

FY24 NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET)

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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: FY24 NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2024-2008240

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.008, NOAA Mission-Related Education Awards

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on February 20, 2024 to be considered for funding. Applicants should apply online through Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) is seeking proposals under the New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (New England B-WET) Program: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/noaa-new-england-bay-watershed-education-and-training-new-england-b-wet-program
New England B-WET is an environmental education program that funds locally relevant, authentic experiential learning for K-12 audiences through Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs; defined below) in New England states.

The FY24 New England B-WET funding announcement focuses on two priority areas: (1) projects combining long-term, classroom-integrated MWEEs for students and teacher professional development, and (2) Capacity Building for K-12 Environmental Literacy at the state and local level. Applicants may be physically located in any U.S. state; however, projects must target students and teachers in the New England region. For the purposes of this solicitation, the New England region includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

This New England B-WET funding announcement emphasizes our strong commitment to expanding the participation of minority communities that have historically faced barriers preventing or limiting access to NOAA resources and is interested in projects that partner specifically with organizations and institutions that serve underserved groups, including minority communities. NOAA also recognizes that the MWEE framework can contribute to fostering an understanding of how watersheds are connected to coastal and offshore Atlantic fisheries and protected species stewardship, as well as contribute to climate change and resilience education

that support climate solutions.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity includes information on the application process and evaluation criteria for proposals applying under Priority 1 may request between \$25,000 to \$100,000 in total Federal funding for a project period of two years. Projects applying under Priority 2 may request between \$75,000 to \$150,000 in total Federal funding for a project period of three years.

Grants resulting from this competition depend on the availability of annual Federal funding, as provided in enacted Appropriation Acts. Successful applicants are not guaranteed a specific level of funding. If funds are not available in FY2024, applications submitted in FY2024 may be carried over for consideration in FY2025 should funds become available then and if these applications remain relevant to New England B-WET priorities.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

a. Overview

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Bay Watershed Education and Training (NOAA B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning, and outdoor investigations integrated into formal classroom learning, from kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12). Established first in 2002 in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, B-WET programs exist today in the Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, California, Hawaii, Pacific Northwest, Great Lakes, and New England. New England B-WET began in 2008.

New England B-WET supports grantee capacity building and connects grantees with local NOAA and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) experts, while being responsive to local education and environmental priorities. For the purposes of this solicitation, the New England region is defined as the following states: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

NOAA recognizes that knowledge and commitment built from first-hand experience, especially in the context of one's community and culture, is essential for achieving environmental stewardship. Carefully selected experiences driven by rigorous academic learning standards, engendering discovery and wonder and nurturing a sense of community, will further connect students with their watershed, help reinforce an ethic of environmental stewardship, and promote academic achievement. Environmentally literate individuals can become effective future workers, problem solvers, and thoughtful community leaders and participants.

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 that increases their content knowledge, skills, and pedagogical expertise. Lastly, it supports the expansion of environmental literacy in a systematic manner throughout the region, including providing support for state-level capacity building.

b. Defining the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE)

All seven B-WET regions throughout the country use the MWEE as an approach to

delivering high quality environmental education, as follows. It is based on the MWEE definition developed by the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup. Additional MWEE information and resources are provided as resources on our website: www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/resources/mwee-resources.

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

The MWEE consists of four essential elements and four supporting practices that build upon each other to create a comprehensive, student-centered learning experience. Throughout the MWEE, teachers provide structure, support, and encouragement as students use their curiosity and creativity to investigate and take action to address a local environmental issue. To support teacher implementation of MWEEs, B-WET has also included six characteristics that are recommended to be included in teacher professional development activities. MWEEs are appropriate for all grade levels with content and practices growing in complexity and sophistication across the grades — starting with teacher-guided investigations and progressing to student-led inquiry. Using the MWEE framework helps educators create an engaging program to achieve their learning objectives (i.e., the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should be able to exhibit following instruction). Learning objectives should address academic standards but might also include other objectives, such as teamwork, social-emotional learning, and civic responsibility.

1. MWEE Essential Elements

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

1.1 Issue Definition

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

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

1.2 Outdoor Field Experiences

Students participate in multiple Outdoor Field Experiences to explore the driving question and strengthen their connection to the natural world. Within appropriate safety guidelines, students are actively involved in planning and conducting the field investigations, including developing supporting questions to explore the driving question in the field. Field experiences allow students to interact with their local environment and contribute to learning in ways that traditional classroom or laboratory settings may not. During field experiences, students can use their senses, scientific equipment, and technology to make observations, collect data or measurements, and conduct experiments necessary to answer their supporting questions and inform environmental action. Students who have opportunities to learn in, thrive in, and appreciate the outdoors can become informed and engaged champions for our natural resources.

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

should also prepare students by providing information and discussing what students can expect to see, feel, or experience during their time outdoors to ensure students feel safe and comfortable during their field experiences.

1.3 Synthesis and Conclusions

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

1.4 Environmental Action Projects

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

This essential element allows students to understand that they personally have the power to bring about change by taking action to address environmental issues at the personal, community, or societal level. Taking action instills confidence in students and can contribute to students becoming environmental stewards in their communities.

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

> **Restoration or Protection:** actions that assist in the recovery or preservation of a watershed or related ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Examples include: plant or restore protective vegetation/trees; restore a local habitat; remove invasive plants; clean up litter at local beaches, parks, or school grounds; develop a school garden, natural history area, community garden, or other sustainable green space; install rain gardens to help manage 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.

2.1 Teacher Facilitation

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

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

2.2 Learning Integration

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

2.3 Sustained Experience

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

2.4 Local Context

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

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

3. Teacher MWEE Professional Development Characteristics

Professional development providers play a crucial role in preparing teachers to implement successful MWEEs with their students. Professional development that includes

characteristics such as: relevant content; explicit modeling of educational frameworks; collaboration, feedback and modeling instruction such as student-centered teaching; adequate time for professional development including time for ongoing support; and offering participation incentives that teachers value leads to a variety of positive outcomes. Professional development should empower teachers to confidently and competently use the MWEE framework to support standards-based learning that aligns with local education agency initiatives. Teachers should gain confidence in the value of MWEEs and strategies for conducting them so that they will be able to implement MWEEs after the professional development has ended. To set teachers up for success, the following six overarching characteristics, informed by education research and evaluation results, are recommended for inclusion in professional development to support teachers implementing MWEEs.

