Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) for Indigenous Communities 2024

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) for Indigenous Communities 2024

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ONMS-2024-2008201

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.429, Marine Sanctuary Program

Dates: Electronic applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, March 1, 2024 to be considered for funding.

Applicants are required to apply online through www.grants.gov. Use of Grants.gov requires an advanced registration process that may take a few days or several weeks.

A webinar outlining the required proposal elements and the review process will take place on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 from 2:30-3:30 pm CT / 3:30-4:30 pm ET (https://meet.google.com/ttx-qzqq-uay), and Wednesday, December 13, 2023 from 1:00-2:00 pm CT / 2:00-3:00 pm ET (https://meet.google.com/tor-jzib-cry)

The Great Lakes B-WET Coordinator will be available to answer questions Monday through Friday, 8:30 am-5:00 pm ET excluding federal holidays.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary office) is seeking proposals under the Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program: https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/bwet/greatlakes/.

The B-WET program is an environmental education program that promotes place-based experiential learning for K-12 students and related professional development for teachers. B-WET fosters the growth of new, innovative programs and encourages capacity-building and environmental education partnerships. The primary delivery of B-WET is through competitive grants that promote Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). The MWEE is a learner-centered framework that focuses on investigations into local environmental issues and leads to informed action.

MWEEs are composed of multiple components that include both outdoor and classroom learning, 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 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.

This Great Lakes B-WET funding announcement focuses on a single priority area: MWEEs for K-12 students that incorporate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge. It is anticipated that approximately $300,000 will be available to fund eligible applications. Total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA should not exceed $100,000. The minimum Federal amount to request from NOAA is $50,000. Projects should be for a period between 12-24 months. No cost sharing is required under this program.

The Great Lakes B-WET program suggests that the MWEE framework can directly foster climate knowledge, skills, and competencies to address climate change, climate impacts, and the opportunities to contribute to climate solutions in participant's own communities. Therefore, the B-WET program also strongly encourages the purposeful incorporation of education about climate change into programming.

For Great Lakes B-WET, applicants may be physically located in any U.S. state; however, projects must target students in the Great Lakes region. For the purposes of this solicitation, the Great Lakes region is defined as counties in the Great Lakes watershed in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Applications for projects can come from any eligible applicant, however, involvement, coordination and support from an Indigenous organization or Tribal Government is required. To document the level of support and engagement from the Indigenous organization or government, official letters of collaboration from Indigenous entities are required with proposals.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

a. Overview

Every year, the NOAA B-WET program supports environmental education programs for thousands of students and teachers. These programs engage youth in meaningful watershed educational experiences (MWEEs) that provide memorable hands-on, experiential learning that are not typically available within traditional classrooms. It also plays a significant role in providing professional development to classroom teachers nationwide that increases their content knowledge, skills, and pedagogical expertise. Lastly, it supports the expansion of environmental literacy in a systemic manner throughout the region, including providing support for state-level capacity building.

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, stimulating discovery and wonder, and nurturing a sense of community will further connect students with their watershed, help reinforce an ethic of responsible citizenship, and promote academic achievement. Experiential learning techniques, such as those supported by the NOAA B-WET program, have been shown to increase interest in STEM, thus contributing to NOAA's obligations under the America Competes Act (33 USC 893a(a)).

b. Defining Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET)

B-WET was established in 2002 in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and currently exists in seven regions: California, Chesapeake Bay, Hawaii, Gulf of Mexico, New England, Pacific Northwest, and Great Lakes. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries coordinates four of the seven B-WET regions. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater areas encompassing more than 620,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The network includes a system of 15 national marine sanctuaries and Papahanaumokuakea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.

The Great Lakes B-WET region was established in 2011 with funding for awards provided by the Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

(https://www.glri.us/). The program is managed by NOAA's Office of Education and Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 2000 as the first national marine sanctuary in the Great Lakes. It encompasses 4,300 square miles off the Michigan coast in Lake Huron, and protects a significant collection of historic shipwrecks (https://thunderbay.noaa.gov/).

c. Defining the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE)

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, civic responsibility, and traditional ecological knowledge.

