FY2021-FY2022 NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (New England B-WET) Program

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2021-FY2022 NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (New England B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2021-2006802

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.008, NOAA Mission-Related Education Awards

Dates: Dates: Complete applications must be received at http://www.grants.gov, or postmarked, or provided to a delivery service, with appropriate documentation, no later than 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), on the closing date, April 1, 2021. Electronic submission via Grants.gov is preferred. If use of Grants.gov is not feasible or practical, paper copy applications will be accepted, but use of the U. S. Postal Service or other delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Private meter postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than five (5) business days after the closing date will not be accepted. Any application not adhering to the postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Submission via w.w.w.Grants.gov is preferred. Electronic submission is complex, with several preliminary registrations which must be completed before the application itself can be submitted. Allow sufficient time to submit your application electronically and to accommodate possible computer delays. Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to two (2) business days after submission.

Funding Opportunity Description: Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA’s Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET) is an environmental education program that promotes place-based, locally relevant, experiential learning for kindergarten through grade 12 students and their classroom teachers and educators. Its signature methodology is Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs), which include multi-stage activities, in the classroom and outdoors, to increase environmental literacy of all participants. This Notice of Funding Opportunity addresses the unique need for innovative strategies to support K-12 outdoor environmental education within the context of a global pandemic and constrained educational resources.

New England B-WET is one of NOAA's seven (7) regional, outdoor environmental education programs. It promotes high quality environmental education for all, including underserved populations, fosters innovative programs, and encourages capacity-building and environmental education partnerships within the six New England States: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Successful projects advance ocean, climate, and other environmental literacy goals and incorporate the goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan through (1) K-12 student, hands-on environmental education in New England watersheds and (2) teacher/educator professional development and support during student MWEEs.

Each proposal submitted to this competition must address and identify one of the two priorities: (1) Backyard B-WET in a Pandemic and (2) Second Glance: Capacity Building for Sustainability. This Notice of Funding Opportunity includes information on the application process and evaluation criteria for proposals which may request up to $300,000 in total Federal funding for a maximum project period of three (3) 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 FY2021, applications submitted in FY2021 may be carried over for consideration in FY2022 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

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.

Students receive hands-on, place-based, outdoor education related to issues affecting watershed, coastal, and ocean ecosystems. Teachers, administrators, and other educators who serve in-school K-12 audiences receive professional development training to support student learning based on B-WET's signature methodology – Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). MWEE methodology integrates field experiences with classroom activities and instruction in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), using NOAA assets, e.g., datasets, reporting, websites, curricula, experts, National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Marine Sanctuaries, and so forth. MWEEs are the foundation of the NOAA B-WET experience, for students as well as educators, and are used by all seven B-WET regional programs.

The MWEE
Please familiarize yourself in depth with NOAA B-WET's recently updated (summer, 2020), MWEE definition (below), also available at:
https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-meaningful-watershed-educational-experience

MWEEs are learner-centered experiences that focus on investigations into local environmental issues that lead to informed stewardship actions. They are composed of multiple elements that include learning both outdoors and in the classroom, and are designed to increase the environmental literacy of all student participants. All students, regardless of where they live or their social or economic status, should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from MWEEs.

The MWEE model applies multidisciplinary practices in order for students to understand how the environmental systems they are investigating relate to their community's social or

cultural systems. MWEEs help connect students with their local environment and enable them to take actions and make decisions that contribute to stronger, sustainable, and equitable communities. These experiences, grounded in best practices for learning, academic standards, and the context of the local watershed and community, help increase student interest and engagement for learning, support student achievement, promote 21st century skills, and achieve environmental stewardship.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, the MWEE consists of four essential elements and five supporting practices that build upon each other to create this comprehensive learning experience for students. This process should be tailored to each audience and be age appropriate with practices growing in complexity and sophistication across the grades, starting with teacher-guided investigations and progressing to student-led inquiry. Teachers should support and assist students in their inquiry and investigations of local environmental issues that are of interest to them throughout the MWEE. To support teacher implementation of MWEEs, B-WET has also included five practices that are recommended to be in place for teacher professional development activities

NOAA has adopted this definition of the MWEE to assist with the development of effective projects founded in best practices determined through environmental education evaluation and research. This definition builds on the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup and is further informed by over a decade of B-WET project implementation and evaluation work across the country. While these criteria represent standard national guidelines, each B-WET regional program will continue to craft and refine its own priorities that build on this MWEE definition and are tailored to the local population, geography, culture, and natural, financial, and human resources.

MWEE Essential Elements
The MWEE consists of four essential elements that describe “what students do.” These elements promote a learner-centered approach that emphasizes the role of the student in actively constructing meaning from the learning experiences. The order of the elements depends on project design and is not always linear. For example, some elements, such as Synthesis and Conclusions, should occur repeatedly throughout the MWEE.

Issue Definition
Teachers and students work together to define a locally relevant environmental issue or phenomenon affecting watershed, coastal, or ocean ecosystems. Throughout the MWEE, students focus on a driving question that guides their inquiry and investigations of the defined issue and leads to stewardship actions. During Issue Definition, students learn about the issue through classroom instruction and are actively involved in planning and conducting

background research and investigations focused on understanding the driving question (e.g., making observations and/or measurements; carrying out investigations; talking to experts or relevant stakeholders; reviewing credible resources; reviewing current environmental policies or community practices; exploring models; using tools). Students also reflect on personal and public values and perspectives related to the driving question. Teachers should ensure that the driving question is open-ended, relevant to the students' lives, and meets their learning objectives.

Outdoor Field Experiences

Students participate in multiple outdoor field experiences sufficient to investigate the driving question. 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. During field experiences, students use their senses to make first-hand observations, gain experience using equipment or technology to collect data or measurements, and conduct experiments necessary to answer their supporting questions and inform student stewardship actions.

