long-Term Investment in Change. A series of recordings featuring current and former B-WET grantees that describe how they have operationalized the Community Engagement Guidelines is available on the Chesapeake Bay Program's YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRa28NrZJAF5R8ap_HTQkZpNQZhUyCVVP).

Definition of underserved communities: This term refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. Underserved communities are defined in Executive Order 13985

Definition of meaningful engagement: This term refers to communities having an opportunity to be an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, or leadership for

activities that may affect their environment and/or health and wellbeing. Meaningful engagement relies on the involvement of those potentially affected in a manner that builds trust and addresses barriers to community participation to ensure that the scope of the activities is inclusive of the priorities and needs of communities and that the benefits of the activities flow back to the community.

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 interested in supporting school districts and their partners who are committed to a vision for equitable, sustainable, and curriculum-embedded MWEEs that reach every student (e.g. systemic MWEEs) regardless of where they are in their journey towards this vision.

NOAA is committed to the goals of advancing equity and support for underserved communities. NOAA encourages applicants to include and demonstrate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and environmental justice through proactive, meaningful, and equitable community engagement in the identification, design, and implementation of proposed projects.

Based on these priorities, NOAA will give additional consideration to supporting districts that:

- Lack capacity to establish, support, or sustain environmental literacy programming,
- Impact underserved communities, including those with populations that are low-income and high-minority, and/or
- Do not have a systemic MWEE in place for the proposed grade band.

For help in determining which districts to work with, you should consider:

-Chesapeake B-WET must 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>.

-The Chesapeake Bay Environmental Justice and Equity Dashboard (<https://chesapeake-deij2-chesbay.hub.arcgis.com/>) can help to identify underrepresented communities to work

with.

-Additional information about the status of environmental literacy efforts in school districts may be available from the 2019 ELIT survey on the Chesapeake Bay Program's Education Workgroup page (https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/publications-archive/education_workgroup).

Applicants should consider the scale of the project when designing budgets. Awards for smaller districts are typically in the range of \$50,000-\$80,000 per year while larger school districts may require up to \$100,000 per year. In school districts that have only one or two high schools, it may be appropriate to apply as Intermediate Units or clusters of school districts.

1. Proposals to this announcement must address one of the following Priority Areas which are listed here in no particular order of importance:

Priority 1 - Implementing MWEEs in School Districts

Proposals submitted under the Implementing MWEEs in School Districts priority seek to build towards systemic MWEE programming in local districts. Chesapeake B-WET welcomes proposals that will result in a systemic MWEE and proposals that will build towards a systemic MWEE. The program recognizes the challenges and time required to embed systemic MWEEs so proposals under this priority that may not achieve systemic MWEEs within the grant cycle must show how they are working towards this goal.

Systemic MWEEs reach the entire student population in one or more grades within a school district 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. They 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.

While Chesapeake B-WET strongly believes in systemic MWEE implementation, the program recognizes there are organizations and school districts across the watershed that face challenges in developing and implementing systemic projects in a single grant cycle. While every organization faces some barrier 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 implement the full MWEE model and make meaningful progress towards systemic implementation. Applicants should explain why systemic implementation is not feasible in the project timeline and how they will build towards it over the course of the grant period and into the future.

Proposals and supporting materials should include details about where the project fits within the scope and sequence of the school district's curriculum and applicants should clearly understand and convey the primary learning objectives. Multi-disciplinary objectives are encouraged. For school districts that have previously had systemic MWEEs in place for the intended grade but were not successful in becoming fully embedded into the curriculum or otherwise sustainable, applicants should consider whether the Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy priority may be a better fit for building a strategy for environmental literacy integration and a district culture that embraces such. Without substantial reasons to justify a change or addition, B-WET is not interested in funding MWEEs for grade bands that have previously had MWEEs.

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

Priority 2 - Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy

Proposals submitted under the Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy 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 MWEEs 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 that includes the school district and local partners focused on advancing environmental literacy through collective impact or other partnership/social impact models. This may include building capacity, relationships, and communication between school districts and/or local community organizations to implement systemic MWEEs and teacher professional development.

