Fiscal Year 2024 Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Capacity Building

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Funding Opportunity Description . . . 4
A. Program Objective . . . 4
B. Program Priorities . . . 5
C. Program Authority . . . 8
II. Award Information . . . 8
A. Funding Availability . . . 8
B. Project/Award Period . . . 8
C. Type of Funding Instrument . . . 9
III. Eligibility Information . . . 9
A. Eligible Applicants . . . 9
B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement . . . 10
C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility . . . 10
IV. Application and Submission Information . . . 10
A. Address to Request Application Package . . . 10
B. Content and Form of Application . . . 10
C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) . . . 19
D. Submission Dates and Times . . . 20
E. Intergovernmental Review . . . 20
F. Funding Restrictions . . . 20
G. Other Submission Requirements . . . 21
V. Application Review Information . . . 22
A. Evaluation Criteria . . . 22
B. Review and Selection Process . . . 26
C. Selection Factors . . . 29
D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates . . . 29
VI. Award Administration Information . . . 30
A. Award Notices . . . 30
B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements . . . 30
C. Reporting . . . 34
VII. Agency Contacts . . . 34
VIII. Other Information . . . 35

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Fiscal Year 2024 Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Capacity Building

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2024-2008241

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.457, Chesapeake Bay Studies

Dates: The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 16, 2024 and applications must be submitted using www.grants.gov (Grants.gov). PLEASE NOTE: it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

Informational webinars about the FY 2024 Chesapeake B-WET funding announcement (including this Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Capacity Building funding announcement) will be held on December 12, 2023 at 11:00 AM and December 18, 2023 at 3:00 PM Eastern Time. To register for these webinars, please visit: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/3056261228833922400. Note that the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office's B-WET Coordinator will be available to answer questions Monday through Friday until 7:30AM-4:00PM Eastern Time excluding federal holidays.

Funding Opportunity Description: Chesapeake B-WET is a competitive grant program that supports existing, high-quality environmental education programs, fosters the growth of innovative programs, and encourages capacity building and partnership development for environmental literacy efforts throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed states. Successful projects advance the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the NOAA Education Strategic Plan by building capacity within organizations and networks that work at the state- or multi-state level to support hands-on environmental education for students and related professional development for teachers, administrators, and other educators who serve formal K-12 audiences.

Through this funding announcement, NOAA is soliciting proposals that support Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Capacity Building. Note that a separate funding announcement through B-WET for Implementing MWEEs in School Districts and Supporting School District Capacity

for Environmental Literacy is also available on grants.gov.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

a. OVERVIEW

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

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support projects that increase opportunities for advancing the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) and environmental literacy at the state-level. These capacity building projects complement a suite of existing B-WET projects that work in and across school districts to provide systemic MWEEs and build up local district capacity to advance environmental literacy strategies. Projects under this announcement are not required to directly reach students and teachers, but should lay the foundation for systemic, equitable, and sustainable environmental literacy, including MWEEs, at the state or multi-state level.

Successful B-WET projects provide formal education that supports the environmental literacy goal of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/goals/environmental-literacy) and NOAA's Education Strategic Plan (https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/2021-2040-noaa-education-strategic-plan).
Information on the Chesapeake B-WET program, including examples of education partnerships that have been funded to date, can be found at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/chesapeake-bay/past-and-current-chesapeake-b-wet-projects.

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

b. DEFINING THE MEANINGFUL WATERSHED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (MWEE)

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

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

The MWEE definition is provided below to give context for the ultimate goals that projects should work towards. This priority does not fund direct MWEE implementation, rather the coordination, networking, leadership, and other support structures necessary for advancing the MWEE as an approach at the state or multi-state level.

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.

B. Program Priorities

Through this funding announcement, NOAA is soliciting proposals that support Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Capacity Building.

Projects proposed under this priority area build capacity for statewide or multi-state K-12 environmental literacy initiatives which support the policies and structures necessary to advance environmental literacy at a statewide level. Increased capacity for environmental literacy efforts at this level creates opportunities for more and higher quality MWEEs in school districts throughout the watershed. Proposals to this priority area should create state-level frameworks, incentives, support systems, and/or drivers for environmental literacy to encourage or support systemic MWEE planning and implementation in local school districts or Intermediate Units. Systemic implementation is defined as MWEEs that are embedded across an entire grade level or levels, or are part of a broader systemic program in a school district to reach every student. Projects should also seek to connect to existing education initiatives like project-based learning, climate education, college and career readiness, district environmental literacy plans, or other efforts/initiatives that already have momentum at the state-level. The proposed project should seek to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, directly supporting authentic representation of communities that have been traditionally left out of environmental literacy efforts.