Outdoor field experiences can take place on school grounds or at locations in close proximity to schools, such as streams or city parks. They can also take place at offsite locations such as state parks, wildlife refuges, or education centers that are staffed by experts and have access to field education materials and facilities. A range of individuals, including teachers, environmental educators, natural resource professionals, or trained volunteers, can help facilitate field experiences and ensure a safe outdoor learning environment. However, facilitators should co-develop and co-teach instruction with teachers so that field experiences are supportive of their learning objectives and/or academic standards.

Outdoor field experiences allow students to interact with their local environment and contribute to learning in ways that traditional classroom or laboratory settings may not. Projects should employ methodologies used in fieldwork so students learn how to work in a natural, uncontrolled environment. Students who have opportunities to learn in, thrive in, and appreciate the outdoors can become informed and engaged champions for our natural resources.

Synthesis and Conclusions

Students identify, synthesize, and apply evidence from their investigations to draw conclusions about the defined issue or phenomenon. They demonstrate understanding of their investigations and conclusions through communication to a variety of audiences such as other classrooms, schools, parents, or the community.

Synthesis and conclusions is an iterative process and should happen regularly throughout the MWEE. Throughout the process, teachers dedicate time for students to reflect on their experiences and investigations in relation to the defined issue or phenomenon. Teachers

should facilitate opportunities for students to share their conclusions with each other. Students' conclusions should be used to help define and develop stewardship actions.

Stewardship Actions
Students identify and implement a stewardship action as a solution that directly addresses the defined issue or phenomenon within their school, town, neighborhood, or community. Students are actively engaged and, to the extent possible, drive the decision-making, planning, and implementation of the stewardship action, while teachers play a facilitation role by forming groups, moderating, and answering questions. Students reflect on the action and determine the extent to which the action successfully addressed the issue or phenomenon.

This element allows students to understand that they personally have the power to bring about change to environmental issues, take action to address these issues at the personal or societal level, and understand the value of that action. This can instill confidence in students and can contribute to students becoming environmental stewards in their communities.

Stewardship actions can take many forms and may fall into the following categories:
¿ Watershed Restoration or Protection: actions that assist in the recovery or preservation of a watershed or related ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed (e.g., plant or restore protective vegetation/trees; restore a local habitat; remove invasive plants; clean up litter at local beaches, parks, or school grounds; develop a school garden, natural history area, community garden, or other sustainable green space; install rain gardens to help manage stormwater).
¿ Everyday Choices: actions that reduce human impacts on watersheds and related ecosystems and offer ways to live more sustainably (e.g., reduce/reuse/recycle/upcycle; 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 (e.g., give presentation 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 Action: actions that identify and address issues of public concern. Students acting alone or together to protect public values or make a change or difference in a student's school, town, neighborhood, or community (e.g., present to school board or school principal; attend, speak, or present at town meetings; write or meet with decision makers/elected officials of a students' school, town, neighborhood, or community).

MWEE Supporting Practices

The MWEE also includes five supporting practices that describe “what teachers do.” B-WET recommends that these supporting practices be in place to ensure successful MWEE implementation with students.

Active Teacher Support

MWEEs depend on teachers to facilitate and support student learning for the duration of the MWEE. Teachers help students make connections and draw on past lessons, serve as environmental role models, and ensure that the essential elements of the MWEE come together to support goals for learning. Even when environmental educators or other professionals are leading elements of the MWEE, the teacher should be actively engaged in answering questions and relating the experience back to the full arc of the MWEE.

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 Professional Development for MWEEs for specifics).

Classroom Integration

To be effective, MWEEs need to be embedded into what is already occurring in the classroom. MWEEs should be anchored to state and national academic standards and support goals for learning and/or student achievement. They are not meant to be something extra, but rather an educational approach that helps teachers meet their learning objectives. They can provide authentic, engaging interdisciplinary learning that crosses traditional boundaries between disciplines. Out-of-school activities (e.g., after-school clubs; summer camps) may provide MWEEs or complement and enrich traditional classroom-based MWEEs.

Local Context

MWEEs use the local environment and community as a context for learning. 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, town, 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, allow students to engage with members of their community of diverse cultures, values, and expertise for a more equitable and inclusive experience.

Emphasizing local contexts enables students and teachers to develop stronger connections 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 how their immediate surroundings affect larger ecosystems and

watersheds.

Sustained Learning Experience
MWEEs have multiple experiences that engage students from beginning to end. While a lesson may focus more heavily on one essential element, it does not stand in isolation from the others. Each essential element builds upon and reinforces the others to provide rich learning opportunities spread over the course of a unit or multiple units. All students should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from each essential element.

NOAA Assets. For this funding opportunity, we strongly recommend that MWEEs use NOAA assets, such as data, resources, expertise, or places. NOAA has a wealth of applicable products, data, and services as well as a cadre of scientific and professional experts who can enhance student experiences both in the classroom and in the field. These resources complement the educator's strengths and augment the educational resources. Additionally, NOAA personnel can serve as important role models for career choices and stewardship. For more on NOAA assets for education please see:

NOAA assets for education grants (https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/grants/noaa-assets)
NOAA in your state (https://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/)
NOAA in your backyard (https://www.noaa.gov/ education/noaa-in-your-backyard)
NOAA Education portal (https://www.noaa.gov/education)
NOAA National Weather Service Weather-Ready Nation (https://www.weather.gov/wrn/)

Teacher MWEE Professional Development Supporting Practices
Professional development should empower teachers to confidently and competently use the MWEE approach to support standards-based learning that aligns with local education agency initiatives. In order to gain and maintain environmental education competencies, teachers benefit from sustained, high quality professional development that includes ongoing support and feedback. Teachers should gain confidence in the value of MWEEs and strategies for conducting them so that they will be able to implement MWEEs after the professional development has ended. Specifically, the following practices are recommended for professional development to support teachers implementing MWEEs.

