

Fiscal Year 2020 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Fiscal Year 2020 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2020-2006338

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

Dates: The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM Eastern Time on March 6, 2020, when submitting through www.grants.gov (Grants.gov). PLEASE NOTE: for applicants that submit through Grants.gov, 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. If use of Grants.gov is impractical for technical or other reasons, paper copy applications will be accepted only as described in Section IV.D.

Informational webinars about the FY 2020 Chesapeake B-WET funding announcement will be held on January 14, 2020, at 2:00 PM Eastern Time and January 31, 2020, at 11:00 AM. To register for these webinars, please visit: <https://forms.gle/z4eVxcEkEshsomT87>

Funding Opportunity Description: Chesapeake B-WET is a competitive grant program that supports existing, high-quality environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new, innovative programs, and encourages capacity building and partnership development for environmental education programs throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Successful projects advance the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan by building capacity to support hands-on environmental education about issues affecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed for students and related professional development for teachers, administrators, and other educators who serve formal K-12 audiences. These Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) involve learning both outdoors and in the classroom as students engage in issue definition, outdoor field experiences, synthesis and conclusions, and stewardship and civic action.

Through this funding announcement, NOAA is soliciting proposals that support two Priority Areas under the theme of Capacity Building for MWEEs: (1) Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Initiatives, which advance state efforts toward systemic MWEE implementation at the

school district level, and, (2) Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative, which supports the development of systemic MWEEs in school districts and the networking of these school districts, their partners, and the larger environmental education community.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

a. OVERVIEW

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is a competitive environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) environment. B-WET funds projects that support student MWEEs and related professional development for teachers to foster stewardship of the Bay and its watershed. Environmentally literate citizens with the skills and knowledge to make well-informed environmental choices are key to sustaining the nation's ocean and coastal environments. 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 projects that increase opportunities for and encourage new participation in MWEE programming. These capacity building projects complement the 18 existing Systemic MWEE Implementation projects. Capacity building projects are not required to directly reach students and teachers, but can lay the foundation for MWEEs at the regional, state, school district, or individual school level.

Successful B-WET projects support formal education that contributes to the Environmental Literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program Agreement (<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/chesapeakebaywatershedagreement/page>) and NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (<https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-education-strategic-plan>)

b. DEFINING THE MEANINGFUL WATERSHED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (MWEE)

The MWEE definition below was developed by the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup. Additional tools and resources to help education professionals develop MWEEs such as "An Educator's Guide to the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience" and an online training can be accessed on BayBackpack at: <http://baybackpack.com/mwee/what-is-a-mwee>. More information about Chesapeake B-WET and MWEEs can be found at <https://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/bay-watershed-education-and-training-b-wet/bay-watershed-education-and-training-b-wet>

MWEEs are learner-centered experiences that focus on investigations into local environmental issues that lead to informed action and civic engagement. Both teachers and students play important roles in the MWEE by working together in partnership. Teachers present unbiased information and assist students with their research and exploration, while students go through the inquiry process and ultimately take action to address the issue. These activities, grounded in best practices for learning and the context of the local community and culture, help increase student interest, motivation, and attitudes toward learning, and achieve environmental stewardship. As a result of the MWEE activities students should have an understanding of basic watershed concepts, as well as the interaction between natural systems (e.g. wildlife, plants, and water cycle) and social systems (e.g. communities, transportation systems, and schools), highlighting the connection between human activity and environmental conditions. MWEEs consist of multiple components “what students do” (essential elements) and “what teachers do” (supporting practices) as defined below.

1. MWEE Essential Elements

1.1 Issue Definition

Students focus on a driving question that addresses a locally relevant environmental issue, problem, or phenomenon requiring background research and investigation. Driving questions—often referred to as essential questions, organizing questions, or overarching questions—are the “big picture” questions that are important for sparking curiosity and organizing inquiry for the issue investigation. Posed by the teacher, driving questions provide students with a framework for learning across disciplines. Students learn more about the issue through classroom instruction and by making observations, collecting data, conducting experiments, talking to experts, and reviewing credible publications. Supporting questions are generated by the students to help find the missing information needed to answer the driving question. During issue definition, students also reflect on personal and public values and perspectives related to the issue.