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 tribally

important/significant areas, 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 Tribal knowledge holders or elders, 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 storm water.

>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 and can be found at: https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-meaningful-watershed-educational-experience.

d. Resources for Implementing The MWEE

The following resources explain the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE) and provide guidance on implementing a MWEE:

> NOAA MWEE resources: This website, https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/resources/mwee-resources.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals should include a plan of action to show how students will participate in MWEE elements as defined in Section I.A.c. Student MWEEs should be organized around a driving question that has students focus on a locally relevant environmental issue or phenomenon affecting the Tribal community(ies), local watershed, and the Great Lakes ecosystem. Proposals should include a general overview of activities, and applicants should clearly understand and convey the primary learning objectives. Applications for projects can come from any eligible applicant, however, involvement, coordination and support from an Indigenous organization or Tribal Government is required. To document the level of support and engagement from the Indigenous organization or government, official letters of collaboration from Indigenous entities are required with proposals.

a. Great Lakes Basin Priorities

All projects must demonstrate a connection to the Great Lakes basin through the watershed system so that program participants understand how their actions can affect the Great Lakes ecosystem through their local watershed. Great Lakes B-WET awards are funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), and applicants must demonstrate how the project will "educate the next generation about the Great Lakes ecosystem." (GLRI Action Plan III, Objective 5.1, https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-10/documents/glri-action-plan-3-201910-30pp.pdf)

b. B-WET Priority Area

Applicants must address the following priority area:

Activities that incorporate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge as it relates to the Tribal community(ies) and the local watershed.

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the White House Council on Environmental Quality issued a memorandum to recognize Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge – also known as Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Ecological Knowledge – as one of the many important bodies of knowledge that contributes to the scientific, technical, social, and economic advancements of the United States and to our collective understanding of the natural world in decision-making. [Executive Office of the President Memorandum for the Heads of Departments and Agencies, Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decision Making (Nov. 2021)

https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ostps-teams/climate-and-environment/indigenous-knowledge/]

As defined in the above-mentioned memorandum, Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) is “a body of observations, oral and written knowledge, practices, and beliefs that promote environmental sustainability and the responsible stewardship of natural resources through relationships between humans and environmental systems. It is applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and spiritual systems. ITEK has evolved over millennia, continues to evolve, and includes insights based on evidence acquired through direct contact with the environment and long-term experiences, as well as extensive observations, lessons, and skills passed from generation to generation.” ITEK is owned by Indigenous people—including, but not limited to, Tribal Nations, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fact Sheet (Feb. 2011) https://www.fws.gov/nativeamerican/pdf/tek-fact-sheet.pdf; Inuit Circumpolar Council, Indigenous Knowledge (2022) https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/icc-activities/environment-sustainable-development/indigenous-knowledge/]

Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge resource in the context of the Great Lakes region:

>Guidance Document on Traditional Ecological Knowledge Pursuant to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (Feb 2021) at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/assets/bia/wstreg/Guidance_Document_on_TEK_Pursuant_to_the_Great_Lakes_Water_Quality_Agreement.pdf

c. Special Interest Areas

Any proposal to this announcement must meet the Great Lakes regional priory (I.B.a.) and the single priority area (I.B.b.). Additionally, NOAA also has a Special Interest Area, which is climate change education. More information on this special interest area is provided below. While applicants are not required to address a NOAA Special Interest Area, doing so will make applications more competitive.

The K-12 education system is a well-positioned venue for instilling comprehensive knowledge, skills, competencies, and resilience around the most pressing environmental issue of today: climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, 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 https://www.brookings.edu/research/unleashing-the-creativity-of-teachers-and-students-to-combat-climate-change-an-opportunity-for-global-leadership/; K12 Climate Action Commission, 2021 https://www.k12climateaction.org/blog/climate-action-plan-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.