Increases Teachers' Knowledge and Awareness of Environmental Issues
Teachers must have an adequate level of content knowledge for their MWEE topic area specific to their grade level and discipline, including an understanding of their local watersheds, interactions between natural systems and social systems, and human impacts on local watersheds and larger Earth systems. Recognizing that environmental issues often

include different perspectives and opinions, teachers must also have a deep understanding of the facts related to environmental issues, along with an understanding of the various stakeholder values. In addition, teachers who demonstrate environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors may be role models for their students and increase their ability to guide students in stewardship actions to address complex environmental issues.

Models MWEE Framework
Facilitators should utilize the same techniques and experiences in professional development that teachers are expected to use with their students, such as hands-on outdoor field experiences, critical thinking about environmental issues, and stewardship actions. Professional development should also provide opportunities for teachers to understand the goals and rationale behind the MWEE as an approach to learning and stewardship. Professional development should deliver workshops on both MWEE content and instruction, include ongoing support for teachers, and include time for teachers to plan how the student MWEEs will be implemented.

Allows for Adequate Instructional Time
Professional development should be multi-day, occurring consecutively or over the course of several weeks or months. Professional development should include ample opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and plan how to use knowledge and skills gained from professional development in the classroom. Opportunities to share ideas and challenges with colleagues in a cohort creates space for dialogue that can provide teachers with additional support and inspiration.

Provides Ongoing Teacher Support and Appropriate Incentives
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 a structure in place for on-going teacher support and enrichment. This can take the form of follow up meetings, creating web-based forums for communication and feedback, establishing mentor teachers who can serve as points of contact, or including teams of teachers from one particular school. Continuing education credits and stipends can be used to encourage participation in on-going professional development opportunities. Outreach and training opportunities for school administrators may help increase high level support for both environmental education and continuing teacher professional development for teachers.

Meets Jurisdictional Guidelines for Effective Teacher Professional Development
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 the general guidelines set forth by local education agencies.

The NOAA B-WET Program and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since March, 2020, COVID-19 has significantly impacted the ability of environmental education providers to engage with schools and therefore to meaningfully reach students and teachers. This loss of programs will have lasting repercussions on the audiences targeted by these programs and on the institutions who support them. NOAA B-WET recognizes that support is needed to bridge the gap created by the loss of revenue, the cancellation of programs, and the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Outdoor, place-based, environmental education faces multiple threats due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent survey of impacts on the field found that thirty percent of environmental education providers report they will definitely be unable or will very unlikely be unable to reopen. Organizations will need funding to support creative and alternative approaches so they can provide online or physically distant meaningful opportunities, especially in marginalized communities. In addition, the financial challenges many organizations are facing through the pandemic raises the risk that in the recovery they will prioritize majority audiences and paying participants, with the potential to set back years of efforts to engage more historically underfunded communities in these programs.

Challenges such as those imposed by the pandemic also offer creative opportunities. Shifts from in-person to virtual learning may enhance a project's affordability, sustainability, and applicability, as well as articulating a renewed and strengthened appreciation of the value of outdoor spaces for the health of students and communities.

In response to these impacts, the NOAA B-WET Program will focus on capacity building to ensure providers can adjust and adapt to this changing environment. Capacity building is defined as building capacity within the school system to implement meaningful watershed educational experiences, or building capacity within the organization that is providing the meaningful watershed educational experience. Our intent is to allow the community to respond by articulating its own needs.

Some examples of capacity building could include:

¿ Innovative approaches to MWEEs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¿ Support for environmental educators to be redeployed into schools and school systems to provide assistance to instruction in an outdoor setting.

¿ Support to promote the value of environmental education as engaging, effective, and essential during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¿ Support to acquire technology and professional training that will enable environmental

education organizations to reimagine their programming so they can provide both high-quality and meaningful online and/ or physically distant learning opportunities, especially in marginalized communities.

¿ Development of partnerships that are a significant driver in ensuring equity and inclusion in environmental literacy planning activities or may bridge pathways between in-school MWEE implementation and complementary out-of-school activities.

We encourage applicants to partner with community-based organizations that will lead with equity during recovery. Such community-based partnerships may include:

¿ Organizations and institutions that are run by and/or serve marginalized groups, particularly minority communities.

¿ Partnerships that help to address a watershed issue or phenomenon by bringing in local expertise on existing environmental issues and creating innovative solutions.

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

We want the community to identify and respond with its needs. Applicants should clearly describe the demographics and need(s) of their target audience(s) and justify adjustments to foster successful meaningful experiences during COVID-19. The applicant should emphasize substantive partnerships with target audience(s), including them in project planning, implementation, and evaluation. The applicant should provide letters of support from its community-based partnerships and targeted school districts or school systems.

The New England B-WET Program

New England B-WET is managed by NOAA's Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), in Gloucester, Massachusetts. It supports projects within the six resource-rich New England states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. A project participant integral to the application may be based outside the boundaries of the New England B-WET region (we welcome collaborations and partnerships!), but proposed project activities must lie within New England, and field investigations must occur within New England watersheds.