Applicants should consider the following characteristics of driving questions: supports learning objectives; is relevant and related to everyday life, is thought-provoking and intellectually engaging; is open-ended (i.e. typically will not have a single, final, and correct answer); promotes further inquiry (i.e. raises additional questions); encompasses both natural and social systems and topics; requires students to revisit the problem frequently as knowledge and understanding evolves; calls for higher-order thinking, including analysis, inference, prediction, and evaluation; and includes concepts and practices from multiple disciplines.

1.2 Outdoor Field Experiences

Students participate in multiple outdoor field experiences sufficient to investigate the issue, problem, or phenomenon. These investigations may involve making observations, collecting data, and/or conducting other activities required for answering their questions and informing student actions. To the extent possible and within appropriate safety guidelines, students are actively involved in planning the inquiry that occurs during the outdoor field experiences. Field study sites can be located on school grounds or at locations close to school such as streams or city parks. They can also take place at offsite locations like state parks, wildlife refuges, or education centers that are equipped with experts, gear, and facilities. A range of individuals, including teachers, environmental educators, natural resource professionals, or trained volunteers, can help facilitate field experiences. Outdoor field experiences should be fully supported by teachers to ensure that the concepts are reinforced in the classroom throughout the school year.

1.3 Synthesis and Conclusions

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

1.4 Stewardship and Civic Action

Once students have generated a claim, they should work in small groups or as a class to brainstorm and evaluate solutions, and then take action. Throughout this process, teachers play an important facilitation role by forming groups, moderating, and answering questions, while students drive the decision making, planning, and implementation in an age-appropriate way. Projects should be directly related to the issue the students are studying. Action projects may include stewardship, civic action, or a combination of both (see below for examples). Students reflect on the action and determine the extent to which the action successfully addressed the problem, challenge, or opportunity reflected in the claim. Students may also share proposals for sustaining or extending the action. Action projects can take many forms, including: Watershed Restoration or Protection (e.g.,

create schoolyard habitat, planting trees or grasses, invasive species removal, community cleanup, stormwater management); Everyday Choices (e.g., reduce/reuse/recycle/upcycle, composting, energy conservation, water conservation); Community Engagement (e.g., presentations, social media, event-organizing, messaging at community events/fairs/festivals, mentoring, PSAs, flyers, posters); and Civic Engagement (e.g., town meetings, voting, writing elected officials/decision makers, advocating for policy change). Action Projects related to Civic Engagement and Community Engagement should be focused on influencing behaviors as opposed to strictly communicating results of their investigations.

2. MWEE Supporting Practices

In addition to the components identified above, NOAA recommends that the following elements are in place to fully support successful MWEE implementation with students.

2.1 Active Teacher Support

While external partners are entirely appropriate to support MWEEs, teachers should support the experience in the classroom and in the field. Teachers are in the best position to help students make connections and draw on past lessons, serve as environmental role models, and enhance students overall outdoor education experience and should be involved in all components of the experiences detailed above. To support them in this role, teachers should have appropriate knowledge of environmental issues and watershed concepts, skill in connecting these issues to their curriculum, and competency in environmental education pedagogy, including the ability and confidence to teach outdoor lessons and to lead students in critical thinking about environmental issues.

2.2 Classroom Integration

MWEEs are anchored to curriculum standards and support formal goals for learning and student achievement. They provide authentic, engagement opportunity for interdisciplinary learning that crosses traditional boundaries between disciplines. Some portions of the experience, such as outdoor field experiences, may occur off school grounds and/or be facilitated in partnership with external providers, however the MWEE is integrated into the scope and sequence of the academic program.