Examples of climate change adaptation planning, and educational resource for Great Lakes regional context that include ITEK:

>A framework to integrate indigenous and traditional knowledge, culture, language and history into the climate adaptation planning process, the Tribal Climate Adaptation Menu (Tribal Adaptation Menu Team 2019) is available at: https://glifwc.org/ClimateChange/TribalAdaptationMenuV1.pdf.

>Great Lakes region curriculum example that integrates place-based evidence of climate change with science and promotes action, the “G-WOW” Curriculum (Gikinoo’wizhiwe Onji Waaban (Guiding for Tomorrow) “G-WOW” Changing Climate, Changing Culture is available at: http://g-wow.org/en-us/about/default.aspx

d. Additional Considerations to Support Program Priorities

Applicants with primarily outside-of-school projects should adapt components of the MWEE model for implementation in outside-of-school hours. Activities should emphasize using the environment as a core element of STEM skills, engage students and staff in hands-on environmental education opportunities that take place both outdoors and indoors, provide opportunities for students to interact with Tribal Knowledge Holders/elders, and other subject matter experts, and promote student interest in STEM careers. Outside-of-school projects should emphasize project-based learning, maximize youth voice and empowerment,

and include opportunities for student reflection and meaning-making.

C. Program Authority

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

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

It is anticipated that approximately $300,000 will be available in FY 2024 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds. NOAA anticipates making approximately three to six new awards, subject to the availability of appropriations. For each proposal the total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA should not exceed $100,000. The minimum Federal amount to request from NOAA is $50,000. Awards will be made with one allotment of funding for the entire project period, which may extend up to 2 years.

Applications not funded in the current fiscal year may be considered for funding in the next fiscal year without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement. This alternative to developing another, new funding opportunity for FY25 acknowledges the great effort required by applicants to develop a strong application as well as the work required by the B-WET Program Office and reviewers to conduct panel reviews. If we select applications from this FY24 competition for possible funding in FY25, the standard practice of considering the remaining projects from this FY 2024 solicitation in rank order, subject to the application of selection factors, will be followed.

The possibility of carrying the results of this competition over to FY 2025 depends on determining that the project applications received under this funding opportunity for FY 2024 funds remain relevant to NOAA priorities in the Great Lakes in FY 2025.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award

negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. Future opportunities for submitting proposals to the Great Lakes B-WET competitive process are anticipated, but will depend on funding levels and resources available to support new projects.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before August 1, 2024. Awards will be made in a single allotment of funding with an award period of up to 2 years. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period. 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. The requested award start date must begin on the first day of a month, and project end date is always on the last day of a month.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement depending upon the amount of collaboration, participation, or involvement of NOAA in the management of the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if the NOAA B-WET program shares responsibility for management, control, direction, or performance of the project with the recipient. 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. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions. III. Eligibility Information.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are: K-12 public and independent schools and school systems;

institutions of higher education; nonprofit organizations; regional, 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 as a project partner with an eligible applicant. Additional guidance on sub-recipient partners can be found at https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-200.331. Likewise, Federal agencies are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement, but may serve as collaborative project partners and may contribute services in kind.

Applicants may be physically located in any U.S. state; however, education projects must target teachers and/or students located in the Great Lakes region. For the purposes of this solicitation, the Great Lakes region is defined as counties in the Great Lakes watershed in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program. Cost sharing is not considered in the evaluation criteria or selection factors.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

No other criteria.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants should apply online through Grants.gov. If it is not feasible to apply online through Grants.gov, application packages may be requested from: Sarah Waters, Great Lakes B-WET Program Manager, NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary Office, 500 W. Fletcher St., Alpena, MI 49707, (989) 312-3520, sarah.a.waters@noaa.gov.

The NOAA Great Lakes B-WET Coordinator will be available to answer questions Monday through Friday, 9 am – 5:00 pm ET excluding federal holidays.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications should follow the content and format described below.

a. Format Requirements

All pages should be single-spaced and should be composed in at least 11-point font with one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. The project description should not exceed 10 pages, exclusive of the project summary (1-page), literature cited (if any), budget information (including indirect cost rate documentation), resumes of investigators, letters of support, data management plan, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire, and federal forms. Any attachment included in an electronic application should meet the format requirement when printed out. All documents submitted as electronic application elements should be PDF (rather than MS Word, Excel, MOV, or other file types).