Historically, New England B-WET funding opportunities have supported in-school K-12 environmental literacy through student MWEEs investigating New England watersheds, guided by professional development training for teachers, administrators, and other educators serving K-12 students. New England watershed communities offer excellent, abundant, resource-rich opportunities for accessible environmental education and STEM learning for all, including underserved populations. New England's traditions and history,

our coastal and estuarine, tidal and non-tidal waters, and the landscapes which surround them provide available, hands-on, place-based laboratories where students (and their teachers!) can see, touch, investigate, and learn about their watersheds and the larger environment in a comprehensive, integrated fashion.

As in the past, successful applications for this funding opportunity will use MWEE best practices to advance ocean, climate, and other environmental literacy goals This funding opportunity identifies key aspects of what New England B-WET competitions have historically looked for in successful applications, namely, the option of supporting multi-year projects (most are for three years), requiring Teacher Professional Development Training and Student MWEEs leading to stewardship projects and sustainability after federal funding ends, documented partnerships, substantive evaluation and feedback, and the inclusion of targeted underserved populations.

Our intent with this funding opportunity is to encourage the community to define and respond with its needs. The B-WET program continues to promote multi-year projects focusing on MWEE implementation that prioritizes Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training and partnerships that foster long-term collaboration, networking, and capacity-building. However, in the interest of supporting our constituents during the pandemic to the maximum extent possible, applicants to this opportunity may limit their proposed projects to focus, for example on virtual learning, or to emphasize Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training. In the interest of capacity building, we ask that all applicants focus on establishing or enhancing existing local partnerships.

We want well planned, well written, thoughtful applications that address the difficulties imposed by the pandemic. We want to be supportive to the realistic, documented needs of educators, educational systems, and partnerships as they identify resources and strengths and the documented limitations, for example, in staff, electronic/virtual capabilities, materials, projects, and programming, experienced as a result of COVID-19.

Elements that remain central to New England B-WET programming include:

*Increasing equity in environmental education. New England B-WET has been and remains committed to expanding the participation and knowledge of low-income and underserved populations in ocean, watershed, and environmental STEM education. In your application, please provide demographic evidence if your project targets in whole or in part low-income or underserved populations, for example, Title I schools, minority groups, including Native American populations and tribal organizations, underrepresented communities, and rural

schools.

*Building sustainable communities of support. Finally, New England B-WET urges collaboration with local and regional partnerships, e.g., community-based partnerships, partnerships with local expertise in watershed-related issues, and partnerships with recognized competence in educator professional development training. These relationships need to be documented and justified as leverage to ensure local stewardship and sustainability.

Additional information on the New England B-WET program, including examples of projects funded to date, can be found at:

https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards

B. Program Priorities

This Funding Opportunity describes two (2) priorities. Applicants MUST designate a single priority in their application. Priority 2 is available only to successful New England B-WET grantees prior to 2017 (see section III.A, Eligible Applicants). Applicants may submit more than one application, but each application must be for a separate project. Please see I.A. above for the definition of a MWEE and more discussion of program objectives within the context of the pandemic.

Any application may focus on Teacher MWEE Professional Development, on the Student MWEE, or on both. We understand that due to the multiple, diverse, and often intense constraints encountered in education during the pandemic, it may be desirable and more productive for applications to focus particularly on strengthening Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training. We encourage this but leave this decision to the discretion of the applicant. If Professional Development Training is the focus or a focus, it should include support throughout the project period, including for example, assistance and co-teaching during delivery of student MWEEs, mentoring, continuous financial support for salaries, equipment, materials, and supplies.

Please note as well that in this challenging period, including its severe fiscal constraints, you will want to make use of two resources--NOAA assets and local and/or regional partnerships--to strengthen your proposal. Both are important resources for the two priorities described below, and you should use them.

NOAA Assets. NOAA has abundant products, data, services, facilities, sanctuaries, etc., as well as a cadre of scientific and professional experts who can enhance student and educator

experiences in the classroom (virtual or real) and in the field. NOAA assets -- national, regional, or local -- are readily available, often at no cost. These resources can complement educator expertise and augment other educational resources when incorporated into Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training, as well as into the Student MWEE. NOAA personnel can also serve as important role models for career choices and stewardship. For more information on NOAA assets for education, please see:

NOAA assets for education grants (https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/grants/noaa-assets)
NOAA in your state (https://www.legislative.noaa.gov/NIYS/)
NOAA in your backyard (https://www.noaa.gov/ education/noaa-in-your-backyard)
NOAA Education portal (https://www.noaa.gov/education)
NOAA National Weather Service Weather-Ready Nation (https://www.weather.gov/wrn/)

Partnerships relevant to key elements of the proposed project. We encourage applicants to initiate new, and strengthen established, partnerships with local and regional organizations. Examples of appropriate, documented partnerships may include, but are not limited to, community-based organizations working with underserved populations and partnerships with organizations with expertise in watershed-related issues and specialized competence in Teacher Professional Development Training. Community-based organizations are those driven by community residents, where most of the governing body and staff consist of local residents, and the main operating offices are in the community. In community-based organizations, community residents identify, define, and develop priorities and possible solutions aligned with those priorities. Local residents are leaders, intimately involved in program design, implementation, and evaluation of their community-based programs and partnerships. (National Community–Based Organization Network, University of Michigan 2011; https://sph.umich.edu/ncbon/whatis.html).

This B-WET funding opportunity could also support financial resources for teacher salaries, incentives for creating a stand-alone position for an outdoor educator to work within an entire system (or a group of local systems) in support of the MWEE, for hiring the expertise needed to support essential virtual programming, as well as for the infrastructure and hardware needed to support effective remote learning for the targeted populations.

Priority 1. Backyard B-WET in a Pandemic.