3.1 Increases teachers' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues

Professional development facilitators should ensure that teachers have an adequate level of content knowledge in science, specific to their grade level and discipline, to support their MWEE. The content knowledge should also be connected to the interactions between natural systems and social systems, including human impacts on local watersheds and larger Earth systems. Recognizing that environmental issues often include different perspectives and opinions about the environment, teachers must also experience and build skills that enable them to address these traditionally non-academic factors in their classrooms. When combined, this knowledge and these experiences often result in teachers who are more aware of, and more prepared for, the complexity of implementing MWEEs.

3.2 Models MWEE framework

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

Research suggests teachers are more likely to engage their students in activities they experience themselves during professional development programs. Therefore, MWEE professional development should always include opportunities for teachers to experience environmental action projects that connect to the watershed issue being studied, as well as the inquiry activities their students will take to plan and implement their own action projects

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

Effective professional development includes peer collaboration, time for teachers to

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

3.4 Allows for adequate instructional time and ongoing support

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

Regarding the time allocated for professional development, educational research findings and evidence from the B-WET national evaluation system support the B-WET program recommendation that professional development include more than 30 hours of professional development (for example, in-person multi-day workshops, virtual lectures or demonstrations, field-based data collection, one-on-one consultations), of which more than 10 hours should be spent doing hands-on inquiry or engaging in action projects in the outdoors. It has been shown that these targets will change teacher practice and increase the likelihood that teachers will implement impactful MWEEs. Where states and/or school districts put limits on the amount of time teachers can spend in professional development, applicants should describe those limitations and how they will maximize the professional development time that is available.

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.

3.5 Offers appropriate incentives

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

3.6 Meets jurisdictional guidelines and engages leadership

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

4. Other Considerations

4.1 Includes NOAA assets, including personnel and resources

NOAA has a wealth of applicable products, data, and services as well as a cadre of scientific and professional experts who can enhance student and teacher experiences both in the classroom and in the field. These resources complement the educator’s strengths and augment the educational resources. Additionally, NOAA personnel can serve as important role models for career choices and stewardship. For applicants seeking to address the Climate Change special interest area, NOAA provides data, tools, and information to understand and prepare for climate variability and change. Many resources exist that can support teachers and students. For more on NOAA assets for education please see: www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections, NOAA in your state (www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/), and NOAA in your backyard (www.noaa.gov/education/noaa-in-your-backyard).

4.2 Ensures cultural relevance

The New England B-WET Program is strongly committed to expanding the participation of communities historically and systemically facing barriers to outdoor experiential educational experiences and MWEEs and ensuring that students’ identities are reflected in those experiences. Programming should be designed to be culturally relevant and make authentic connections to students' lived experiences. Cultural relevance is defined as the ability to

effectively reach and engage communities and their youth in a manner consistent with the cultural context and values of that community while effectively addressing disparities of diversity, equity, and inclusion within an organization's entire structure.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must address one of the following priorities: (1) Projects combining long-term, classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) through teacher professional development and student experiences or (2) Projects that will increase capacity for the field of environmental education at the state and local level. Descriptions of these priorities are described in detail below.

a. Priority 1: Projects combining long-term, classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) through teacher professional development and student experiences.

NOAA's New England B-WET program seeks proposals for projects that support high quality teacher professional development for classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). Projects must include the development of teacher-led student outdoor experiences, learning, and environmental actions that connect students to their local watershed. These projects must address all aspects of the MWEE, as defined in Section I.A.b.

1. Teacher Professional Development

Professional development for teachers, coupled with MWEEs for students that are fully supported by their teachers in the classroom, will help concepts of watershed education be reinforced throughout the school year. Teachers should be trained to rely extensively on hands-on, inquiry-based experiential teaching and learning that allows students to draw on multiple disciplines and provides genuine, locally relevant sources of knowledge that can be used to help advance student learning skills across the entire school curriculum.

Projects should include more than 30 hours of professional development time for each teacher, of which more than 10 hours should be spent doing hands-on inquiry or engaging in action projects outdoors. Professional development opportunities should allow for adequate instructional time, and create a structure for on-going teacher support and enrichment. Where states and/or school districts put limits on the amount of time teachers can spend in professional development, applicants should describe those limitations and how they will maximize the professional development time that is available. Projects should be designed so that teachers are capable of conducting MWEEs independently. These targets are expected to support teacher training and increase the likelihood that teachers will successfully implement

MWEEs in their classrooms. The long-term goal for the professional development is to empower teachers to continue MWEE implementation and stewardship action in their classrooms even after B-WET funding is exhausted.

Professional development for teachers may include, but is not limited to, a combination of the following types of supported activities: workshops, college level courses, training for individuals who provide teacher professional development, individual teacher coaching and support (e.g., curriculum planning, shared teaching, demonstrations and/or other forms of in-school or in-field support), development of teacher networks, and/or online support (e.g., courses, webinars, discussion forums). Research suggests teachers are more likely to engage their students in activities they experience themselves during professional development programs. Therefore, MWEE professional development should always include opportunities for teachers to experience environmental action projects that connect to the watershed issue being studied, as well as the inquiry activities their students will take to plan and implement their own action projects.

Professional development, and subsequent implementation with students, may take place on school grounds or at off site locations. Where appropriate, professional development should include tools for teachers to implement MWEEs on their school grounds and/or adequate resources for transportation for teachers to participate in off-site professional development.

2. Student Experiences

All proposals should demonstrate a connection to the Gulf of Maine or Atlantic Ocean through a local watershed system so that students understand how their actions, even if inland, are connected to the health of the marine ecosystem. B-WET funded projects should include more than 5 hours of student activity time spent outdoors and incorporate at least one measurable environmental action situated in places where students live, grow, and play. Student MWEEs led by the applicant and partners should serve as part of the teacher's professional development and training for how to successfully implement a MWEE.

Since teachers often cite the lack of transportation funding as a barrier to taking students off school grounds for field trips, if you believe your proposed projects would benefit students the most by bringing them to a site that requires transportation to the site, we encourage you to allocate funds in your budget to cover transportation costs.