Full applications, which are submitted through the www.Grants.gov website, should include a maximum of four files (PDF files only) in addition to the federal standard forms.

b. Content Requirements

1. Federal Forms: The following Federal Forms are required and must be submitted with applications with signatures of the authorized representative of the submitting organization. (Note: submission through Grants.gov results in automatic electronic signatures on these forms.)

1.1 Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424

1.2 Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A

1.3 Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

1.4 Certifications Regarding Lobbying: CD-511

Additionally, the following Department of Commerce forms may be required:

1.5. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable, see instructions on form)

2. Project Summary (1-page limit): The project summary accurately describes the project being proposed. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read the summary and grasp your plan. The project summary should include: organization title; Principal Investigator(s); address, telephone number, and email address of principal investigator(s); project title; project duration (12 to 24 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month); project objectives; total federal funding requested

(whole dollars only); cost-sharing to be provided from non-federal sources if any (match is not required for this funding opportunity and will not affect scoring); succinct description of work to be performed during the project period; and audience description (describe the demographics of your audience including location(s)).

3. The project description should describe and justify the project being proposed and address each of the evaluation criteria as described in Section V. A. A high-quality project description includes specificity regarding the purpose of the project in plain language, project goals and milestones, expected deliverables and outcomes, activities to be performed, and intended beneficiary or target audiences.

3.1. Goals, Objectives, and Need: The project description should include the goals, objectives, and purpose of the project. Include information about how the project contributes to greater understanding and stewardship of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

3.2. Target Audience and Contact Time: The project description should provide a discussion of the target audience(s) that will be served. Specifically, project descriptions should include a precise location of the project area(s) to be served and the number of students and teachers/educators (if applicable) to be reached each year of the proposed project. Demonstrate an understanding of the needs of that audience including anything that makes your target audience unique. Applicants should show total anticipated contact time with project participants and indicate how much of this time will be spent doing hands-on inquiry or engaging in action projects outdoors.

3.3. Methods: Project descriptions should include a timeline of expected deliverables, outcomes, and milestones and should describe how the planned activities will address the project goals and objectives. Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible.

3.4. Proposed activities: Provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken. Demonstrate how your project meets the criteria defined in the Program Priorities. Include details about MWEE activities (Issue Investigation, Outdoor Field Experiences, Synthesis and Conclusions, and Environmental Action Projects). Describe how you will incorporate ITEK and if applicable climate science and resilience activities into your programming. Describe how you will prioritize student safety during MWEE activities, demonstrating that participants will be provided a safe learning environment (mentor/student ratio, supervision, etc.). Provide information that outlines how you will recruit participants and identify incentives to be used, as applicable.

3.5. Project Partners. Describe the project partners' roles and the coordination among project partners; Describe how partnerships have been formed to engage schools, community members and/or organizations. Note: letters of commitment articulating project partners' roles should be submitted as a separate section of the application, not included in the 10-page limit to the Project Description.

3.6. Outreach and Sharing: The project description should include external sharing and communication, including a mechanism that encourages target audiences to share their experiences with peers and with the environmental education community while honoring Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge ownership. Projects should also exempt any culturally sensitive program elements from outreach and sharing as appropriate.

3.7. Evaluation: Project-level evaluations should identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities via a description of the project-level evaluation. Up to 10% of the budget can be spent on the evaluation component of your proposal. For this funding opportunity, project-level evaluation is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about your project's short-term outcomes in order to improve the project's effectiveness, document successes toward meeting project objectives, and inform decisions about future programming. It informs those who design, manage, and implement the project to make refinements and introduce improvements into future efforts.

4. Appendices (not included in the Project description 10-page count)

4.1. Literature Cited: If references are cited, applications should include a literature cited list.

4.2. Letters of Support and Partnership: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project should be included with the application, including the required letter of support from an Indigenous entity (if the applicant is not one of these entities).