Over 5,000 public schools serve more than two million public school students in New

England. There are many private schools in New England as well, along with a strong cadre of non-profits and foundations. Funds for field investigations are often limited and costly, so projects that require transportation or site fees cannot always be sustained during a grant but especially after the grant period ends. The financial difficulties associated with off-site investigations are even more consequential during the pandemic. However, in New England there are many opportunities for MWEE investigations and hands-on stewardship and restoration on school grounds, within walking distance of a school, in the community in a backyard, in a community, in a kitchen, in a virtual classroom or outdoors in field settings with small, well managed groups that adhere to pandemic mitigation recommendations.
.
A great deal of what might be done under this priority can be done virtually by educators, by facilitators, and by students, individually or collectively. An application focusing on the Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training might begin with learning about the value and importance of social distancing, at home, in the classroom, in the community.

During the pandemic, with masks and social distancing required and so much being experimental and innovative, Backyard B-WET may be reconfigured virtually, or realized individually with appropriate, small-scale facilitation and mentoring by educators. Restoration projects on school grounds, on land adjacent to schools, in the backyard or in the kitchen, or through walking field trips can still support the four essential elements of the MWEE, whether by Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training or in the Student MWEE itself or both.

When watershed and issue investigation components of the MWEE target areas outside of school grounds, the action element of the student MWEE may include hands-on habitat restoration, such as planning, implementing, and maintaining stream buffers, school forests, wildlife habitat, or the creation of outdoor learning environments, but they may also be redefined virtually. Projects that remove impervious surfaces, install barrels, or plant rain garden or trees are possibilities, but applicants are encouraged to suggest other types of projects. Stewardship action projects may also include everyday choices at home or community engagement and civic action on the topic of study.

With virtual, and/or small in-person activities outside, more resources in the form of essential expendable supplies may be needed during the project as well as after it ends, Where equipment is critical to continuation of the project during and after the grant has ended, budgets may include equipment purchases for schools. Sustainability, including the basic resources needed to support it, is always a key element of New England B-WET projects.

Successful Priority 1 projects may implement environmentally sustainable practices to improve the health of the school's watershed, assure teacher confidence integrating the program into the classroom curriculum, offer authentic investigation and stewardship experiences for students in their own backyard or even in their home, reduce energy and maintenance costs for schools (internal as well as external climate mitigation). For example, during the pandemic many classrooms and entire school buildings have required retrofitting to improve HVAC infrastructure. Re-opening has often been contingent upon these improvements. The pandemic's persistence has put immense pressure on schools and school systems to re-open -- whether virtually, via a hybrid model, or full time. Re-opening has often been contingent upon these improvements. Improving air quality within classrooms offers a unique opportunity to consider the environmental costs and benefits to the community as well as to the individual of these changes and to relate them directly to public health, mental health, and climate change. This inquiry may also prompt consideration of a Backyard-BWET school's transition to "Green Schools," one local example of responsible environmental stewardship associated with local watershed management practices as we seek to minimize our carbon footprint. See:

https://www.baybackpack.com/action-projects/national-state-green-school-programs

Other competitive projects might include family and community outreach opportunities, for example, peer-to-peer sharing in school, presentations at school events or at public meetings, or posting at libraries and other community spaces. These can all be done virtually, whether the focus is on Educator MWEE Professional Development Training, on the Student MWEE, or on both.

Priority 2. Second Glance: Capacity-Building for Sustainability

Priority 2 is available only to previous (prior to FY2017) New England B-WET grantees. See Section III.A., Eligible Applicants for more information on eligibility. Below are two lists of prior NOAA/NMFS Funding Opportunity numbers relevant to applications under New England B-WET's Priority 2. Grantees (and their partners!) from any of these prior Funding Opportunities are eligible to submit applications for Priority 2 under this Funding Opportunity.

Funding Opportunities sponsored by NOAA's Office of Education on behalf of New England
B-WET:
SEC-OED-2008-2001368
SEC-OED-2009-2001648

Funding Opportunities sponsored by NMFS/Northeast Regional Office, now Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, on behalf of New England B-WET:
NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2010-2001868
NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2011-2002569
NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2013-2003467
NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2014-2004167
NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2016-2005001

New England B-WET‘s past funding opportunities, project timelines, and funding criteria have not changed much in recent years. Historically, we have preferred “exemplary projects”, i.e., those which include Teacher Professional Development Training AND substantive Student MWEEs AND demonstrable stewardship and sustainability, all three major elements combined in a single project. We have specifically asked that repeat applicants NOT submit applications which continue previously funded projects. We have requested new, innovative projects, not repeat performances. Finally, we have always emphasized evaluation, the leverage and the value-added secured from strong partnerships and collaboration, and a requirement to address, at some level, underserved populations.

These are difficult times for education, especially for K-12, STEM-oriented outdoor environmental education programs such as B-WET. The disruptions to outdoor environmental education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that now is an appropriate time to assess what we have done in the past to address STEM requirements using the MWEE methodology, to see how B-WET projects have stood the test of time in a rapidly changing world, particularly within the context of a deepening pandemic. How, today, can we accommodate pandemic-induced dislocations innovatively where virtual programming and limited social interactions, whether in class or outside in the field, are the “new normal”. Compounding these dislocations are on-going, serious losses of revenue streams which have historically funded mainstream education, never mind innovative educational strategies such as the MWEE. These disruptions have potential, long-term consequences which need thoughtful, innovative consideration now.

During this pandemic, our immediate goal is meaningful support for educators, students, and educational institutions, while sustaining our focus on STEM and the Student MWEE as an exciting vehicle for promoting, and where appropriate or necessary, on redefining how we approach outdoor education and stewardship for our K-12 educational population.

Priority 2’s capacity-building focus has two key dimensions: (1) expanding the institutional partnership capabilities of the community, while supporting STEM, placed-based outdoor

environmental education for K-12 and (2) supporting and improving upon prior B-WET investment.