3. Other Requirements

All proposals submitted under Priority 1 should also include the following elements:

3.1 An outreach opportunity. Outreach opportunities should allow students, teachers, and

project staff to share their experiences with peers, other students, and their community (e.g., newsletters, peer-to-peer presentations, conferences, community events, media/social media).

3.2 Inclusion of multiple partners. Partners may include (but are not limited to) non-profits, community organizations, schools, school departments, tribes, local municipalities, universities, etc. Partners should be actively involved in the project and submit a letter demonstrating the level of commitment and involvement with the application package.

3.3 Demonstrate alignment with state or local learning standards and NOAA's Education Strategic plan (www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-education-strategic-plan).

3.4 Use of NOAA resources. Description of NOAA resources that will be used in support of the training or MWEs such as data, places, or collaborations with NOAA entities as partners.

3.5 Community partnerships that lead with equity. Applicants should work with community organizations that lead with equity (if the applicant is not one of these entities). In order to be effective, sustainable, and equitable, environmental education must be integrated within organizations that understand and support the needs of their community. The NOAA B-WET program is interested in projects that partner specifically with organizations and institutions that serve groups that have been affected by historic and systemic barriers preventing or limiting access to NOAA resources, particularly minority communities. Projects are strongly encouraged to develop meaningful and mutually-beneficial partnerships that honor the strengths of community organizations. In successful partnerships, organizations have shared goals and work together to share resources, communicate effectively, collaborate on decision-making, and competently engage members of diverse cultures and expertise. Adequate compensation should be provided for community-based organization partners and community members for the effort they are contributing to the project. Community partnerships may include, but are not limited to:

- > Historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas.

- > Organizations and institutions that serve groups historically or systematically excluded from STEM and environmental fields, particularly minority communities.

- > Partnerships that help to address a watershed challenge, problem, or phenomenon by bringing in local expertise on existing environmental issues and creating innovative solutions

and/or traditional ecological knowledge.

> Partnerships that enhance the local context, cultural relevance, and cultural competence in professional development for all teachers.

4. Special Interest Areas

New England B-WET has two additional Special Interest Areas that applicants applying under Priority 1 may wish to address if they choose. These Special Interest Areas are not required, however, they will be considered during the review process and will make applications more competitive. These areas are:

> New England fisheries and protected species: The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office is an office under the NOAA Fisheries. We work with partners to ensure sustainable fishing opportunities, protection for endangered species and marine mammals and the conservation of the habitat needed to support marine life. Given these commitments, NOAA is interested in B-WET projects that develop student understanding around the ecological, economic, or cultural importance of New England fisheries and protected species including, but not limited to, groundfish, shellfish, sea turtles, Atlantic salmon, or marine mammals; and the habitats that support them.

> Climate change science, resilience, and justice: The K-12 education system is a well-positioned venue for instilling comprehensive knowledge, skills, competencies, and resilience around one of the most pressing economic, social and environmental issues of today: climate change. Education has the power to help students develop meaningful personal connections to climate solutions, a sense of personal agency and empowerment, and ultimately impact their behaviors and decision-making in relation to climate change (Kwauk, 2021; K12 Climate Action Commission, 2021). The MWEE educational framework can directly foster climate knowledge, skills, and competencies to address climate change, climate impacts, and the opportunities to contribute to climate solutions in their own communities. Proposals incorporating this special interest area should demonstrate an understanding of age-appropriate, effective climate education communication strategies that will empower teachers and students to take individual, school-wide, and/or community action.

b. Priority 2: Capacity building for K-12 environmental literacy at the state and local level. B-WET projects funded under this priority will focus on building capacity and structures within schools for long-term environmental education and literacy programming at the state and local level.

The project should:

> Engage educational administrators, leaders, and networks to build support for implementing state environmental and/or climate change literacy plans in K-12 learning in one of the six New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, or Rhode Island); and/or

> Build organizational capacity for long-term environmental education networking, planning, and policy engagement. Approaches to capacity building could include (but not limited to):

>> Managing state-wide mini-grants to K-12 schools, non-profits, tribal governments, or community-based organizations working to build individual school capacity for implementing MWEEs on school grounds, particularly focusing in environmental justice communities with disproportionately high human and environmental health risks and impacts or alternatively disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment. Resources for community indicators may include, but are not limited to, the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening or Mapping tool <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen> or the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en#7.48/41.543/-71.41>).

Examples of potential mini-grants may include (but are not limited to) activities that will support school wide climate change literacy and resiliency, the creation of a garden site or outdoor laboratory in an urban school yard to provide an outdoor green learning space to facilitate MWEE implementation, development of an outdoor gear lending library that serves an entire school, purchasing a beach accessible or all-terrain wheelchair to facilitate outdoor field trip accessibility, funding part-time environmental education staff that lead school-ground based student MWEEs, support for school-wide environmental action newsletter, workshop, or event that focuses on youth voice.

Should the application include the management of mini-grants with federal funds, the applicant must document prior experience administering grant funding and/or demonstrate the capacity to administer such a program.

>> Creating a state-level environmental literacy advisory group to inform state education decision makers.

>> Building capacity for agencies, organizations, and collaboratives that are working

statewide to modify or enhance existing programs that ultimately support systemic MWEEs.

>> Increase the number of practitioners committed to advancing the MWEE framework with an emphasis on bringing new disciplines and perspectives to environmental literacy.

> Develop a community of practice to increase accessibility of MWEEs to neurodiverse students and teachers and/or those with physical disabilities.

Applicants for this priority must demonstrate a strong understanding of their state's environmental literacy policies. Direct implementation of MWEEs for students should not occur in projects under this priority area, however, applications may include activities involving administrators, non-formal educators, teachers, and/or support staff such as those examples mentioned above.

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 with consideration given to the goal of promoting the participation of individuals from underrepresented groups in STEM fields and in promoting the acquisition and retention of highly qualified and motivated young scientists to complement and supplement workforce needs.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

We anticipate that in FY 2024 New England B-WET will have approximately \$350,000 available to support up to four awards under Priority 1 and one to two awards under Priority 2. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the New England B-WET Program. Up to 50% of Priority 1 funding may be set aside for applicants that have not previously been funded by B-WET. Therefore, the total funding amount for applicants that have successfully received B-WET funding in the past may be limited to 50% under this

priority.