Examples of activities that may be funded under this priority include but are not limited to:
- Developing a state-level environmental literacy strategy, plan, or framework.
- Expanding upon the work that has been initiated through the Regional Outdoor Learning Network (ROLN), or other comparable efforts, to increase state-level communication and collaboration across networks and organizations seeking to increase environmental literacy.
- Building capacity for agencies, organizations, and collaboratives that are working statewide to modify or enhance existing programs that ultimately support systemic MWEEs.
- Building a cadre of professionals (school district and/or non-formal leaders) to lead regional hubs within a state to improve communication and increase sharing of best practices for systemic, equitable, and sustainable environmental literacy programming with an emphasis on reaching underrepresented communities.
- Supporting and providing resources for key partners to elevate awareness of, and the importance of, environmental literacy among decision makers, including state boards of education, superintendents, state department of education leadership, funders, and others who create policies, set standards of learning, and make funding decisions to support formal education.
- Strategically increasing the number of practitioners across one or more states committed to advancing the MWEE framework with an emphasis on bringing new disciplines and perspectives to environmental literacy (e.g. MWEE Ambassadors and/or MWEE Facilitators).

Direct implementation of MWEEs for students should not occur in projects under this

priority area, however, proposals may include activities involving administrators, non-formal educators, teachers, and/or support staff.

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

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

In addition, applicants are encouraged to apply NAAEE's Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence (https://eepro.naaee.org/sites/default/files/eepro/resource/files/community_engagement_-_guidelines_for_excellence_0.pdf) in developing their project plans for engagement of audiences. The Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence include five key characteristics: 1. Community Centered, 2. Based on Sound EE Principles, 3. Collaborative and Inclusive, 4. Oriented Toward Capacity Building and Civic Action, and 5. Long-Term Investment in Change. A series of recordings featuring current and former B-WET grantees that describe how they have operationalized the Community Engagement Guidelines is available on the Chesapeake Bay Program's YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRa28NrZJAF5R8ap_HTQkZpNQZhUyCVVP).

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

Definition of meaningful engagement: This term refers to communities having an opportunity to be an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, or leadership for activities that may affect their environment and/or health and wellbeing. Meaningful

engagement relies on the involvement of those potentially affected in a manner that builds trust and addresses barriers
to community participation to ensure that the scope of the activities is inclusive of the priorities and needs of communities and that the benefits of the activities flow back to the community.

C. Program Authority

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

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Under this announcement, NOAA anticipates that approximately $500,000 may be available in FY 2024 to fund new applications, subject to appropriations. NOAA anticipates making 4-6 new awards. Projects should not exceed $150,000 annually in federal funds. Performance periods may be up to two years, but funding beyond the first increment, usually one year, is subject to the incremental funding policy described in Section II.B of this Announcement.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before August 1, 2024. Applications should cover a project period of between one and two years. Projects that request multi-year funding must include in their submission a full description of the activities and estimated budget by line item (e.g. personnel, equipment, supplies) for all proposed work for each year.

When a multi-year project is awarded, the scope of work and budget for all years is approved at the time of the award, but funding is usually provided only for the first year of the project with the remainder of the award subject to incremental funding. NOAA anticipates continuing these multi-year awards for the entirety of their project periods; however, the agency has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with the award beyond the initial funding increment. Continuation of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance beyond the initial funding increment is at the sole discretion of

NOAA and will be contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the NOAA mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

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

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

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

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through a cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Applications funded through cooperative agreements will include substantial involvement of the Federal government, which may include, but is not limited to, collaboration on the scope of work, such as liaison activities between the grantee and NOAA personnel who are contributing data or expertise to the project. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is currently available at: https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/Department%20of%20Commerce%20Grants%20%20Cooperative%20Agreements%20Manual%20%2820%20April%202021%29.pdf.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

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

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (NCBO) encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

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

If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, they should contact Elise Trelegan at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office by email at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov or phone 410-267-5669. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office does not have a direct telephonic device for the deaf, however, TDD capabilities can be accessed through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800-735-2258, between the hours of 8 AM-4:30 PM.