2.3 Local Context

MWEEs occur within a local context (i.e. schoolyard, neighborhood, town, or community) in order to establish the life-relevancy of the issue, problem, or phenomenon being studied.

Situating the MWEE within local contexts enables students and teachers to explore how individual and collective decisions affect their immediate surroundings and how their immediate surroundings affect the larger environment.

2.4 Sustained Activity

MWEEs represent sustained activity that engages students from beginning to end. Though a field experience may occur on one day, the total duration leading up to and following the experience involves a variety of rich learning opportunities spread over the course of a unit or multiple units. Experiences such as tours, gallery visits, simulations, demonstrations, or nature walks may be instructionally useful, but alone do not constitute a MWEE.

2.5 Includes NOAA Assets, Including Personnel and Resources

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

3. Teacher Professional Development for MWEEs

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

3.1 Increases Teachers' Knowledge and Awareness of Environmental Issues

Teachers must have an adequate level of content knowledge for their MWEE topic area

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

3.2 Models MWEE framework

Facilitators should utilize the same techniques and experiences in professional development that teachers are expected to use with their students, such as hands-on, place-based, outdoor field experiences, and environmental issue investigation and action. Professional development should deliver training on both content and instruction, include year-long support for teachers, and include a plan for how teachers will be involved in implementing MWEEs with their students. Where appropriate, professional development should include tools for teachers to implement MWEEs on their school grounds. Resources exist to support the effective hands-on implementation of MWEEs and the development and continued use of integrated, sustainable indoor and outdoor environmental learning projects that provide substantial benefit to both students and the school environment. Please see the School Grounds for Learning resources available at: http://baybackpack.com/schoolyard_projects/about. This kind of in-depth professional development reinforces a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources.

3.3 Allows for Adequate Instructional Time

Professional development should be multi-day, occurring consecutively or over the course of several months. These workshops should include ample opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and planning for how to use knowledge and skills gained from professional development in the classroom.

3.4 Provides Ongoing Teacher Support and Appropriate Incentives

Even in cases where teachers participate in robust multi-day trainings, such as a summer or weekend courses, it is still essential that professional development providers have a structure in place for on-going teacher support and enrichment. This can take the form of follow up meetings, creating web-based forums for communication and feedback, establishing mentor teachers who can serve as points of contact, or including teams of teachers from one

particular school. Continuing education credits and stipends can be used to encourage participation in on-going professional development opportunities. Outreach and training opportunities for school administrators may help increase high level support for both environmental education and continuing teacher professional development for teachers.

3.5 Meets Jurisdictional Guidelines for Effective Teacher Professional Development

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

If the teacher professional development requirements are not feasible in the targeted school district, applicants should explain why it is not feasible and how they will build towards these requirements over the course of the grant and into the future. If funding requested under this priority area is dedicated solely to providing teacher professional development (i.e. grant dollars are not directly supporting any student MWEE activities), applicants must demonstrate how trained teachers will implement student MWEEs, and what resources (funds, staff, facilities, partner organizations, etc.) exist to support student components of the MWEE. Successful applicants under this priority will be asked to document the number of students receiving MWEEs as a direct result of the project.

Information on the Chesapeake B-WET program, including examples of education partnerships that have been funded to date, can be found at <https://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/funding/funded-awards>.

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

B. Program Priorities

Through this funding announcement, NOAA is soliciting proposals that support two Priority Areas under the theme of Capacity Building for MWEEs: (1) Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Initiatives, which advance MWEE Implementation, and (2) Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative, which supports elements of MWEE implementation at the school district and/or school-level. NOAA believes supporting both types of capacity building projects are essential to greater implementation and long-term sustainability of MWEEs. Proposals to this funding announcement should address only one priority area.

1: Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Initiatives

Proposals to this priority area build capacity for statewide K-12 environmental literacy initiatives which support the policies and structures necessary to advance environmental literacy at a statewide level.