For Priority 1, applicants may request between \$25,000 to \$100,000 in Federal funding for the entire 2-year project. For Priority 2, applicants may request between \$50,000 and \$150,000 in Federal funding for the entire 3-year project. Applications requesting federal support from NOAA of more than the maximum will not be considered for review or funding. A recipient of a previous award seeking to continue an existing project beyond the approved award period must submit a new application and compete with other applications.

Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to establish any specific partnership or to obligate available funds for partnership activities. There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this 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, it does so at its own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA is not responsible for proposal preparation costs. Direct costs of application preparation shall not be included within the project application budget. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for any incurred project costs if this program fails to receive funding.

Top ranked 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.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before September 1, 2024. The period of award must be two years (24 months) for projects applying under Priority 1 and three years (36 months) for projects applying under Priority 2. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire award period that is broken down by each award year. 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 the month and end on the last day of the month. Project start dates will be no earlier than September 1, 2024, dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including National Environmental Policy Act analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

When a multi-year project is awarded, the scope of work and budget for all years is approved

at the time of the award, but funding is usually provided only for the first year of the project with the remainder of the award subject to incremental funding, usually annually. NOAA anticipates continuing these multi-year awards for the entirety of their project periods; however, the agency has no obligation to provide an additional funding in connection with the award beyond the initial funding increment.

Should adequate funding be available, NOAA reserves the right to make single-year awards (one allotment of funding) with an award period of up to two years (Priority 1) or three years (Priority 2) if funding allows.

Applicants will be required to re-compete for continued funding after the initial period of performance.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The type of funding instrument, exact amount of funding, the scope of work, and the terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA/NMFS representatives after the application has been selected for funding.

The funding instrument will be either a grant or a cooperative agreement. The award will be a cooperative agreement if the proposed project involves substantial NOAA Federal scientific or programmatic involvement. NOAA involvement may include planning, scheduling, conducting and evaluating proposed project activities, and frequent contact with the applicant to help solve technical problems as they arise during the project. “Substantial involvement” means that after the award is approved for funding, NOAA scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities in a partnership role. NOAA will NOT assume direction, primary responsibility, or a dominant role in project activities.

These reside with the recipient for the project as a whole, although specific tasks and activities may be shared between the recipient and NOAA. Examples of “substantial NOAA involvement” may include non-compensated collaboration in research or approval of key stages in project implementation before subsequent steps are taken.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

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

institutions of higher education; community-based and non-profit organizations; state, county, local, or Indian tribal government agencies; and regional organizations.

Individuals, federal agencies, 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 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 any part of the six New England States: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island or Connecticut.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in environmental justice communities. New England B-WET encourages applications from, or applications involving, any of the above categories of institutions. Information on minority-serving institutions and the demographics of K-12 schools can be found at www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst.html.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost sharing or matching is NOT required. Cost sharing is voluntary and will not increase the chances of your project being selected. If you choose to cost-share and if your application is selected for funding, you will be obligated to account for the amount of cost-share dollars reflected in the award documents, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. This commitment of matching dollars becomes a binding offer. If project costs are shared, NMFS must provide at least 50 percent of total project costs.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Potential applicants may contact NOAA's Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (allison.rosner@noaa.gov) before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to B-WET goals and objectives, but Federal staff are not allowed to assist in the preparation of an application. B-WET program staff may provide you with information and clarification on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, Federal staff will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals. Federal staff may provide letters confirming collaboration and commitment to the proposed work, however, they may not advocate on behalf of any application. Any letter from a Federal partner/entity

that advocates for an application, rather than confirming collaboration and commitment, will be redacted so that only the collaboration and/or partnership confirmation is viewed by reviewers.

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 the 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.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants are required to apply online through Grants.gov. You may access the electronic grant application for NOAA's New England Bay Watershed Education and

Training Program at www.grants.gov.

Please note that applicants must locate the downloadable application package for this program by the Notice of Funding Opportunity number (found on the first page of this announcement). Users of Grants.gov are now required to use a new application process called Workspace. For more information regarding this platform, please visit: www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive several automatic acknowledgments from Grants.gov including a receipt, validation of receipt, agency retrieval notice, and a Grants.gov tracking number. NOAA may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date. We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

If an applicant has problems downloading or otherwise using the Grants.gov system, please contact 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Applicants unable to effectively access application materials electronically, should contact Allison Rosner at the NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office by email at allison.rosner@noaa.gov or phone 978-282-8462.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals should follow the content and format described below. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of New England B-WET reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Additional resources for applicants can be found here: www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/apply.

a. Required Federal Forms

At the time of application submission, all applicants shall submit the following forms with signatures of the authorized representative of the submitting institution. The Authorized Representative MUST sign and date these forms in the space reserved for electronic signature. Signatures (electronic certificates or ink) must match the name printed in the "Authorized Representative" section of the SF-424 Block 21. Another Authorized Representative may not sign on behalf of the individual noted in Block 21. (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
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)

b. Proposal Format

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. Page limits for each section are included below.

Pages exceeding the section limits will not be considered during the review process.

The project summary, literature cited, budget information, resumes of investigators, letters of commitment, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement, National Environmental Policy Act questionnaire, and federal forms are excluded from the 15 page limit. See restrictions for these sections in the descriptions below.

All attachments included in an electronic application should meet the above format requirement when printed out. All documents submitted as electronic application elements should be PDF (rather than MS Word, Excel, MOV, or other files types). Only submit the materials requested in this announcement. Additional documents or appendices will not be accepted or reviewed.

1. Project Summary (2 pages)

Your project summary should include the following information:

1.1 Organization Title

1.2 Principal Investigator(s) Contact information: Include address, telephone number, and preferred email address of principal investigator(s)

1.3 B-WET Priority Area: Identify which B-WET priority area will be addressed as described in section I.B (1) Projects combining long-term, classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) through teacher professional development and student experiences or (2) Capacity building for K-12 environmental literacy at the state and local level.