- Creating a school district environmental literacy plan or other documented strategy that includes policies, practices, and metrics for ensuring equitable access to environmental literacy programming for all students and training for all involved teachers. This plan must clearly identify in which grades MWEEs currently exist and/or will be built out by the district. Applicants may refer to School District Environmental Literacy Plan Templates that have been adopted and/or created within the state. Environmental literacy plans should also include a financial sustainability component, including clear strategies for sustaining programs.

- Engaging decision-makers (e.g. superintendents, school boards, district administration, principals, parents) to promote and support environmental literacy, including MWEEs and teacher professional development.

- Supporting an environmental literacy coordinator position at the district that supports development and implementation of MWEEs and other environmental literacy elements.

- Developing outdoor classrooms on school grounds and creating support structures for their use to break down barriers for outdoor learning, including how to use the space to support MWEEs. Note: B-WET funds cannot be used for construction, but can be used for supplies often needed to resource outdoor classrooms (e.g. whiteboards, seating, shade, storage, and natural 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 MWEE implementation. If the proposal includes teacher professional development to guide MWEE implementation, 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 State Initiatives on www.baybackpack.com 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 across the region and will support grantees in connecting and sharing practice between other districts engaged in such efforts.

NOAA SPECIAL INTEREST AREA

Any proposal to this announcement must meet one of the Priority Areas described in the previous section. NOAA also has an additional Special Interest Area, Climate Change. Applicants may address this special interest area if they choose. 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.

Climate Change.

The K-12 education system is a well-positioned venue for instilling comprehensive knowledge, skills, competencies, and resilience around the most pressing economic, social and environmental issue of today: climate change. According to the 2021 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report and most recent National Climate Assessment (NCA, 2018), communities in the U.S. are experiencing changes in climate that are resulting in severe storms, flooding, hurricanes, extended drought, change in ocean chemistry and sea level rise, presenting growing challenges to human health and safety, quality of life, and the rate of economic growth. Currently, educational institutions, researchers and policy makers are calling for climate change education that goes beyond knowledge acquisition and formal classroom teaching to efforts that reach audiences of all demographics and incorporate the social, political, economic, and justice elements of climate change. Education has the power to help students develop meaningful personal connections to climate solutions, a sense of personal agency and empowerment, and ultimately impact their behaviors and decision-making in relation to climate change (Kwauk, 2021; K12 Climate Action Commission, 2021). The MWEE educational framework can directly foster climate knowledge, skills, and competencies to address climate change, climate impacts, and the opportunities to contribute to climate solutions in their own communities. Therefore, the B-WET program strongly encourages the purposeful incorporation of education about climate change into programming.

Applicants to this special interest area should consider how to apply recent research on effective climate change education that points to the need for educational interventions that employ well-studied educational practices including: deliberative discussion that fosters

reflection on differing viewpoints; interactions with scientists and the scientific process; uncovering and addressing misconceptions to dispel unfounded counter claims; and engaging learners in designing and implementing school or community projects to address climate change (Monroe, et al., 2019)

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 up to \$450,000 may be available in FY 2023 to fund new applications, subject to appropriations. NOAA anticipates making 4-6 new awards. Projects should not exceed \$100,000 annually in Federal funds with a minimum request of \$25,000. 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 be between July 1, 2023 and January 1, 2024. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended to include the flexibility of the requested start date in your project description. 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, travel, 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. 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://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/Department%20of%20Commerce%20Grants%20%20Cooperative%20Agreements%20Manual%20%2820%20April%202021%29.pdf>

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. Additional guidance on

subrecipient partners can be found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-200.331>. 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 increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities. 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 Bay watershed are not eligible unless additional funding is available, as described in Section III.A, Eligible Applicants.

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 or phone 240-628-4507. 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 Eastern Time.