Increased capacity for environmental literacy efforts at a statewide level creates opportunities for more and higher quality MWEEs in school districts throughout the watershed. Proposals to this priority area should create state-level frameworks, incentives, support systems, and/or drivers for environmental literacy to encourage or support MWEE planning and implementation in local school districts. All proposals should clearly articulate how the project will help to advance systemic MWEE implementation. Systemic implementation is defined as MWEEs that are embedded across an entire grade level or levels, or be part of a broader systemic program in a school district to reach every student.

Direct implementation of MWEEs for students should not occur in projects under this priority area, however, proposals may include activities involving teachers, administrators, and/or support staff, such as training for MWEE Ambassadors, creation of environmental literacy plans, the formation and support of teacher advisory groups, principal/supervisors academies, and sustainable school task forces. Proposals could also build capacity for agencies, organizations, and collaboratives that are working statewide to modify or enhance existing programs to offer full MWEEs to students or related trainings for educators.

Proposals for statewide projects must include documented support from state departments of education, and may also include support letters from natural resource or other state agencies.

2. Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative

NOAA wishes to continue building capacity for MWEEs by supporting one organization to build and support a watershed-wide network building initiative, which supports the development of systemic MWEEs in school districts and the networking of these school districts, their partners, and the larger environmental education community together.

The network will share information and coordinate efforts to overcome common barriers to systemic implementation. Key elements of the work will be to identify and recruit new partners from sectors not traditionally engaged in environmental education, and to ensure that districts with the highest need will be meaningfully included and supported. In addition to the MWEE network building initiative, requested funds under this priority may go toward

other Environmental Literacy capacity building initiatives, such as planning and executing regional environmental literacy workshops and conferences, mini-grant administration, or supporting MWEE evaluation and monitoring initiatives of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Applicants seeking to administer the network building initiative should have the organizational capacity to effectively manage 2-4 network building grants as well as up to 30 mini grants simultaneously to grantees in all Chesapeake Bay Watershed jurisdictions. Applicants must document prior experience administering federal grant funding to schools and non-profit organizations, and demonstrate previous experience with the MWEE and regional environmental literacy policy.

C. Program Authority

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

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Under this announcement, NOAA anticipates that approximately \$400,000 may be available in FY 2020 to fund new Capacity Building applications, subject to the availability of appropriations. NOAA anticipates making 3-5 Capacity Building awards, of which one will be for network building grant administration and the remainder for statewide environmental literacy initiatives. NOAA anticipates that applications to administer the Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative would not exceed \$200,000 annually in Federal funds, while Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Initiative projects would not exceed \$100,000 annually in Federal funds. The project period may be up to three years, but funding beyond the first increment, usually one year, is subject to the incremental funding policy described in Section II.B of this Announcement.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before July 1, 2020. Applications should cover a project period of between one and three years. Projects that request multi-year funding must include in their submission a full description of the activities and estimated budget by line

item (e.g. personnel, equipment, supplies) for all proposed work for each year.

When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding will usually be provided only for the first year of the project, and the award will be subject to incremental funding, usually annually. Once an incremental or multi-year project is awarded, the multi-year scope of work and budget is approved but funding beyond an initial increment is not provided. Future funding is anticipated to maintain such awards for project periods of up to three years; however, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award beyond the initial funding increment awarded. Continuation of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance 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 previous awards issued under the incremental funding policy do not need to apply to this funding announcement.

Single-year requests or awards in which an applicant proposed a multi-year project but NOAA limited the period of performance to a shorter time period will be required to re-compete for further funding in subsequent years. Any renewal of the project will depend on the submission of a new proposal subject to review, adequate progress on previous award(s), and the available funding.