1.4 Project Title

1.5 Project Duration: Identify the project duration of 2 years (24 months) project period for applications applying under Priority 1 or 3 years (36 months) project period for applications applying under Priority 2. Indicate the anticipated start and end dates. Please note: projects must begin on the first of the month and end on the last day of the month.

1.6 Organizations and Partnerships: Briefly describe your organization and list your key partners for this grant, if applicable. Partnerships are encouraged.

1.7 Special Interest Areas Addressed (Priority 1 only): If any of the special interest areas are addressed by your project (described in section I.B (a)), please indicate which one(s).

1.8 Summary: Provide a brief statement that explains the need for your project, how the need was identified, what the project goals are, and the specific objectives. Your summary should use plain language to provide reviewers with an understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of your educational project and estimated hours of engagement. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read this paragraph, understand your objectives, and grasp your plan.

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

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

1.11 Budget Overview: State the total Federal funding that the project is requesting, broken down by fiscal year. List requested amounts should be in whole dollars. Match is not required for this funding opportunity and will not affect scoring. If there will be a match, show the non-federal match for each fiscal year. A more detailed budget narrative will be provided in your Appendices (IV.B.b).

2. Project Description (15-page limit)

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

2.1 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 New England watersheds. What is the need for your project? What environmental literacy gaps will this project fill?

2.2 Target Audience: 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 and area(s) to be served. Demonstrate an understanding of your audience's needs, strengths, and what barriers may systemically or historically have prevented the access of environmental education experiential experiences and/or environmental education professional development training. If working with this audience is new, please include a description of how you will overcome any potential communication, language, trust, or other relevant barriers.

For Priority 1, the description should include the number of teachers and/or students to be reached each year of the proposed project. Data on demographics of the intended audiences should also be included, and whether or not the communities are considered to be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change or other environmental justice considerations. Use data to support these assumptions. Applicants should clearly show total anticipated contact time with project participants (teachers in professional development and students), and indicate how much of this time will be spent outdoors.

For Priority 2, identify the audience(s) that will be engaged and discuss why this audience is well positioned to build capacity for environmental literacy.

2.3 Partnerships: Describe any and all partnerships, including community based partnerships that lead with equity. Include descriptions of how these partnerships will provide content and cultural expertise that will contribute to the success of the project. Explain how partners will equitably share resources, communicate, and engage in equitable decision-making with respect to project implementation.

2.4 Methods: Describe the project's timeline of expected deliverables, outcomes, and milestones to demonstrate how the planned activities will address the project goals and objectives. Descriptions should include specific approaches to achieving project objectives and expected outcomes. For Priority 1, project descriptions should outline the methods, activities to be performed, and approaches to be used to ensure the project implements each component of a MWEE (defined in section I.A.b). Projects under Priority 1 should include contact time with project participants, including how much of this time will be spent outdoors. For Priority 2, project descriptions should outline how the applicant will engage school administrators and the objectives for increasing local and state environmental literacy initiatives.

2.5 Outreach and Sharing: Projects should include external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience. Projects should include outreach strategies that enable the

sharing of project outcomes to external audiences and how results will be communicated and disseminated information from the project. Outreach and sharing should occur at two levels: (1) how the overall project results will be shared by the project leads through professional networking (ex. conference presentations, electronic media development) and (2) how the audiences will share their individual project results with their schools, administrators, and/or communities.

If a project includes the development of educational resources (ex. lesson plans, curricula, videos, worksheets, etc.) created as a part of your grant with other grantees and educators, please include descriptions of the products you plan to create and how you plan to make them available to others, including a statement indicating any intent to submit resources for inclusion in the NOAA Education Resource Collections (www.noaa.gov/education/resources). Costs associated with producing and sharing accessible resources may be included in your project budget.

2.6 Sustainability: B-WET funding is not meant to sustain long-term programs. Planning for the project's future is increasingly important. In this section, explain how the 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. This may look like building in planning time for identifying future funds needed to carry out next steps toward sustaining networks or partnerships. List other sources of funding that have been sought for the project and the status of those requests.

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

Most project evaluations will not require institutional review board (IRB) approval, however it is the responsibility of the applicant to determine if this is necessary and report back to NOAA. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Human Research

Protections website has resources to help you determine the necessity of IRB approval. You can find those resources at www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/decisioncharts-2018/index.html. If IRB is necessary, the applicant should include a timeline for IRB review as a part of their project evaluation plan, and no expenditures related to data collection may occur until IRB approval has been obtained.

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

3. Appendices

The following attachments do not count against the 15-page project description described previously, but should be included with the application package. Additional appendices not requested in this announcement (i.e. agendas, brochures, curriculum, etc.) will not be considered for review.

3.1 Literature Cited: If references are cited, proposals should include a literature cited list.

3.2 Letters of Commitment: Letters of commitment from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project should be included with the application. These partners should include (but are not limited to) the schools and community-based organizations engaged in the project. Letters of commitment should be written by school administrators or organization leadership, not individual teachers or staff members, and demonstrate an authentic commitment to the project, acknowledging their specific role in the project's implementation. Include these letters as a part of the application.

Letters of endorsement from individuals not directly involved in the project will not be considered.

See definition of community-based partnerships in Section IV.B.a Community-Based Partnerships that Lead with Equity.

3.3 Resumes (2 pages maximum for each major participant))

3.4 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. 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 (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 about the NEPA section of the application.

3.5 Budget and Budget Justification (no page limit): Provide a detailed budget table and budget narrative that clearly identifies and justifies the cost of separate elements of the proposed work. The detailed budget table should include a detailed year-by-year breakdown by cost category. The budget narrative should be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown and calculations used to derive the line item subtotals listed in the SF-424A budget.

The budget section of the application should provide enough detail to allow NOAA staff and the review panel to evaluate the level of effort proposed by investigators and staff on the project. The budget must include all anticipated expenses to realistically describe for reviewers what resources will be necessary to carry out the project. NOAA staff will review budget information in recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and necessary. As appropriate, the narrative and table must provide details on:

- > Personnel salary and fringe benefits (for each year);
- > Transportation costs (for staff and/or to facilitate transporting students, teachers, or other audience members to field trip locations);
- > Equipment and supplies;
- > Contractual costs;
- > Other direct costs (such as teacher stipends, printing, publication, evaluations and communications);

Amounts requested should be in whole dollar amounts (no cents). For multi-year projects, the costs should clearly be broken down for each year of the project.