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: Implementing MWEEs in School Districts or Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy
- Special Interest Area: Climate Change (optional)
- Organization and Partnerships: List your organization name, type of organization, and number of employees. List key partners for this grant, if applicable. Partnerships are encouraged.
- School District(s): List the school district(s) engaged in the project and their NCES District ID which can be found at: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>
- Project duration: 12 to 36 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month. This project period should match your timeline and all forms (e.g. 08/01/2023-07/31/2026)
- Summary: Your summary should use plain language to provide reviewers with an understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of your educational project. If addressing Priority 1, include whether the proposal will reach every student within the grade band in the district (i.e. whether or not it is systemic or not). Include the 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. If addressing Priority 2, describe what the outcome of the capacity building work will be and how it will advance environmental literacy in the district. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read this paragraph and grasp your plan.
- Audience: Describe the demographics of your audience including the number and types of participants you expect to reach, such as the number of teachers, administrators, staff, and/or 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 each fiscal year; total non-federal match for each fiscal year. Total multi-year request and match (if applicable). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars. Match is not required for this funding opportunity, will not be considered by proposal reviewers, and will not affect scoring.

(ii) Project Description (up to 10 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 Implementing MWEEs in School Districts (Priority 1) and for Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy (Priority 2).

What: Explain the goals and objectives for your project.

-Describe the overarching goal of the project. Goals are the overall aim the program or project will help achieve, which may be longer-term and extend beyond the grant.

-Describe the outcomes for your project. Outcomes are the change that is prompted as a result of the project (example: increased knowledge and skills, changes in attitudes and behaviors, streamlining processes to remove barriers for outdoor environmental literacy programs, or securing sustainable funding to ensure the longevity of environmental literacy programs).

-Describe how the project supports the Chesapeake Bay Program's Environmental Literacy outcome to provide a curricularly-integrated MWEE once in each grade band (elementary, middle, and high school). If applicable, also describe how the proposal supports the sustainable schools and/or planning outcome under the Environmental Literacy goal.

-For Priority 1, describe how the applicant identified the need for a MWEE in this specific grade band within this school district, including specific data that was used. Describe the driving question and how it will contribute to greater understanding and stewardship of the watershed. Explain why this topic is relevant and important to the community that will be served.

-For Priority 2, define the barriers you are addressing and why addressing those barriers will advance environmental literacy, including MWEEs, at the school district level.

This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A for Priority 1 and Priority 2. (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

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 and do not count toward the page limit.

Who: Identify the audience and give a precise location of the project and area(s) to be served.

-Identify the school district(s) that are being served and indicate if the schools and/or communities have indicators of need in academic performance (e.g. academic achievement, graduation rates, and attendance), socioeconomic status (e.g. low income, unemployment, high poverty, over 50% of Title I schools), and/or other areas that have shown to widen disparities in access to environmental education.

-For Priority 1, include how many students will receive MWEEs and how many teachers will receive professional development annually as a result of your project. Include the number of hours of professional development each teacher will engage in. Identify if the project will result in a systemic MWEE (every student in a school district across one or more grades), and, if not, how the project will build toward a systemic MWEE.

-For Priority 2, describe the nature of the capacity building effort that will build towards a sustainable and equitable MWEE, including the key partners who will be engaged.

This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and Priority 2 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

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 to advance the goals and outcomes outlined above. Reviewers must be able to determine the duration and frequency of all activities. If multi-year, provide activities for each year.

-Detail how the project meets or supports the definition of the MWEE as defined in this funding opportunity.

-Describe how Chesapeake Bay Program and/or NOAA resources will be used to support the project.

-Describe activities and strategies that will be used to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the project.

-For Priority 1:

-Describe the process by which the MWEE will be embedded, or work to become embedded, into the school district curriculum.

-Outline how the essential elements and supporting practices are organized within the program, including the duration and frequency of MWEE activities and whether they occur in the classroom or outdoors. Outdoor field experiences should be accessible to students of all abilities and proposals should describe how accommodations will be made for a variety of learners.

-Describe the professional development plan including the amount and type of training that each teacher will receive in each year of the project. 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.

-For Priority 2:

-Describe how the project will result in one or more products that codifies or supports an environmental literacy strategy that builds towards sustainability.

-Articulate any best practices or innovative approaches that will be used to meet the stated goals.

This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and for Priority 2. (Technical merit)

(iii) Sustainability: B-WET aims to support the student outcome of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement where every student has a MWEE at least once in elementary, middle, and high

school. To this end, projects funded through B-WET should be developed with sustainability in mind. MWEEs are the most sustainable when they are embedded into school curriculum and supported with school district and partner resources.

- Describe the plan for sustainability of the project beyond NOAA funding.