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

C. Type of Funding Instrument

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

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are K-through-12 public and independent school systems, institutions of higher education, community-based and nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments. For profit organizations, foreign organizations, and foreign public entities are not eligible to apply; however, for-profit and foreign organizations and foreign public entities may participate with an eligible applicant as a project partner. Likewise, Federal agencies are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, but may be project partners.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic application packages are strongly encouraged 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 phone at 410-226-1015, or email at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office does not have a direct telephonic device for the deaf, however, TDD capabilities can be accessed through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800-735-2258, between the hours of 8 AM-4:30 PM.

Information on the Chesapeake B-WET program, including examples of currently supported projects, can be found on NOAA's website at <https://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/funding/funded-awards>. Potential applicants may contact the NCBO before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to B-WET goals and objectives.

B. Content and Form of Application

Required Elements for Applications:

(a) At the time of application submission, all applicants (but not project partners) 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.):

1) Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424

2) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A - When applying for a Multi-Year award (2 to 5 years), the non-federal entity must submit a line item budget (SF-424A) and corresponding budget narrative, see (b)(i.) below, for each of the funding periods anticipated. The budget justification/narrative requirement should reference the GMD Budget Narrative Guidance at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/training.html>.

3) Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: Form SF-424B

4) Certifications Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511

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

(i) Project Summary (1 page):

1) Project Title

2) Priority Area(s):

3) Project duration: 12 to 36 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month.

4) Organization and Partnerships: Briefly describe your organization and list your key partners for this grant, if applicable. Partnerships are encouraged.

5) Summary: Provide a brief statement that explains the need for your project and its goals and objectives. In addition, identify what NOAA priority you will address. Your summary should use layman's terms to provide reviewers with an understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of your educational project. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read this paragraph and grasp your plan. More information about NOAA assets and educational resources can be found at: <http://www.education.noaa.gov/>.

6) Delivery Method: Explain how you will reach your audience, such as workshops, planning meetings, interactive programs, summer institutes, webinars, etc.

7) Audience: Describe the demographics of your target audience including the state or region(s) and the number and types of participants you expect to reach, such as teachers, environmental educators, principals, school facilities managers, etc.

8) Budget Information: Total Federal funding requested this fiscal year; Total Non Federal match for this fiscal year. Total multi-year request and match (if applicable). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars.

(ii) Project Description (up to 12 pages): Describe in detail what your project will achieve with the following headings: What, Who, Why, 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.

1) What: Explain the goals and objectives for your project. Include information about how the project builds capacity for environmental literacy and stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Identify the priority area you are addressing. If your project may implicate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as described in the NOAA NEPA policy in Section VI.B.4. of this Announcement, applicants should provide relevant information in the project description. Any applicable supporting documents may be included as attachments that do not count toward the page limit. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

2) Who and Why: Identify the target audience that will be served and discuss why this audience was chosen to build capacity for environmental literacy. Describe why this audience is positioned to advance and enhance MWEs. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

3) How: This is the work plan for your project. Define the activities that will be conducted during this project, and their frequency. Reviewers should be able to determine the duration and frequency of activities, such as professional trainings, planning meetings, webinars, workshops, etc. If multi-year, provide deliverables for each year. Detail how the project meets or supports the definition of the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience as defined in this funding opportunity and what NOAA products, services, or staff will be used in program delivery. This section addresses technical merit of the proposal. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical merit).

(iii) Sustainability: Discuss a plan for sustainability of project beyond NOAA funding.

Explain how requested funding can build a project that can be sustained after NOAA grant funds expire, or if funding will be necessary beyond the project period. List other sources of funding that have been sought for the project and the status of those requests. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.4 (Project Costs).

(iv) Outreach and Education: Projects should include significant external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience. Applications should discuss outreach strategies that enable the sharing of project outcomes and how they will communicate and disseminate information from the project to ensure broader MWEE implementation. This could include conference presentations or strands, web development and social media. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.5 (Outreach and Education).