B. Content and Form of Application

Required Elements for Applications:

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

- Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424

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

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

- Certifications Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511

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

(i) Project Summary (1 page):

- Project Title

- Priority Area: Statewide K-12 Environmental Literacy Capacity Building

- Project duration: 12 to 24 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month.

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

- Summary: Provide a brief statement that explains the need for your project, 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, including total number of people directly engaged (administrators, partners, etc) and estimated hours of engagement. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read this paragraph and grasp your plan. If awarded funding, this summary will be used on the B-WET website and in other public documents.

- Delivery Method: Explain how you will reach your audience, such as workshops, planning meetings, summer institutes, webinars, incentives, etc.

- 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 school district administrators, environmental educators, superintendents, principals, etc.

- Budget Information: List the total federal funding requested each fiscal year and total non-federal match for each fiscal year (if applicable). List the total multi-year request and total multi-year match (if applicable). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars. Match is not

required for this funding opportunity, will not be considered by proposal reviewers, and will not affect scoring.

(ii) Project Description (up to 10 pages): Describe in detail what your project will achieve with the following headings: What, Who/Why, and How. Explain each aspect of your proposal clearly and address each topic below. Please address all of the following to ensure that grant reviewers can fully comprehend and score your project correctly. Specific Evaluation Criteria are defined in Section V.A.

- What: Explain the goals and objectives for your project. Include information about how the project contributes to greater understanding and stewardship of the environment. Describe how the project supports the Chesapeake Bay Program's Environmental Literacy Goal, including how it meaningfully advances environmental literacy activities related to environmental literacy planning and/or student MWEEs at the statewide level. Explain specifically how the project will ultimately contribute to more systemic, equitable, and sustainable MWEEs and how the MWEE framework is incorporated into the project. Define the barriers to advancing environmental literacy at the state level and explain how the proposed work will fill a recognized gap. Applicants should review existing resources available through NOAA, the Bay Program (Bay Backpack), the state department of education, the state's NAAEE affiliate, and other relevant state-level networks focused on environmental literacy and identify which resources will be used in this project. If your project may trigger consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as described in the NOAA NEPA policy in Section VI.B. of this Announcement, applicants should provide relevant information in the project description. Any applicable supporting documents may be included as attachments that do not count toward the page limit. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.1 (Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals).

- Who/Why: Identify the audience(s) that will be served and discuss why this audience was chosen to build capacity for environmental literacy. Describe why this audience is positioned to advance and enhance MWEE adoption and implementation. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical merit).

- How: This is the logistical work plan for your project and should be the most in-depth section of the project description. Clearly define the activities that will be conducted during this project, and their frequency. Reviewers must be able to determine the duration and frequency of activities, such as professional trainings, planning meetings, webinars, workshops, etc. If the proposed project is two years, provide objectives for each year. Detail

how the project will result in one or more products that codify or support the long-term implementation of state environmental literacy strategies. Explain any best practices or innovative approaches to meet the stated goals, including strategies from the Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence. This section addresses the technical merit of the proposal and will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical merit).

(iii) Sustainability: Discuss a plan for sustainability of the project beyond NOAA funding. Applicants may develop plans for sustaining networks and partnerships or identify future funds needed to carry out next steps toward building systemic MWEEs across the state. List other sources of funding that have been sought for the project and the status of those requests. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.4 (Project Costs).

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

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

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

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

Participation in B-WET National Evaluation:

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

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

(b) APPENDICES (not included in 10-page limit):

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

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

such funding has been requested.

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

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

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs, which are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. See 2 C.F.R. 200.1 and 200.412-.415 at http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4. An applicant may also propose all allowable project charges as direct costs.

An applicant requesting indirect costs should provide a current approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement established with its cognizant Federal agency or an acknowledgement letter from the cognizant agency to which the applicant has submitted a proposed rate. In addition, if an award recipient does not have a current indirect cost rate with any Federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimis rate described at 2 C.F.R. 200.414 or it may negotiate a new rate with the Department of Commerce. The negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by the NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, https://go.usa.gov/xRuaF, require that within 90 days of the award start date, recipients submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation, plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to establish a new rate to the address listed below.