- For Priority 1 this may include but is not limited to: integrating the MWEE into the school district curriculum, building capacity of teachers, and/or ensuring that at least one field experience occurs on school grounds as well as identifying opportunities for sustained funding in school budgets and partnerships with local funders.

- For Priority 2 this may look like building in planning time for identifying future funds needed to carry out next steps toward building systemic MWEEs and/or developing plans for sustaining networks and partnerships.

- List other sources of funding that have been sought for the project (e.g. Title II or IV funding) and the status of those requests.

This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and for Priority 2. (Project Costs).

(iv) Outreach and Education: Projects should include external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience.

- Describe how school administrators, teachers, educators, and other partners will 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 separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and for Priority 2. (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. 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.

-Describe how you will track and measure 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.

-Explain how your evaluation strategy includes a plan to periodically assess the effectiveness of the programming and make adjustments as needed during the grant period.

This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and for Priority 2 (Technical Merit).

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

Most project evaluations will not require institutional review board (IRB) approval, however it is the responsibility of the applicant to determine if this is necessary and report back to NOAA. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Human Research Protections website has resources to help you determine the necessity of IRB approval. You can find those resources at: <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/decision-charts-2018/index.html>. If IRB is necessary, the applicant should include a timeline for IRB review as a part of their project evaluation plan, and no expenditures related to data collection may occur until IRB approval has been obtained.

Participation in B-WET National Evaluation:

In the past, B-WET has collected data on B-WET program grantee and participant activities and outcomes through its national evaluation system, above and beyond project-level evaluation work conducted by grantees. However, we are currently analyzing existing evaluation data and will enhance our evaluation approach based upon that analysis. Therefore, we are not currently collecting data via the B-WET National Evaluation System. Grantees may be invited to participate in future data collection activities and will be given advance notice about these opportunities so they can incorporate data collection into project and implementation plans, as appropriate.

Additional information about B-WET national evaluation work is available here: <https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources/national-evaluation>

(b) APPENDICES (not included in Project Description 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). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars. 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 separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and Priority 2 (Project Costs).

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 the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup's Environmental Literacy Forum or 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 share about their B-WET projects and learn from each other. This meeting may be part of an existing state environmental conference 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. 200.1 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 does not have a current indirect cost rate with any Federal

agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimis 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 of teachers and/or students reached for each activity and the duration of each contact. This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and for Priority 2 (Technical Merit).

(iii) For proposals addressing the Implementing MWEEs in School Districts priority: Provide an Environmental Literacy Model (ELM) or other document that illustrates how the proposed project will meet the full definition of the MWEE, including identifying curricular connections of the MWEE through academic standards, issue investigation where students engage in the essential elements of issue definition, outdoor field experiences, and synthesis and conclusions, and ultimately engage in informed action through a student-directed environmental action project. The document should include brief (2-3 sentence) descriptions about how the proposed project will address the following information:

-Defining the Learning Objectives and Curriculum Connection. What are the curriculum indicators, performance expectations, and/or student learning objectives? Are there opportunities to meet academic standards in multiple disciplines or content areas?

-Describing the Local Context. What is the local and life-relevant environmental issue, problem, or phenomenon that will serve as the context for learning?

-Identifying the Driving Question. What is the open-ended, life-relevant question that meets academic standards/learning objectives?

-Asking Questions and Defining Issues. What are supporting questions that students may investigate to further explore the driving question? List the supporting questions that cover

your required curriculum content and lessons. Describe how you will guide students in developing and/or co-developing their own questions.

-Planning and Conducting Investigations. How could students plan and conduct indoor and outdoor investigations to actively address the supporting questions? What kinds of data could be collected to draw conclusions and make actionable claims?

-Analyzing and Interpreting Data. How could students analyze data (graphic, models, etc.) to reveal patterns and relationships? What could the process of synthesizing evidence look like?

-Constructing and Communicating a Claim. How could you guide your students through the process of developing claims based on their evidence? How may they communicate these evidence-based claims to internal and/or external audiences?

-Identifying Solutions. How could you encourage your students to identify and explore a variety of solutions that could directly address the issue? How will students make decisions about which solution(s) to implement?