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

Participation in B-WET National Evaluation:

In addition to project evaluation, grantees will be asked to participate in data collection for the national B-WET evaluation. The B-WET national evaluation consists of two parts; part 1 is for all recipients of B-WET grants while part 2 is only for programs that work with teachers. The B-WET national evaluation is intended to monitor program implementation and outcomes on an ongoing basis. Results of this evaluation will be used to improve the B-WET program, document its value, and better tailor it to program audiences. Grantees with teacher participants will be able to view a summary of responses from their participating teachers. Success of this effort depends on grantee participation, so applicants are strongly encouraged to review the information about the national evaluation system (available here: <http://go.usa.gov/x8xwp>) and consider how they can support it as part of their projects.

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

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

B-WET grantees who respond to the questionnaires will remain anonymous to B-WET and NOAA. NOAA will only view the resulting data in aggregate at the national or regional level.

All applicants should provide information about how they plan to support this national evaluation system, incorporate it into the project timeline, and ensure responses from participating teachers as part of their application. Applicants may incorporate staff time required to complete the B-WET national evaluation in their budget proposal. More information, including all of the survey instruments, is available on the NOAA B-WET

National Evaluation website here: <http://go.usa.gov/xkc7P>.

Note that this evaluation system is not intended to replace project level evaluation. It may not provide the level of detail needed to fully understand, describe, and improve specific grant projects. Grantees are therefore encouraged to balance these needs within their planning and budgeting process.

Additional information about this project, including background, FAQs, survey instruments, and suggested text for communicating with your teacher participants about this project, is available here: <http://go.usa.gov/xkc77>.

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

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

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

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

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

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs, which are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular

project. See 2 C.F.R. 200.56-.57 and 200.412-.415 at <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>. An applicant may also propose all allowable project charges as direct costs.

An applicant requesting indirect costs should provide a current approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement established with its cognizant Federal agency or an acknowledgement letter from the cognizant agency to which the applicant has submitted a proposed rate. In addition, if an award recipient has never established an indirect cost rate with any Federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimus rate described at 2 C.F.R. 200.414 or it may negotiate a new rate with the Department of Commerce. The negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by the NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, <https://go.usa.gov/xpR9u>, 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. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical Merit).

(iii) Logic Model: Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific outputs and outcomes. Provide a logic model that displays these expected outputs and outcomes. A basic logic model template and instructions are available at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet-evaluation.html>. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.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. If you send resumes for the key personnel conducting the project, please keep them to a maximum of three, one-page resumes. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3

(Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(v) Partnership Letters of Commitment: If the applicant organization has partners, such as state agencies, universities, or other organizations, include letters of commitment from partners explaining their role in and/or funding of the proposed project. Do not include letters of endorsement from previous participants, teachers, or others not directly involved in project implementation except letters demonstrating school or school district support. Letters should be received as part of application submission. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(vi) Results from prior NOAA support: If any principal investigator (PI) or co-PI identified on the project has received support from NOAA in the past five years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:

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

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

Data Management Guidance to Applicants

The NOAA B-WET program has developed this guidance to help grant applicants plan to share quality environmental data collected as part of their B-WET funded projects, where

applicable. Environmental Data are defined by NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 212-15: Management of Environmental Data and Information as recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans, atmosphere, space environment, sun, and solid earth, as well as correlative data such as socio-economic data, related documentation, and metadata. Digital audio or video recordings of environmental phenomena (such as animal sounds or undersea video) are included in this definition. Numerical model outputs are included in this definition, particularly if they are used to support the conclusion of a peer-reviewed publication. Data collected in a laboratory or other controlled environment, such as measurements of animals and chemical processes, are included in this definition. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely-used or international standards.

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

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

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

data will be shared, based on the following guidance:

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

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

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

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

Questions Regarding This Guidance

Responsible NOAA Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients: Elise Trelegan, Chesapeake B-WET Coordinator, elise.trelegan@noaa.gov, 410-226-1015; or Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, NOAA Office of Education, bronwen.rice@noaa.gov, 202-482-6797.