The budget may also include 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. If an applicant does not have a current indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). 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: Raishan Adams, Grants Officer NOAA Grants Management Division 1325 East West Highway 9th Floor Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 raishan.adams@noaa.gov.

3.6 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Statement (DEIJ) (2 page limit): NOAA's B-WET Program supports NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion and the principles of equity and justice called for in the Executive Orders (13985 and 14008) through funded projects. There is an interest in projects that specifically engage community members who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life (Exec. Order No. 13985, 2021). This section should include a description of how you will ensure your project supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice by describing how the project team (including community-based partners) reflects the diverse perspectives and/or experiences of the target audiences and how this enables them to best serve the needs of the project's target audiences. Alternatively, applicants may provide descriptions of how the project team's organizations are committed to advancing DEIJ goals and objectives.

3.7 Timeline (2-page limit): Include a project schedule that indicates when each action, event, milestone, product development, and evaluation will occur. Timelines should be detailed enough for reviewers to ascertain the number and duration of audience contacts.

3.8 Results from prior NOAA support (no page limit): 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.

3.9 Data Management Plan: This announcement is not seeking proposals that generate environmental data. Therefore, a Data Management Plan is not required as part of the proposal.

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

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> . Applicants are required to use the Universal Identifier and System for Award Management as identified in Office of Management and Budget guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, found at <https://go.usa.gov/xX5CU> . Guidance on obtaining a Unique Entity ID at SAM.gov may be found at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted 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 (UEI) 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 UEI 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.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Electronic Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on February 20, 2024 to be considered for funding. Applications received after the deadline will be withdrawn without further consideration.

Applicants are required to apply online 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. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov. See Section IV.G. for more information.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs". Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC), established as a result of E.O. 12372.

F. Funding Restrictions

The New England B-WET Program should not be considered a long-term source of funds. Funding may not be used to support endowments, individuals, building campaigns or capital construction, deficit financing, annual giving, or fundraising.

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.

The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award (including any approved no-cost extensions), and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the

applicant's cost-share or matching contribution. 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

a. Registration Process

1. Required registrations

You must complete and maintain the following free registrations to be eligible to submit an application using the Grants.gov website. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. Registration can take between 3 days to 4 weeks or more, so applicants should begin the registration process as early as possible.

1.1 Grants.Gov

The first step in submitting an application online is to complete a one time registration process.

1.2 System for Award Management (SAM)

All Applicant Organizations must complete and maintain an active registration. New registrations take an average of fourteen (14) business days. The renewal process may require as much time as the initial registration. To register, go to: www.SAM.gov.

Applicants are required to use the Universal Identifier and System for Award Management as identified in Office of Management and Budget guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, found at <https://go.usa.gov/xX5CU>. Guidance on obtaining a Unique Entity ID at SAM.gov may be found at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>.

You must renew and revalidate your entity's registration at least every 12 months from the date you last certified to and submitted the registration in SAM - and sooner, if your entity's information changes. The primary point of contact's email address will receive a message alerting them to the entity's renewal requirements at 60 days, 30 days and 15 days prior to expiration. If you do not renew your registration, it will expire. You must have an active SAM registration in order to be eligible to receive contract awards or payments, submit assistance award applications via Grants.gov, or receive certain payments from some federal government agencies.

2. Authorizations and Credentials

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 plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions; as such submissions will be rejected. The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only validated applications are sent to NOAA to review. To ensure successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application be submitted at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

After you electronically submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgment receipt from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. (This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by NOAA.) Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by FOUR automated responses (1-Grants.gov Submission Receipt; 2-Grants.gov Submission Validation Receipt for Application; 3-Grants.gov Grantor Agency Retrieval Receipt for Application; 4-Grants.gov Agency Tracking Number Assignment for Application). You should save and print the proof of submission. If all notifications are not received, applicants should follow up with both the Grants.gov Help Desk to confirm NOAA's receipt of the complete submission. You must obtain a Grants.gov Support number.

3. System Issues

If you experience a Grants.gov "system issue" (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before and applicable funding cycle deadline, please (1) 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 Organization Representative submits the application, or (iii) receive an email from Grants.gov are not considered system 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," NOAA may allow more time for applicant submission due to system problems at Grants.gov at the time of application submission that are beyond the control of the applicant.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

a. Evaluation criteria for Priority 1: projects combining long-term, classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) through teacher professional development and student experiences.

1. Importance, relevance, and applicability of proposal to the program goals (20 points total)
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 New England B-WET program, this may include the following questions:

1.1 Project Need (5 points): Does the applicant demonstrate a need for the project?

1.2 Target Audience (5 points): Does the applicant describe the target audience using specific demographics? Does the applicant target historically marginalized communities, students of color, and students from low-income families, or those that are less likely to have access to environmental education within their local school districts? Does the applicant include data to justify and support their description of the targeted communities?

1.3 Connection to Watershed (2 points): Does the project make a direct connection to the greater marine or estuarine environment and watershed system; and does it address how actions within that system can affect the environment?

1.4 Alignment with National, State, and Regional Standards and Priorities (1 points): Does the applicant illustrate alignment with state educational standards and national and regional principles and priorities such as Ocean Literacy Principles, Climate Literacy Principles, NOAA Education Strategic Plan goals?

1.5 Local Context (5 points): Does the experience use the local context for learning and focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to the New England region including its local population, geography, culture, and natural, financial, and human resources?

1.6 Special Interest Areas (2 points): Does the applicant address one or more of the stated Special Interest Areas (New England fisheries or protected species, and/or climate change science, resilience, and justice) defined in section I.B.d.?

2. Technical Merit (40 points total)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the

NOAA New England B-WET program, this may include the following questions:

2.1 Objectives (5 points): Are objectives identified in the application? Are they focused on reaching the stated outcome(s)? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives and outcomes can be reached within the proposed project period?

2.2 Timeline with Milestones (5 points): Does the applicant include project milestones and a timeline for reaching each? Is the timeline reasonable for the award duration and components?