Michele Mazzocchetti
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov

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

(iii) Logic Model: Projects should be accomplishment-oriented and identify specific outputs and outcomes. Provide a logic model that articulates the short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes resulting in programming that support systemic and curricular-embedded MWEEs and changes in statewide environmental literacy. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.2 (Technical Merit).

(iv) Technical Experience and Qualifications: Attach a description of your programmatic capabilities and ability to successfully implement and manage the proposed project including staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them to successfully achieve the goals of the project, and your organizational experience and past history in performing tasks similar to the proposed project. Also include a paragraph describing qualifications of each of the key personnel conducting the project, including justification for how the project team members possess the educational, scientific, and cultural expertise needed to carry out the project. If you send resumes for the key personnel conducting the project, please keep them to a maximum of three, one-page resumes. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(v) Partnership Letters of Commitment: Proposals for statewide projects should include support letters from state departments of education, and may also include support letters from leaders of other state networks. If the applicant organization has partners, such as state agencies, universities, or other organizations that are engaged in the proposed work, include letters of commitment from partners explaining their role in and/or funding the proposed project. Do not include letters of endorsement from previous participants or others not directly involved in project implementation. Letters should be received as part of application submission. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion V.A.3 (Overall Qualifications of Applicants).

(vi) Results from prior NOAA support: If any principal investigator (PI) or co-PI identified

on the project has received support from NOAA in the past five years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:

- The NOAA award number, amount and period of support;

- The title of the project;

- Summary of the results of the completed work (including # of teachers/students);

- If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

(vii) Data Management Plan: Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the NOAA B-WET Data Management Guidance provided below and will be considered as part of proposal review. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

Data Management Guidance to Applicants

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Responsible NOAA Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients:
Please contact the NOAA Federal Program Officer for the regional B-WET competition to which you are applying. Contacts are available here: https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/apply

Additional questions may be directed to:

Name: Bronwen Rice
Title: B-WET National Coordinator
Affiliation or facility: NOAA Office of Education
E-mail address: Bronwen.Rice@noaa.gov
Phone number: (202) 604-1388

(viii) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - Consistent with Section IV.B.(a)(ii) and Section VI.B of this Announcement, if any permits, permit requests, maps, or other supporting NEPA documents are applicable to your project, they may be included as attachments. The NOAA NEPA Questionnaire does not need to be submitted as part of this application.

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be

registered in SAM.gov 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

Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov and must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on February 16, 2024. PLEASE NOTE: After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive a third email when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

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

Informational webinars about the FY 2024 Chesapeake B-WET funding announcement will be held on December 12, 2023 at 11:00 AM and December 18, 2023 at 3:00 PM Eastern Time. To register for these webinars, please visit: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/3056261228833922400.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Requirements), found at 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable." Construction costs are not allowed.

G. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials should be submitted in PDF format.

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

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

To use Grants.gov, an applicant must have a EUI number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM), https://www.sam.gov/SAM/, and periodic renewals are required. Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. More information can be found at SAM.gov.

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

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the

application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another email when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review, and the validation time is deemed the time NOAA received it.

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

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

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

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

a. Does the proposal articulate how it supports the Environmental Literacy Goal and related outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement? Does the project meaningfully advance environmental literacy activities related to environmental literacy planning and/or student MWEEs at the statewide level? (8 points)

b. Does the proposal clearly define the barriers to advancing environmental literacy at the state level? Does the project aim to address one or more specific needs and will it fill a recognized gap within the state? (7 points)

c. Does the applicant describe how environmental literacy programming and in particular the MWEE framework will be supported through their project? Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the MWEE and its role in K-12 education and stewardship? (4 points)

d. Does the proposal demonstrate how Chesapeake Bay Program, NOAA, and/or state partner resources including but not limited to the MWEE Guide, Facilitator's Guide to MWEE Training, MWEE 101/201 online courses, and Bay Backpack will be used in the implementation of the project? (3 points)

2. Technical merit (36 points)

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.

a. Does the applicant demonstrate a firm understanding of desired outputs and outcomes that result in changes that support statewide environmental literacy (short-, mid-, and long-term)? Does the applicant provide a logic model that clearly illustrates appropriate mechanisms and processes across this continuum? (7 points)

b. Will the project result in one or more products that codify or support the long-term implementation of state environmental literacy strategies? Does the proposal describe in what ways these project outputs help to establish a means to communicate priorities and practices across the state? (7 points)