-Designing a Plan and Taking Informed Action. What resources or frameworks will students use to create their plan of environmental action? During what time period will they execute their project?

-Evaluating Action. In what ways will students reflect on the action and determine the extent to which it successfully addresses the issue?

The Environmental Literacy Model (ELM) Template can provide consistency for articulating this and can be found at: www.baybackpack.com. Note: you may reference lesson plans or curriculum as part of the appendices but do not embed these resources into the proposal.

For proposals addressing the Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy priority: Include a logic model that articulates the short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes resulting in programming that support systemic and curriculum-embedded MWEEs.

This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A for Priority 1 and for Priority 2 (Technical Merit).

(iv) Technical Experience and Qualifications: Attach a description of your programmatic capabilities and ability to successfully implement and manage the proposed project including

staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them to successfully achieve the goals of the project, and your organizational experience and past history in performing tasks similar to the proposed project. Also include a paragraph describing qualifications of each of the key personnel conducting the project, including justification for how the project team members possess the educational, scientific, and cultural expertise needed to carry out 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 separate evaluation criterion in V.A for Priority 1 and for Priority 2 (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 particular role in and/or funding of the proposed project. In particular, letters are requested from school district personnel that demonstrate support and commitment for environmental literacy efforts, specifically MWEEs, as well as a description of where MWEEs will align with curriculum and how they will ensure that teachers will participate in professional development. Do not include letters of endorsement from previous participants, teachers, or others not directly involved in project implementation. Letters should be received as part of application submission. This section will be scored using separate evaluation criterion in V.A. for Priority 1 and for Priority 2 (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 all federal funds were not expended, a detailed explanation why funds remained;
- If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

(vii) Data Management 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 10-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, 240-628-4507.

(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)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, which may be accessed at <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/textidx?SID=2dae4a7dcd5848a6364bb94d2d7786dd&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2subtitleA.tpl>.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov and must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 10, 2023. 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 November 21, 2022 at 1:00 PM data and November 30, 2022 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time. To register for these webinars, please visit: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/8833601088603866894>.

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 EUI 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. More information can be found at SAM.gov.

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

Implementing MWEEs in School Districts (Priority 1) Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (24 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. Is the MWEE systemic for a grade level (i.e. does the project reach all students and relevant teachers in a grade level within a school district) or seek to build towards this sort of systemic MWEE programming? If not fully systemic, is there a clear plan describing how they propose to reach/build towards systemic implementation? (7 points)
- b. Does the proposal address a clearly demonstrated 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? Does the applicant describe how they identified the gap and number of existing systemic MWEEs currently in place (e.g. Chesapeake Environment Justice and Equity Dashboard, meetings with school district leaders)? (6 points)
- c. Does the applicant provide data that demonstrates that the school district(s) to be served have indicators of need in academic performance (e.g. academic achievement, graduation rates, and attendance), socioeconomic status (e.g. low income, unemployment, high poverty, over 50% of Title I schools) and/or other areas that have shown to widen disparities in access to environmental education? If significant differences in student population exist across the school district, does the proposal address the highest needs schools within the district? (5 points)
- d. 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, MWEE 101/201 online courses, and Bay Backpack will be used in the project? (4 points)
- e. Does the proposal demonstrate what NOAA resources will be used in teacher professional development and/or MWEEs with students? (2 points)

2. Technical merit (36 points)

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

- a. Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will be fully embedded into the district's curriculum? If not, does the applicant describe how the project is aligned with the district's curriculum and include clear commitment from school district personnel to work towards sustainable and curriculum-embedded MWEEs that reach every student? (5 points)
- b. Will the project result in students conducting issue identification and background research? Will students engage in synthesis and conclusions throughout the MWEE? Does the MWEE provide ample opportunities for youth voice? (4 points)
- c. Will the project result in multiple outdoor field experiences for students? Does at least one field experience occur on school grounds? Are the locations for student field experiences and number of times students are learning outdoors appropriate for the project? Does the applicant describe how they will ensure equitable access for students of all abilities in MWEE activities, especially field experiences? (4 points)
- d. Will the project result in environmental action projects that directly address the issue of the inquiry? Are students involved in the formation of project ideas and planning for the action? (4 points)
- e. Does the project create the expectation that teachers facilitate all elements of the MWEE? Is this reflected and supported in the plan for teacher professional development? Is it clear that teachers are meaningfully engaged in learning experiences conducted by outside providers? (4 points)
- f. Does the proposed professional development meet the criteria set forth in section 3 of the MWEE definition in this announcement? Does professional development use aspects or resources from the Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training? Do letters of commitment from the school district articulate how they will ensure that teachers will participate in professional development? (8 points)
- g. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the evaluation strategy include a plan to periodically assess the effectiveness of the programming and make adjustments as needed during the grant period? Does the proposal indicate who will be conducting the evaluation and analyzing the results, and does this person have the necessary skills to complete this work? (5 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20 points)