We are interested in identifying key differences in what worked in the earlier, pre-pandemic world of outdoor environmental education and what supports Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training, the Student MWEE, and participation of underserved populations and community-based partnerships, today.

Working with previous, or new, partnerships, please develop a project that would have been a logical sequel to your original grant, adapted to the exigencies of today's pandemic, had funding been available. A successful follow-on project might consider the following:

What worked well, short-term and long term?
What did not work well, short-term and long term? Identify what you and others in your community identify as key strengths and key deficiencies.
What would strengthen what worked well and remedy what did not work well in a follow-on project during a pandemic? Questions you might ask include:

Were partnerships integral to the early award? If so, how effective were they, how might they be improved?
Was there sufficient administrative support from the school system?
Is more, or enhanced, Teacher Professional Development Training, including a focus on the MWEE, a concern? Previously we have asked for 30 plus hours of Professional Development Training. Is this sufficient today, given virtual programming, social distancing, and a focus on Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training?
Is recruitment of teachers with different expertise and skill sets desirable, essential?
Was more innovation, including more access to technology, an issue then, now?
Would more guidance and mentoring of educators, as well as students, improve outcomes?
Was the timeline consistent with implementation? Does this change with virtual programming?
Was the budget (travel, supplies, equipment, infrastructure, contracts, incentives, etc.), realistic during the project and sufficient to support its sustainability after the grant ended?
What are key budget priorities during the pandemic?
How effective was project evaluation? Was there follow-through on key evaluation recommendations at project's end and what adjustments would be needed today?

Successful Priority 2 projects might address:

Key requirements (MWEE elements, resources needed, time requirements, leadership) of

virtual Teacher MWEE Professional Development Training.
Promoting effective partnerships, including active involvement of community-based organizations and local and regional institutions with documented, recognized subject matter expertise.
Recommendations and lessons learned to be shared with the environmental education community.

We have deliberately not provided more detailed guidance or parameters for either of our FY2021-FY2022 priorities, preferring to rely on applicants to identify and describe their own perspectives as to what is most important for their outdoor environmental education programming during this critical time. Capacity-building and partnerships are central to both.

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 approximately $250,000 will be available to support three to five New England B-WET awards in FY2021. 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.

The minimum Federal funding requested for one year is $50,000. The maximum Federal funds requested for any single year is $100,000. The maximum Federal funding requested

for a three-year project is $300,000.

Multi-year projects (two or three years) will receive funding for only the first year of the award in FY2021. Funding for future ("out") years is always dependent on the B-WET Program's budget and on priorities in those years. Out-year funding for any award is not guaranteed, so include in your project description discrete deliverables that can be completed by the end of each year in the event that future funding is not available.

This funding opportunity is for two years: FY2021 and FY2022. If B-WET receives funding in both years, after FY2021 projects have been funded, we may use the ranking from the FY2021 competition to select new projects for funding in FY2022. This alternative to developing another, new funding opportunity for FY2022 acknowledges the significant effort required of applicants to develop a strong proposal, particularly during constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the resources required by the B-WET Program Office and reviewers to conduct the competition. If we select proposals from the FY2021 competition for possible funding in FY2022, we will adhere to the standard practice of considering the remaining applications in the rank order determined in the FY2021 review process.

B. Project/Award Period

We will award grants for a maximum period of three years (36 months), but shorter term project proposals are welcomed. The requested award start date must begin on the first day of a month, and the project end date is always on the last day of a month. The earliest start date for projects will be September 1, 2021. Applicants selected for funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

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.

Priority 2 is available only to previous (prior to FY2017) New England B-WET grantees. Eligible applicants must be organizations that have received awards or were formally recognized partners (i.e. identified by either a sub-award or letter of commitment or both) for projects funded under the FY2008-FY2014 Funding Opportunities from this program, listed below:

SEC-OED-2008-2001368
SEC-OED-2009-2001648
NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2010-2001868
NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2011-2002569
NOAA-NMFS-NERO-2013-2003467
NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2014-2004167

Individuals, federal agencies, for-profit organizations, foreign organizations, and foreign public entities are NOT eligible to apply. Federal employees can serve as uncompensated partners in a project. If you wish to partner with a NOAA employee, in your application you must provide a written agreement documenting the participation, including details of the NOAA employee's involvement, signed by their supervisor. While applicants do not need to be located in New England, the work proposed must occur within this geographical region.

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 underserved areas. 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:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst.html

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing or matching is required. Please do not include a cost share in your application. It will not increase chances of your project being selected for funding

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Potential applicants may contact NOAA's Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (deirdre.kimball@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, or writing letters of support for any application. Federal staff may provide letters confirming collaboration and commitment to the proposed work.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

For the full application, the standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at

http://www.grants.gov

A complete, standard, NOAA grant application package is required in accordance with the guidelines in this funding opportunity. Applications that are not complete on the closing date of this announcement, April 19, 2021, will not be reviewed. Your application must contain all required documents and forms. If these forms are not signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, they MUST be signed in ink. If the www.Grants.gov electronic signature is not used, the applicant organization's Authorized Representative MUST sign and date these forms over the same printed signature that will appear in the signature boxes. Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. An incomplete application or one that does not follow the format requirements will not be reviewed and will be withdrawn
from the competition.

Registered users of Grants.gov can download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If you have problems downloading the application from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Support at 1-800-518-4726, or support@Grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, contact Deirdre Kimball (deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov, 978-281-9290) to request an application package. If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or if internet access is not available to you or your organization, you may submit a paper application.