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

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

The registration described here and in Section IV.G. implements requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Under this

law, to enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public, any application awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at www.sam.gov/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/text-idx?](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2dae4a7dcd5848a6364bb94d2d7786dd&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2subtitleA.tpl)

[SID=2dae4a7dcd5848a6364bb94d2d7786dd&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2subtitleA.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2dae4a7dcd5848a6364bb94d2d7786dd&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2subtitleA.tpl).

Each applicant (unless an exception arises under 2 C.F.R. 25) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (e.g. DUNS number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. See 2 C.F.R. Part 25, <http://go.usa.gov/cTbMk>.

DOC TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicant 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>.

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. 200.205. 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.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on March 6, 2020 if submitting

through Grants.gov. PLEASE NOTE: When submitting through Grants.gov, you will receive two emails. An initial email will be sent to confirm your attempt to submit a proposal. This is NOT a confirmation of acceptance of your application. It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application and send you a second email confirming successful submission. NOAA considers the validation time as receipt. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

If use of Grants.gov is impractical for technical or other reasons, paper copy applications will be accepted at the address listed in Section VII. Paper copies may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery service. Applications submitted by mail must include a SF-424 form with original ink or valid electronic signature and date from an authorized recipient organization representative, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark or provided to a commercial carrier with tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 pm Eastern Time on March 6, 2020; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. Paper applications received more than three business days after the deadline will not be reviewed, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications. No email or fax copies will be accepted. To submit a hand-delivered application, applicants should make advance arrangements with NOAA by contacting the official listed in Section VII. of this Announcement, and the application must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 6, 2020.

Informational webinars will be held on January 14, 2020 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time and January 31, 2020 at 11:00 AM. To register for these webinars, please visit: <https://forms.gle/z4eVxcEkEshsOmT87>.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

Allowable Costs

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

are not allowed.

G. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

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

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov 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. 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

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

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

- a. Does the project meaningfully advance environmental literacy activities related to environmental literacy planning, student MWEEs, and/or sustainable schools at the statewide level? (10 points)
- b. Does the applicant address the need for this project and will it fill a recognized gap in the state or region being targeted? (5 points)
- c. Does the applicant demonstrate understanding of the full definition of the MWEE and its role in K-12 education and student stewardship? (5 points)

d. Does the proposal articulate how it supports the Environmental Literacy Goal and related outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Program Agreement? (5 points)

2. Technical merit (35 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, logical, and feasible, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

a. Does the application clearly describe how the project will be executed logistically and include details sufficient to determine how stated goals and outcomes will be achieved? Examples of such details could include specific nature of capacity building activities (duties of a funded position for example), duration and frequency of trainings and meetings, how grant applications are reviewed, how grants are monitored and evaluated, etc. (10 points)

b. For Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative only, does the applicant ensure that grant projects will support the development of a network of school districts and nonprofit partners to advance environmental education through systemic environmental literacy programs in school districts with the highest need? If mini-grants are administered, does the applicant ensure that mini-grants will support student experiences that are part of a full MWEE (issue investigation, outdoor field experiences, synthesis and conclusions, and stewardship and civic action) rather than stand-alone field experiences? For teacher professional development mini-grants, does the applicant discuss how teachers are expected to implement student MWEEs? (10 points)

c. For Statewide Environmental Literacy Initiatives, does the proposal clearly justify and explain how supporting the statewide initiative will ultimately improve MWEE quality and/or increase MWEE implementation? (10 points)

d. Does the logic model show a firm understanding of desired outputs and outcomes for the project? (5 points)

e. Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? (5 points)

f. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the applicant discuss how they will participate in the NOAA National Evaluation? (5 points)

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.