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

- a. Does the proposal demonstrate that the applicant and/or their partners have the educational, scientific, and cultural expertise and institutional capacity to successfully complete this project? Is this clearly described in the resumes or narrative included in the proposal? (6 points)
- b. Does the applicant anchor their project objectives within the context of the school district interests, issues, and capacities? Does the applicant demonstrate that they have involved school district representatives in the design of the project? (5 points)
- c. Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to building relationships that reach beyond usual partners in environmental education? Were these partners meaningfully involved in the design of the project? Are these partners focused on ensuring equity while working to meet the unique needs of their community? (3 points)
- d. Does the proposal increase organizational and technical capacity of underserved communities to lead and/or support the MWEE? Does the proposal identify activities that build capacity of underserved communities to lead and/or support the MWEE? (2 points)
- e. Does the proposal include letters of commitment detailing how each partner will engage in the project (as opposed to simply voicing support)? (4 points)

4. Project costs (17 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? Is the budget going to the highest priority needs of the project, for example stipends or substitute costs for teacher professional development? (6 points)

- b. Is the funding being used to broaden support for environmental education through the engagement of new partners? Are community-based partners being adequately resourced to engage in the project? (2 points)
- c. Does the applicant identify what ongoing resources specifically will be needed to maintain the program beyond the grant period? Do they identify a stable funding source or detail a strategy to pursue a stable funding source beyond grants to sustain the project after the grant period? Is there a commitment to support and sustain the work from all of the essential partners? (6 points)
- d. Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and is this a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? (3 points)

5. Outreach and education (5 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 Management 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? (3 points)
- b. Does the proposal describe opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing for teachers, educators, and school administrators? (2 points)

Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy (Priority 2) Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25 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 proposal put in place elements that help build towards a sustainable and equitable district level environmental literacy program that includes a vision for including systemic MWEEs in the curriculum? (7 points)

b. Does the applicant clearly demonstrate a gap in the support for a MWEE in each grade band, embedding these as part of the school district's curriculum, and/or creating a sustainable climate for these MWEEs? If appropriate, does the applicant describe how they identified existing gaps and needs for support (e.g. Chesapeake Environment Justice and Equity Dashboard, LEA summaries from ELIT, meetings with school district leaders)? (5 points)

c. Does the applicant provide data that demonstrates that the school district(s) to be served have indicators of need in academic performance (e.g. academic achievement, graduation rates, and attendance), socioeconomic status (e.g. low income, unemployment, high poverty, over 50% of Title I schools) and/or other areas that have shown to widen disparities in access to environmental education? If significant differences in student population exist across the school district, does the proposal address the highest needs schools within the district? (5 points)

d. Does the applicant clearly define and address the barriers to advancing environmental literacy at the school district level? (4 points)

e. Does the proposal demonstrate how Chesapeake Bay Program, NOAA, and/or state partner resources including the MWEE Guide (ELM planning tools and MWEE Audit tool), Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training, MWEE 101/201 online courses, and Bay Backpack will be used in the implementation of the environmental literacy strategy? If an Environmental Literacy Plan is proposed to be created, will any state templates or resources be utilized in the development? (4 points)