4.3 Technical Experience, Qualifications, and Resumes: Applicants should provide a description of the applicant's 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 and partner conducting the project, including justification for how the project team members possess the expertise needed to carry out the project. Technical experience, qualifications, and resumes do not

count against the 10-page Project Description page limit.

4.4. Data Sharing: Please see section VI.B for information on the data sharing section of the application. If environmental data collected/generated as part of the project are primarily for education and are not intended to be shared with scientists outside of the educational program, this element of the application should consist of a paragraph (under the heading Data management Plan) describing the intended use of the data that an exemption from data sharing is requested. The data sharing plan does not count against the 10-page Project Description page limit.

4.5 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. Consequently, if your project may trigger consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), identify any impact the proposed work will have on the quality of the environment by completing the NOAA NEPA Questionnaire at the following link (https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf) and include it as an appendix to your application. Please see section VI.B. for information the NEPA section of the application. The NEPA responses do not count against the 10-page Project Description page limit.

5. Budget and Budget Justification: In addition to the SF-424A Budget Information form, applicants should include a detailed budget justification, or budget narrative. Please list requested amounts in whole dollars. Applicants are encouraged to use the B-WET budget template found https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2021-01/BWET_Budget_Template_21.xls?null. All budget information submitted with the application should mirror the dollar amounts on required SF-424 and SF-424A forms. The budget documentation does not count against the 10-page Project Description page limit.

The budget justification should explain the need for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested in relation to the project description. To ensure equitable participation by community members, applicants are encouraged to include participant support costs (e.g., direct financial compensation, covering travel expenses and meals, providing lodging).

Grant recipients may be asked to attend a two to three-day conference during the award period. Your budget should include, in the travel category, estimated funds for this trip at no more than $2,000 (such as meals, lodging, airfare and/or other transportation including rental car, shuttle, or taxi). Although this is considered an outreach and education opportunity, it should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criteria; local, regional

or national communication is required as well.

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://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf, 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: Michele Mazzocchetti, michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov.

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

As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C.6101 note, to the extent applicable, any applicant 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/SAM/.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. A federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency 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.

Applicants should allow a minimum of thirty days to be registered in SAM. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through www.grants.gov.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 1, 2024 to be considered for funding. Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application and that an advance registration process is required that may take a few days or several weeks.

If Grants.gov has technical issues that prohibit submission or use of Grants.gov is otherwise not feasible, hard copy applications will be accepted. Hard copies may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery service. Mail hard copy applications to Sarah Waters, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, 500 W. Fletcher St., Alpena, MI 49707. Hard copy applications must be postmarked by March 1, 2024.

A webinar outlining the required proposal elements and the review process will take place on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 from 2:30-3:30 pm CT / 3:30-4:30 pm ET (https://meet.google.com/ttx-qzqq-uay), and on Wednesday, December 13, 2023 from 1:00-2:00 pm CT / 2:00-3:00 pm ET (https://meet.google.com/tor-jzib-cry).

The Great Lakes B-WET Coordinator will be available to answer questions Monday through Friday, 8:30 am-5:00 pm ET excluding federal holidays.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

a. Indirect Costs: The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if your organization has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. If indirect

costs are requested, indirect-cost-rate agreements must be included for the applicant organization. If an applicant does not have an indirect cost rate and wants to include indirect costs, the applicant has up to 90 days after the award start date to submit an indirect cost proposal or cost allocation plan. Indirect-cost-rate agreement documentation is not required for sub-awardees.

Under 2 C.F.R. §200.414 Indirect (F&A) Costs, any applicant that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 C.F.R.§ 200.403 Factors affecting allowability of costs. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a cooperator chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Michele Mazzocchetti, michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov.

b. Construction: B-WET cannot fund projects with the primary purpose of construction. This includes the construction of new buildings, completion of shell space in existing buildings, renovation or rehabilitation of existing buildings, and construction or development of real property infrastructure improvements (e.g., site preparation, utilities, streets, curbs, sidewalks, parking lots, other streetscaping improvements, etc.). Alteration activities in support of an education project, such as the renovation of an educational exhibit or installation of a schoolyard garden space, would likely not be considered construction.

c. Allowable Costs: All costs must be reasonable, allowable and allocable. 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.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application and that an advance registration process is required that may take a few days or several weeks.