- a. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the target community, including in depth understanding of school districts and environmental literacy programming? (2 points)
- b. Does the applicant demonstrate the capability and experience to successfully complete similar projects? (3 points)
- c. Does the applicant document experience working towards the Environmental Literacy goal and related outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Program agreement? (5 points)
- d. For Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative only, does the applicant document experience working in network development? Do they have experience administering an environmental education focused grant program? (5 points)
- e. For Statewide Environmental Literacy Initiatives only, is the applicant in a strategic position that will enable it to establish environmental literacy guidelines, policy, and initiatives at the statewide level to be implemented in K-12 schools? (5 points)

4. Project costs (20 points)

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

- a. Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the number of participants and/or target audience to be reached? (10 points)
- b. Does the proposal adequately address project sustainability after NOAA funding? (5 points)
- c. Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? (2 points)

- d. Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and is this a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? (3 points)

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. Specifically, does the project involve mechanisms for significant sharing and communication about the project to both the target and external audiences? In addition, this section also includes consideration of the Data Sharing Plan described in Section IV.B.(b)(vii) of this Announcement.

- a. For Regional MWEE Network Building Initiative projects only, does the applicant discuss an outreach strategy that will effectively promote the program models to potential program partners throughout the Bay Watershed? (5 points)
- b. For Statewide Environmental Literacy Initiatives only, does the proposal include plans for effectively communicating project goals and outcomes to project participants and other environmental literacy stakeholders? (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

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

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

Technical Review:

The purpose of the technical review is to evaluate each proposal's technical merit via

individual evaluations of the proposals. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of 3 reviewers. Reviewers provide comments (which can be shared with applicants after the competition has concluded) and assign scores to the applications based the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of this federal funding opportunity. No consensus advice will be given.

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

Panel Review:

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

Up to three 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 based on the Selection Factors (e.g. geographic distribution) described in Section V.C of this Announcement. The Selecting Official 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. However, the Selecting Official will select proposals after considering the recommendations of the review panel, and recommendations of the Chesapeake B-WET Coordinator. 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. 200.205. 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 the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System, or FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, the quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory,

regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award.

Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. NOAA also reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. In addition, NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management requirements referenced in Section VI.B. of this Announcement, and if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

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.

5. Applicant's prior award performance

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the three months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to NCBO and notification, and applicants may receive communications to negotiate a potential award by May 2020. Final issuance of awards or declinations are expected by August 2020. No date prior to July 1, 2020 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding with an official notice of award, the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer, and accompanying award package. The CD-450 award cover page is available at https://connection.commerce.gov/sites/connection.commerce.gov/files/media/files/2016/cd-450_april_2017.pdf. The CD-450 (including associated terms it incorporates by reference) is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin.

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this Announcement and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

2. Uniform Administrative Guidance

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

3. Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for any or all qualified projects pursuant to this Announcement or that any proposal will be selected for funding. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the competition described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award funding for specific projects, or obligate available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs for awards that have not been designated as "research" unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when an award is made. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for any direct costs of proposal preparation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded to a

meritorious applicant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Funded awards are subject to enforcement and termination provisions under 2 C.F.R. 200.338-.342.

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

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

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

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

5. Felony and Tax Certification

Where required in accordance with applicable Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representative making a certification regarding any applicable Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law. A sample form may be viewed at https://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/docs/unpaid_tax_liability_form.pdf.

C. Reporting

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

1. Financial Reports - Information about federal financial reports is available at: <http://go.usa.gov/cjE4T>.

2. Performance/Progress Reports - Suggested content and guidance related to Chesapeake B-WET performance/progress reports can be found here: <https://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/images/stories/education/bwet/noaabwetprogressreportguidance2018.pdf>.

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

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the Chesapeake B-WET Applying for a Grant webpage: <https://go.usa.gov/xnRbu> or contact Elise Trelegan at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office by phone at 410-226-1015, or email at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov or by mailing correspondence to 200 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Suite 460, Annapolis, MD 21401.

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, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality 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.

In addition, Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.