All pages must be no less than single-spaced printed or typed, in at least a 12–point font with one-inch margins on letter sized (8.5" x 11") paper. Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirement when printed out. Mail your paper application to

Deirdre M. Kimball
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

B. Content and Form of Application

Your application will not be reviewed if we receive it after the deadline, 11:59 p.m. on April 19, 2021. Applications lacking any required elements, or which do not follow the instructions prescribed in this funding announcement, will be deemed ineligible and eliminated from further review.

Here is guidance on completing some of the required Standard Federal (SF) Forms:

* Application for Federal Assistance, Standard Form SF-424.

Items 17 a -- b (Proposed Project, Start and End Date). The proposed start date must be the first day of the month (recommended is September 1, 2021), and the end date must be the last day of a month.

Items 18a – g (Estimated Funding ($). These items must reflect (1) the total Federal funding requested for ALL years of the project, (2) the total match, if match is a factor, for ALL years of the project (we strongly recommend that you not include match), and (3) the total project cost, which equals the total Federal funding requested for ALL years of the project plus the total match, if there is match, for ALL years for the entire project.

Item 21 (Authorized Representative). Signatures (electronic 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.

* Budget Information, Non-construction Programs, Standard Form SF-424A.
Submit separate SF-424A budget forms for EACH year of requested funding. In Section B (Budget Categories), use separate columns to indicate how Federal funds (and matching funds, if match is a factor) are broken down by each cost category, i.e., by each line item, for each year of requested funding.

* SF-424B, Assurances - Non-construction Programs.
This must be completed for each submitted non-construction application. B-WET applications are always non-construction projects.

* CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.

* SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable).
You must complete and submit this form if you have made or have agreed to make payment to any lobbying entity to influence or attempt to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, or an officer or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of, or the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of, any Federal contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or loan. Recipients may not use funds awarded under a Federal grant or cooperative agreement to conduct such lobbying activities.

PLEASE NOTE: Validation or rejection of your application by the Grants.gov system may take up to two (2) business days after submission. Consider this timeline in submitting your application. Submit early!

Submission Process

Electronic submission, preferred and encouraged, is a two-step process. First, the complete application package must be successfully submitted into the Grants.gov system. If that submission is successful, the application moves into NOAA’s Grants Online (GOL) system. Please note that Grants.gov is NOT a NOAA system.

Required registrations: You MUST complete and maintain the following three (3) registrations to be eligible to submit an application via Grants.gov:

* Grants.gov
* Dun & Bradstreet's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)
* System for Award Management (SAM)

ALL three registrations must be completed before an applicant can submit an application. Since complete registration can take from three (3) days to four (4) weeks or longer to complete, begin the registration process early.

* Grants.gov registration. This is the first step required to submit an online application. It is a one-time registration process.

* Data Universal Numbering System registration. All applicants must be issued a DUNS number, a unique nine-digit identifier provided by Dun and Bradstreet. You must use your Data University Identifier Number when applying for Federal awards. Request a DUNS number by calling 1-866-705-5711 (toll free) or through the internet:

https://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html

Securing your DUNS number is a free service.

*System for Award Management (SAM). All applicants must complete and maintain an active SAM registration. SAM registration must be renewed at least annually. New registrations take an average of fourteen (14) business days to complete, and renewal may require as much time as the initial registration. SAM registration includes assignment of a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code for domestic organizations which have not already been assigned a CAGE Code. To register, go to:

https://www.sam.gov

You must renew and revalidate your organization's SAM registration at least every twelve (12) months from the date you were last certified and submitted your SAM registration, or sooner than twelve (12) months, if your applicant organization's information has changed. The primary point of contact's email address will receive a message alerting them to the entity's/entities' renewal requirements at 60 days, 30 days, and 15 days prior to SAM registration expiration. If you do not renew your registration, it will expire. You must have an active SAM registration to receive contract awards or grant payments, submit financial assistance award applications via Grants.gov, or receive certain payments from some Federal agencies.

Once you have completed all three registrations, a designated, registered Authorized Representative of the applicant must submit the application via Grants.gov. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE (3) automated email responses to the Authorized Representative:

* The first email will be received within 24 to 48 hours, confirming receipt into the Grants.gov system. This acknowledgment of receipt contains a Grants.gov tracking number which you must keep for your records. This acknowledgment indicates receipt by the Grants.gov system ONLY, not receipt by NOAA.

* The second email will indicate that the application has been successfully validated by the Grants.gov system before transmission to the grantor agency (NOAA) or (2) that it has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review, and the time of validation is the official time of NOAA's receipt of the application.

* The third email validates that the application has been forwarded to NOAA's Grants Online (GOL) system for further processing.

Save all three emails. If all three notifications are NOT received, follow up immediately with both the Grants.gov Support Desk (1-800-518-4726) and Deirdre Kimball (978-281- 9290, Deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov) to confirm NOAA receipt of the application package. If you use the Grants.gov Support Desk, secure a Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number, and retain this record for future reference.

If you experience a Grants.gov "systems issue" (defined as technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete submission before the application deadline, print out a copy of any error message received AND call the Grants.gov Support Desk immediately. Problems with an applicant organization's computer system or equipment are not considered "systems issues." An applicant's failure to complete the required registrations and/or to ensure that a registered Authorized Representative submits the application on time are not "systems issues." A Grant.gov "systems issue" is a problem with the operation of the Grants.gov system, such as a temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volumes of traffic or a failure of its information technology systems. In the event of a confirmed "systems issue" or if a significant natural disaster affects submission, NOAA may allow more time for application submission.

Below is guidance on the substantive content of the application and related attachments or appendices.

Brevity and clarity will assist reviewers and the B-WET regional Program Office in effectively processing the proposals. However, do not assume prior knowledge and understanding on the part of the Program Office or the reviewers as to the information contained in the application. Program Office staff do not review and score applications for technical merit. Subject matter experts will review each application.