2. Technical merit (30 points)

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

a. Does the proposal demonstrate a firm understanding of the desired outputs and outcomes

of the project (short-, mid-, and long-term)? Will these outputs and outcomes result in programming and operational changes that support sustainable environmental literacy programming? Does the applicant provide a logic model that clearly illustrates appropriate mechanisms and processes across this continuum? (6 points)

b. Will the project result in one or more products that codifies or supports the long-term implementation of the school district environmental literacy strategy? Will this help to establish a means to communicate priorities and strategies across district administrators and principals, and ensure continuity across time to build sustainability? (7 points)

c. Does the applicant describe the steps that will be taken to execute the project? Is there sufficient detail about how these activities are connected to the stated objectives (e.g. explanation of the duties of a funded position, the content and function of an environmental literacy plan, and/or the function of an environmental literacy network)? Is this approach sufficient and reasonable to reach the stated objectives? (7 points)

d. Does the project use best practices and/or innovative approaches (i.e. collective impact framework, network-building strategies, Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence) to meet the stated goals? (5 points)

e. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the evaluation strategy include a plan to periodically assess the effectiveness of the programming and make adjustments as needed during the grant period? Does the proposal indicate who will be conducting the evaluation and analyzing the results, and does this person have the necessary skills to complete this work? (5 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20 points)

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

a. Does the proposal demonstrate that the applicant and/or their partners have the educational, scientific, and cultural expertise and institutional capacity to successfully complete this project? Is this clearly described in the resumes or narrative included in the proposal? (6 points)

b. Does the applicant anchor their project objectives within the context of the school

district interests, issues, and capacities? Does the applicant demonstrate that they have involved school district representatives in the design of the project? (5 points)

c. Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to building relationships that reach beyond usual partners in environmental education? Were these partners meaningfully involved in the design of the project? Are these partners focused on ensuring equity while working to meet the unique needs of their community? (3 points)

d. Does the proposal increase organizational and technical capacity of underserved communities to lead and/or support the MWEE? Does the proposal identify activities that build capacity of underserved communities to lead and/or support the MWEE? (2 points)

e. Does the proposal include letters of commitment detailing how each partner will engage in the project (as opposed to simply voicing support)? (4 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? (7 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 (e.g. Title II or IV funding)? Does the applicant specifically address what ongoing resources would be needed in order to maintain the program? Is there a commitment to support and sustain the work beyond the grant period from all of the essential partners? (7 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? Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and is this a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? (4 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 Management 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, as well as other school district leaders in the region? (5 points)

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

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application received by the deadline 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 addressed. If NOAA identifies a non-material deficiency in an application after the deadline, applicants may be requested to make non-material changes.

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. 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 the proposals in-depth 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.C. 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. 200.206. If Federal funding will be over \$250,000 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 §200.206.

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. 200.208. 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.B. 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 NOFO, including Implementing MWEs in School Districts and Supporting School District Capacity for Environmental Literacy.
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups including tribes, tribal entities, and underserved communities
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 2023. Final issuance of awards or declinations are expected by August 2023. No date prior to July 1, 2023 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Upon completion of the review and selection process, successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project, and it is not a guarantee of funding. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. This notification will be issued to the Authorizing Representative of the project either electronically through use of Grants Online or in hard copy. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the Applicant's Authorized Representative has received official notice of the award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified their proposal was not recommended for funding or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements described in IV.B (Content and Form of Applications). Unsuccessful paper applications will not be returned to the applicant.

Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements. These special award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award, as applicable, and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award so they are fully aware of the relevant Standard Terms and Conditions as well as any Special Award Conditions that have been placed on the award.

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.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS. Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

DOC TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species,

aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting 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. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) - In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

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 NOAA-Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at:

http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/facilities_assault_policy.html.

REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS. If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), Pub.L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American, Buy American (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52 and OMB M-22-11, recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (DOC) are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project for infrastructure unless: 1) all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States; 2) all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and 3) all construction materials¹ are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project. WAIVERS. When necessary, recipients may apply for, and DOC may grant, a waiver from these requirements. DOC will notify the recipient for information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. 1) When DOC has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which DOC determines that: a. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest; b. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or c. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent. A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. DOC will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15

days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office. There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america. DEFINITIONS. “Construction materials” includes an article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives²—that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall. “Domestic content procurement preference” means all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. “Infrastructure” includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy. “Project” means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. -- 1 Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

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. 200.328-.200.330, 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 \$30,000. 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 or phone 240-628-4507.

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.