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

stated objectives? (8 points)

d. 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? (5 points)

e. Is it evident from the proposal that the applicant used strategies from the Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence in designing the project and does the applicant sufficiently describe how strategies from the Guidelines will be employed in the project? (4 points)

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

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (19 points)

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

a. Does the applicant anchor their project objectives within the context of the state environmental literacy interests, issues, and capacities, including those identified in the Regional Outdoor Learning Network, or comparable effort? (4 points)

b. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of existing state-level capacity building work and how this project fits within that context? Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the intended audience(s), including an in-depth understanding of current challenges and opportunities that school districts face in relation to environmental literacy? (4 points)

c. Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to building relationships that reach beyond usual partners in environmental education? Were these partners meaningfully involved in the design of the project? Does the proposal identify activities that build organizational and technical capacity of underserved communities to lead and/or support environmental literacy efforts? (4 points)

d. Does the proposal demonstrate that the applicant and/or their partners have the educational, scientific, and cultural expertise and institutional capacity to successfully complete this project? Is this clearly described in the resumes or narrative included in the proposal? (3 points)

e. Does the proposal 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 department of education representatives in the design of the project? (4 points)

4. Project costs (18 points)

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

a. Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the work proposed? (6 points)

b. Does the proposal adequately address project sustainability after NOAA funding, including detailing stable or potential funding sources or strategies that will sustain the project beyond the grant period? Does the applicant address what ongoing resources specifically would be needed in order to maintain the program? Is there a commitment to support and sustain the work beyond the grant period from all of the essential partners? (5 points)

c. 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 points)

d. Does the budget adequately resource and compensate partners from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in environmental literacy efforts? (3 points)

5. Outreach and education (5 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project involves mechanisms for significant external

sharing and communication about the project by students, teachers, or project staff? This includes consideration of the Data Management Plan described in Section IV.B.(b)(vii) of this Announcement.

Does the proposal describe an outreach strategy that will effectively communicate the program models to other partners in the Mid-Atlantic region? Will this outreach strategy help to broaden and deepen the understanding of the lessons learned from this project? (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

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

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

Technical Review:

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

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

Panel Review:

A panel review meeting will be held following the technical review process. The purpose of

the panel meeting is to discuss the proposals in-depth and to get final funding recommendations from reviewers. This in-depth discussion may raise issues or answer questions that a reviewer did not have in the technical review, or it may clarify an issue. After discussing proposals, panelists will provide comments and a final score for each application, upon which a final rank order is established. No consensus advice will be given by the panel.

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

Project Selection

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

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

Grants Management Review

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. If federal funding will be over $250,000 over the period of performance, NOAA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (formerly FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 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 IV.C of this Announcement, and if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA

Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

C. Selection Factors

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

1. Availability of funding

2. Balance/distribution of funds

- Geographically
- By type of institutions
- By type of partners
- By priority areas
- By project types

3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies

4. Program priorities and areas of interest as set out in section I. B of this NOFO.

5. Applicant’s prior award performance

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups including tribes, tribal entities, and underserved communities

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

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the three months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to NCBO. In April 2024, applicants may receive communications from NCBO to negotiate a potential award. Final issuance of awards or declinations are expected by August 2024. Projects may not have an official start date prior to August 1, 2024.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

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

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

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

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this project. A current version of this document is available at https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. These terms will be provided in the award package in eRA.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390)

are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

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

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

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

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental

impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the 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 ASSISTANCE AWARDS- If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities are involved in any awards funded under this announcement, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at: http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/facilities_assault_policy.html.

REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS. If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ("IIJA"), Pub.L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American,

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

sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives2 —that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall. “Domestic content procurement preference’’ means all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. “Infrastructure” includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy. ‘‘Project’’ means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. -- 1 Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

C. Reporting

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

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

2. Performance/Progress Reports - Suggested content and guidance related to Chesapeake B-WET performance/progress reports can be found here: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/funding-and-financial-services/how-manage-your-grant

(b) The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $30,000. Refer to 2 C.F.R. Part 170 at https://www.fsrs.gov.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please visit the Chesapeake B-WET Applying for a Grant webpage: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/noaa-chesapeake-bay-watershed-education-and-training-program or contact Elise Trelegan at the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office by email at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov or by phone at or phone 240-628-4507.

VIII. Other Information

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