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov. Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Because first-time registration with Grants.gov can take up to three weeks or more, it is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Also, even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their registration may need to be renewed prior to submitting to Grants.gov. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please consider these notes in developing your submission timeline.

If you experience Grants.gov 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 print any error message received; and call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 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 Grants.gov technical problems. Similarly, an applicant’s failure to: complete the required registration, ensure that a registered Authorized Organization Representative submits the application, or receive an email message from Grants.gov are not considered Grants.gov technical problems. A Grants.gov technical problem occurs 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 technical problem, NOAA may allow more time for applicant submission. Sarah Waters, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, 500 W. Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 49707

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points, based on the following evaluation criteria and their values.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25

points)
2. Technical merit (40 points)
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15 points)
4. Project costs (15 points)
5. Outreach and education (5 points)

The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion includes factors reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets that criterion. Applications that best address these criteria will be the most competitive. Guidance about each evaluation criterion follows:

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the NOAA Great Lakes B-WET program, this includes the following questions:

Does the project align with the funding opportunity priorities? Does the project make a direct connection to the watershed, Great Lakes ecosystem through locally relevant science and stewardship activities? Does the applicant demonstrate a need for the project? Does the applicant include the appropriate partners to ensure that the deliverables of the grant can be executed? Does this list of partners represent the full set of voices for this work to be successful and sustainable? Does the experience use the local environment and community as a context for learning and focus around a watershed issue or phenomenon pertaining to Great Lakes region that is rooted in the unique culture, history, environment, economy, literature, and art of a students' school, neighborhood, town, or community? Does the applicant address the stated special interest area: climate change education?

2. Technical merit (40 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Technical merit will be scored using the following measures:

Does the proposal demonstrate involvement, coordination, and support from an Indigenous organization or government to incorporate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge into the MWEE? To document the level of support and engagement from the Indigenous organization or government, does the application include an official letter of collaboration from an Indigenous entity? How well does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives can

be achieved within the proposed project period? Does the applicant define the audience(s) that will be reached? Does the project include MWEE implementation where the targeted audiences will participate in all MWEE elements and supporting practices as appropriate? Does the project include student-led, age-appropriate environmental action activities that directly address the defined issue or phenomenon that the students are investigating? Does the proposed project address steps that will be taken to ensure a safe environment for the youth participants? Does the applicant provide an effective project-level evaluation plan to determine the project's effectiveness, document successes towards meeting the objectives, and inform decisions about future programming?
If addressing the special interest area, does the applicant demonstrate how they will incorporate age-appropriate climate science and resilience activities into programming? Does the applicant reference how ITEK guides this programming?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Overall qualifications of applicants will be scored using the following measures:

Does the applicant show the capability and experience to successfully complete the proposed project? Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the target audience? Does the applicant document collaborations with partners, including describing the roles and responsibilities of proposed partners? Are there letters of commitment from partners? Does the applicant have previous experience working in the Great Lakes or with Great Lakes environmental issues?

4. Project costs (15 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Project costs will be scored using the following measures:

Does the applicant adequately justify the proposed budget request and is the budget request reasonable for the number of students, teachers, and/or participants being reached and represent a good return on investment? Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students, teachers, and/or participants in contact with the environment? Are partners adequately compensated for their expertise and contribution to the project? Does the applicant budget for a Great Lakes B-WET conference?

5. Outreach and education (5 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Outreach and education will be scored using the following measures:

Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community, while honoring Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge ownership? Does the applicant include a plan for collecting and managing data, or request an exemption for an educational project?