2.3 NOAA Assets (2 points): Does the project use NOAA and partner assets including products, data, services, or scientific/professional experts in forming and implementing the MWEE?

2.4 Sustainability Plan (4 points): Does the applicant discuss a plan for sustainability of the project beyond NOAA funding (e.g. plans for sustaining networks and partnerships, identification of future funds to facilitate the integration of MWEEs into school curriculum at a school/district/statewide level)?

2.5 Evaluation (3 points): Does the applicant provide an effective project-level evaluation plan, appropriate to the maturity and scale of the project, to determine the project's effectiveness, document successes towards meeting the objectives, and inform decisions about future programming? Does the plan describe how the evaluation will be used? Does the plan define what will be evaluated and the types of evaluation planned? Are the methods for implementing the evaluation appropriate?

2.6 Teacher Professional Development (8 points): Does the project demonstrate at least 30 hours of professional development for teachers, with at least 10 hours spent outdoors? Will teachers have the opportunity to model the MWEE framework, including by participating in an outdoor experiential experience and environmental action project? Are measures considered to ensure equitable access to the outdoor field experience for all participating teachers? Does the project allow for adequate instructional time and on-going support?

2.7 Student Experiences (8 points): Does the project guide students to identify a local environmental issue? Does the application provide outdoor field experiences for students with at least 5 hours of outdoor time? Are measures considered to ensure equitable access to the outdoor field experience for all participating students? Will students have the opportunity to complete an environmental action project as a result of their investigation?

2.8 Sustained experience (5 points): Is there a description of how the project will become an integral part of the classroom or instructional program, connections to the local community and environment, and experiences that are a set of activities over time?

3. Overall Qualification of Applicant (15 points total)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this may include the following questions:

3.1 Experience (4 points): Does the application include resumes of the staff members involved in the project? Does the applicant demonstrate capability and experience in successfully completing similar K-12 environmental education projects in New England? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience?

3.2 Partners (4 points): Does the applicant describe the roles and responsibilities of the proposed partners? Are there letters of commitment from each listed partner? Does the applicant document commitments from schools or school administrators describing an authentic understanding of the project objectives and teacher time commitments? If NOAA is listed as a partner in the proposal, is there a letter of commitment from that NOAA partner?

3.3 Community-based Organizations (4 points): Is the applicant or any of their partners a community-based organization that serves communities historically or systemically facing barriers to environmental literacy and NOAA asset access? Does the applicant describe a mutually beneficial partnership that uses the strengths of the community-based organizations, includes shared goals and resources, communicates effectively, and collaborates on decision-making?

3.4 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (3 points): Do the experiences and/or perspectives of the project team (including partners) reflect those of the target audience(s)? Does the DEIJ statement (Section IV.B(b)3.6) adequately describe how the applicant and partners will ensure the project supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice? Does the application describe how the applicant or their partners' expertise positions them to ensure equity and inclusion in environmental literacy planning activities? Does the applicant describe the qualifications and experience of staff and/or partners related to competently engaging members of diverse cultures, providing expertise on existing environmental issues, creating innovative solutions to the challenges, and/or enhancing the local context/cultural relevance throughout the proposed programming?

4. Project Costs (18 points total)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this may include the following questions:

4.1 Reasonable (7 points): 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 the proposed budget suitable to the geographic area?

4.2 Direct Programming (7 points): Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact with the environment? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the project?

4.3 Partner and Participant Compensation (4 points): Are partners adequately compensated for their expertise and contribution to the project? Does the project describe adequate incentives that support teachers' abilities to attend professional development activities?

5. Outreach (7 points total)

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. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this may include the following questions:

5.1 Outreach (7 points): Does the proposal describe opportunities for outreach and education around the value of MWEEs and environmental education at events that engage school boards, public officials, parents, community organizations, other schools, or the media? Does the project have plans for supporting target audiences in sharing their conclusions and watershed protection knowledge with a broad audience? Is a commitment made to acknowledge NOAA B-WET as the funder?

b. Evaluation Criteria For Priority 2 Capacity building for K-12 environmental literacy at the state and local level.

1. Importance, Relevance, And Applicability Of Application To The Program Goals (15 points total)

This criterion assesses whether the proposed work addresses B-WET program goals and priority areas, and if the project is relevant to NOAA, federal, regional, or state activities. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this includes the following questions:

1.1. Project Need (5 points): Does the applicant provide data that demonstrates that the targeted local municipality or state has a need to build capacity for K-12 environmental literacy initiatives?

1.2. Target Audience (5 points): Does the applicant describe the target audience for the capacity building efforts and the audience that will ultimately benefit from this work? Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the intended community, including an in-depth understanding of current challenges and opportunities that school districts face in relation to incorporating environmental literacy into current state standards? Does the applicant note how communities facing systemic or historical barriers to environmental education access will benefit from the proposed project?

1.3. Barriers (5 points): Does the application clearly define the barriers to advancing environmental literacy at the local, state, or multi-state level of the proposed project? Does the project aim to address one or more specific needs and will it fill a recognized gap?

2. Technical Merit (38 points total)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, logical, feasible, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this includes the following questions:

2.1. Objectives (5 points): Are objectives identified in the application? Are they focused on reaching the stated outcome(s)? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives and outcomes can be reached within the proposed project period?

2.2. Timeline with Milestones (4 points): Does the applicant include project milestones and a timeline for reaching each? Is the timeline reasonable for the award duration and components?

2.3. NOAA Assets (2 points): Does the project use NOAA and partner assets including services or scientific/professional experts in forming and implementing the project?

2.4. Sustainability Plan (3 points): Does the applicant discuss a plan for sustainability of the project beyond NOAA funding (e.g. plans for sustaining networks and partnerships, identification of future funds to build systemic MWEs, etc.)?

2.5 Evaluation (5 points): Does the applicant provide an effective project-level evaluation plan, appropriate to the maturity and scale of the project, to determine the project's

effectiveness, document successes towards meeting the objectives, and inform decisions about future programming? Does the plan describe how the evaluation will be used? Does the plan define what will be evaluated and the types of evaluation planned?