B. Review and Selection Process

After the application period has closed, we will screen received applications to ensure that they were received by the deadline date; include an SF 424 form authenticated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant; address the priorities (including an official letter of collaboration from an Indigenous entity); and include required content. If the application does not conform to the requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be rejected without further consideration. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by a two-part review process; a technical review and a panel review. Both phases are conducted by the same set of private and/or public sector expert reviewers. Each review phase is described in detail below.

a. 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 are 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 reviewer is used, no consensus advice will be given.
The Program Officer will average these scores to create a preliminary ranked list of proposals. This preliminary rank order will be used in the subsequent panel meeting where final funding recommendations are made.

b. Panel Review:

A virtual review panel will convene to evaluate the ranking and comments from the

Technical Review and discuss the proposals as a group. Discussions are based on the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. During the panel meeting, reviewers can revise their scores and comments. Reviewers must individually submit a final ranking to the B-WET Program Manager by the end of the panel meeting. If one or more non-Federal reviewers are used, no consensus advice will be given by the review panel members. The reviewers' final rankings will be averaged for each application to produce a final rank order of the proposals. This establishes a final recommendation of rank order for funding.

In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the final rank order that are competing for the final available funds, the technical review scores will determine the rank order. If a tie persists beyond this, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official will resolve any ties by selecting projects based on the selection factors listed in Section V.C. of this federal funding opportunity.

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, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, and the project duration will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

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. 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 may submit comments to SAM.gov about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. 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. In addition, NOAA 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. 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

The Great Lakes B-WET Panel ratings will be provided in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the following factors:

a. Availability of funding;
b. Balance/distribution of funds:
1. geographically
2. by type of institutions
3. by type of partners
4. by research areas
5. by project types
c. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies;
d. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.A. and I.B., and I.C.;
e. Applicant's prior award performance;
f. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups;
g. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for awards to NOAA’s Grants Management Division who is authorized to obligate funds.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applications are usually recommended within 240 days from the date of publication of this notice. The project start date should not begin before August 1, 2024.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, and the project duration are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the NOAA Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding by the NOAA Grants Management Division with the issuance of an award signed by a NOAA Grants Officer. This is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. The official notice of award is the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, which the NOAA Grants Officer will typically issue electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system. The authorizing document, the CD-450 award cover page, is provided to the
authorized representative identified by the applicant on the SF-424, typically via an email from NOAA's electronic grants management system, and the principal investigator may receive a copy.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification from the Program Office indicating that their proposals were not recommended for funding and including technical reviewers' comments.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

THE 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 https://www.govinfo.gov/content/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 applies 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 electronic grants management system at 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: www.nepa.noaa.gov, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, 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 SAM.gov 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 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: 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 materials 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 https://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 additives —that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinyl chloride, 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).

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 as follows: a) An existing publicly accessible online data server at the funded institution is to be used to host these data (describe in application) or; b) Data are to be submitted to 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 c) Funding recipients will establish their own 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: Sarah Waters, Great Lakes B-WET Program Coordinator, sarah.a.waters@noaa.gov, (989) 312-3520.

C. Reporting

a. Financial Reports. All financial reports shall be submitted through the NOAA

electronic grants management system.

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 https://www.fsrs.gov/ on all sub-awards over $30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

c. Performance Reports. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer. Electronic submission of performance reports is required through the NOAA electronic grants management system. The semi-annual reports must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. A final comprehensive report is due at the end of the award period. The final comprehensive report shall be submitted through the NOAA electronic grants management system. It is recommended that recipients follow the progress report format provided in the following
link: www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/resources/grantee-resources.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding Great Lakes B-WET program or the application process, you may contact: Sarah Waters, NOAA Great Lakes B-WET Program Coordinator, sarah.a.waters@noaa.gov, (989) 312-3520, or view https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/bwet/greatlakes/.

VIII. Other Information

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for any proposal preparation costs. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

Applicants should be in compliance with requirements in any existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative funding agreements or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer in order to receive funds.

References:

Executive Office of the President Memorandum for the Heads of Departments and Agencies, Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decision Making. (Nov. 2021) https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ostps-teams/climate-and-environment/indigenous-knowledge/

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fact Sheet. (Feb. 2011) https://www.fws.gov/nativeamerican/pdf/tek-fact-sheet.pdf

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