2.6 Environmental Literacy (5 points): Does the applicant anchor their project objectives within the context of the state environmental literacy interests, issues, and capacities? Does the project meaningfully advance activities related to environmental literacy planning and/or student MWEs at the local or statewide level? Does the applicant describe how environmental literacy programming will be enhanced, state-wide, through the project? (5 points)

2.7 Project Implementation: Does the applicant illustrate appropriate steps, mechanisms, and processes will be taken to execute the project? Is there sufficient detail about how these activities are connected to the stated objectives (e.g. duties of a funded position, contents of a plan or strategy, and/or function of a network)? (5 points)

2.8 Best Practices: Does the project use best practices and/or innovative approaches (i.e. collective impact framework, network-building strategies, successful approaches from former capacity building efforts) to meet the stated goals? (4 points)

2.9 Outputs and Outcomes: Does the application demonstrate a firm understanding of desired outputs and outcomes that result in changes that support statewide environmental literacy (short-, mid-, and long term)? Will the project result in one or more products that codifies or supports the long-term implementation of state environmental literacy strategies? (5 points)

3. Overall Qualification Of Applicant (20 points total)

This criterion assesses whether the applicant possesses the necessary experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this includes the following questions:

3.1 Organizational Capacity (4 points): Has the applicant organization managed similar programs or grants (e.g. projects with similar funding source, dollar amounts, project team size, project duration, and audience size) or does the applicant justify the capacity of the project leads and organization to be well positioned to manage the proposed project?

3.2 Knowledge of State Environmental Literacy Landscape (4 points): Does the proposal demonstrate that the applicant and/or their partners have the educational, scientific, and cultural expertise to successfully complete this project? Is this clearly described in the

resumes or narrative included in the application?

3.3 Expert Partners (4 points): Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to building relationships that reach beyond usual partners in environmental education? Were these partners meaningfully involved in the design of the project? Does the application include partnerships that contribute to project implementation, and are those partners documented with support letters detailing how they will support the project (as opposed to simply voicing support)? Does the applicant demonstrate that they have involved local and/or state education administrators and/or officials in the design of the project?

3.4 Community-Based Partners (4 points): Are organizations with expertise in reaching communities that historically or systemically face barriers accessing NOAA resources involved in this project and did they provide letters of commitment? Does the applicant describe how the partners' expertise positions them to ensure equity and inclusion in environmental literacy planning activities? Does the applicant describe their partners' qualifications and experience related to competently engaging members of diverse cultures, providing expertise on existing environmental issues, creating innovative solutions to the challenges, and/or enhancing the local context/cultural relevance throughout the proposed programming?

3.5 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (4 points): Do the experiences and/or perspectives of the project team (including partners) reflect those of the target audience(s)? Does the DEIJ statement (Section IV.B(b)) adequately describe how the applicant and partners will ensure the project supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice? Does the application describe how the applicant or their partners' expertise positions them to ensure equity and inclusion in environmental literacy planning activities? Does the applicant describe the qualifications and experience of staff and/or partners related to competently engaging members of diverse cultures, providing expertise on existing environmental issues, creating innovative solutions to the challenges, and/or enhancing the local context/cultural relevance throughout the proposed programming?

4. Project Costs (20 points total)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this includes the following questions:

4.1 Reasonable (8 points): Does the applicant adequately justify the proposed budget request? Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the work proposed?

4.2 Direct Programming (8 points): Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to addressing the stated project objectives? Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project and is this a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project?

4.3 Partner and Participant Compensation (4 points): Are partners adequately compensated for their expertise and contribution to the project? Does the project describe adequate incentives that support teachers' abilities to attend professional development activities?

5. Outreach and Education (7 points total)

This criterion assesses whether the project involves mechanisms for significant external sharing and communication about the project by students, teachers, or project staff. For the NOAA New England B-WET program, this includes the following questions:

5.1 Outreach (7 points): Does the application describe an outreach strategy that will effectively communicate the program models to other partners in the New England state they are working with, or a broader New England environmental education network? Will this outreach strategy help to broaden and deepen the understanding of the lessons learned from this project?

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full application has been received, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with published requirements. If applications do not comply, they will be declined without further review. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified.

Each priority will be reviewed separately following the process described below.

All applications that meet the eligibility and minimum requirements will be evaluated and scored individually using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A by a panel of at least three independent reviewers, who are federal or non-federal experts, each having expertise in a separate area so that the reviewers, as a whole, cover the spectrum of activities covered by the applications received. The panel will then meet to discuss the applications. After discussing a particular application, each reviewer on the panel may individually re-score the application and will provide a summary of their comments. The rank order of all applications will be established by averaging the individual panel reviewers' final scores for each application they reviewed.

The panel will give no consensus advice. The Federal Program Officers (FPOs) will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review process.

The FPO will review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel and make recommendations to the Selecting Official. The rank order from the review panel will be the primary consideration for the Selecting Official in deciding which of the new proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall recommend awarding 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.

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. An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency

review of risk posed by applicants.

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

Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. NOAA also reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. In addition, NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management requirements referenced in Section VI.B. of this Announcement, and if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

C. Selection Factors

The New England B-WET panel ratings will be provided in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall recommend awarding 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:
 - > Geographically
 - > By type of institutions
 - > By type of partners

> 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.;

e. Applicant's prior award performance;

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.

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 September 1, 2024.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project 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

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, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff. Awards are not necessarily made to the highest ranked applications.

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 the NOAA 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 the electronic grants management system, and the principal investigator may receive a copy. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

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

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 www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS. Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which 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 the Responsibility/Qualification section of 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).

C. Reporting

All reports shall be submitted through the electronic grants management systems.

- 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 will be 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.

The final report is a public document and may be posted, partially or in its entirety, on the NOAA NEW England B-WET or NOAA B-WET website along with the PowerPoint presentation, or similar presentation software, introducing the project, the Project Abstract, Summary of Potential Benefits and the Principal Investigator, including the Principal Investigator email contact information.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the NOAA Fisheries New England B-WET website at: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/outreach-and-education/noaas-new-england-b-wet-program or contact Allison Rosner, NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region; 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester MA, 01930, or by phone at 978-282-8462 or email: allison.rosner@noaa.gov.

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.