1. Project Summary

The project summary (two-page maximum) must accurately and succinctly describe the project being proposed and convey all essential elements of the project for public dissemination. The summary must include:

Applicant Information: Applicant organization name and contact information, and name, title, and contact information of the Principal Investigator.

Project Information: Project title, location, requested project period (start and end dates).

Total Federal funding requested and identification of the New England B-WET FY2021-FY2022 priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. You MUST designate a single priority.

Partners: Identify collaborating partners and organizations and their contact information. Partners are NOT those who support submission of your application. Partners are major contributors to the proposed effort.

Summary: A clear description of proposed activities, anticipated benefits and outcomes. State briefly the need for your project, its goals, and objectives, the number of teachers and students you anticipate reaching, anticipated contact hours (in professional development, in classrooms, and outdoors), what NOAA assets and educational resources you will use, and what your anticipated outcomes will be for each year.

Use plain language, not jargon. Avoid acronyms. Merit reviewers must be able to understand the purpose and expected outcome(s) of your educational proposal, including the number of teachers and students targeted. Someone unfamiliar with your proposal should be able to read the project summary and understand your proposal.

Project Objectives: List primary objectives for the entire project period, broken out by year, if appropriate.

Delivery method: Explain how you will reach your audience: Via workshops, field experiences, virtual and interactive programs, summer institutes, classroom outreach, etc.

Audience(s): Describe the demographics of your target audience(s), including the school division(s) and the number and types of participants you expect to reach, such as teachers and students, the specific grade levels, environmental educators, principals, etc.

Budget Information: Provide total Federal funding requested for FY2021, total non-Federal match (if applicable), and total project cost for FY2021 (Federal funding requested plus all sources of match equals total project cost). If you propose a multi-year investigation, include similar information for year two, if you propose a two-year project, and for year three, if you propose a three-year project.

ALWAYS list amounts in WHOLE DOLLARS.

2. Detailed Project Narrative (12-page maximum):

Detail what your project will achieve under the following headings: What, Why, Who, How, and When? Explain each aspect of your proposal clearly, and address each topic below.

Reviewers must be able to connect proposed activities and project costs. The Detailed Project Narrative should track as tightly as possible the evaluation criteria listed under “Evaluation Criteria" in Section V.A.

What? Explain the goals and objectives for your project. Identify the ONE New England B-WET priority that your project supports. Show that you understand the MWEE and can use that understanding to contribute to greater understanding and stewardship of the New England watersheds. Discuss what your project will do to support ocean, climate, or environmental literacy and the goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan:

https://www.noaa.gov/education/explainers/noaa-education-strategic-plan

the GARFO Strategic Plan:

https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/new-england-mid-atlantic

and the program priority selected. This section will be scored under evaluation criterion 1, “Relevance to program goals and priority."

Why? Briefly describe the need for your project, including any local, state, regional, or national initiatives that the project supports. Describe why this project supports the priority you have chosen. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 1, “Relevance to program goals and priority," and evaluation criterion 3, “Project impact."

Who? Identify your target audience(s). Give the precise location of the project and the geographic area(s) to be served. Estimate how many students will receive MWEEs ANNUALLY in your project and how many teachers will receive professional development ANNUALLY. Provide information regarding the demographics of your audience, including percentages of students from low-income or underserved populations. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 1, “Relevance to program goals and priority," and evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

How? How will you achieve your goals and objectives? If you propose a multi-year project, specify project objectives for each year. Detail how the project meets the definition of the MWEE contained in this funding opportunity, including student investigations and stewardship opportunities, teacher professional development with MWEEs, and what NOAA projects, services, or staff will be used in program delivery. Refer to Section VI of this funding announcement regarding inclusion of information relating to the project’s potential impact under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

Project-Level Evaluation Summary. Our definition of evaluation is 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. Explain how you will meet the goals and objectives of your project and measure progress on your outputs and your short-term outcomes. If your medium- and long-term outcomes can also be measured within the project period, explain your plans for that evaluation as well. Evaluation plans may be quantitative and/or qualitative and may include evaluation tools, observations, and/or outside consultation. No more than 10% of the project costs should be spent on the evaluation component of your proposal. Recipients will report project evaluation results in regular, required progress reports. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

For detailed information on developing an education evaluation plan, visit NOAA’s website: https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/evaluation/
B-WET National Evaluation. In addition to project-level evaluation, we ask grantees to participate in data collection for the national B-WET evaluation. The B-WET national

evaluation monitors B-WET program implementation and outcomes on an ongoing basis. We use national evaluation results to improve the B-WET program, document its value, and tailor it to program audiences. Success depends upon grantee participation. We urge all applicants to review information about the national evaluation and how they can support it as part of their project. Applicants should provide information about how they will support the national evaluation. You may incorporate the staff time required to participate in the B-WET national evaluation into your budget proposal.

The B-WET national evaluation has two parts. Part 1 is for all B-WET grantees, while Part 2 is for programs that work with teachers. See:

https://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources/national-evaluation

National Evaluation, Part 1. One individual from each recipient organization will be asked to voluntarily complete an online questionnaire once a year for each year of the award. This questionnaire will take 30 to 60 minutes to complete and may require some internal data collection and compilation. The volunteer will encourage teachers to participate in the national evaluation and secure the email addresses of those teachers who have agreed to participate. Teachers will be notified that their email will be shared with the national evaluation team.

National Evaluation, Part 2. For projects with a teacher professional development component, teacher-participants will complete one questionnaire at the close of their professional development training experience and another after implementing a MWEE with their students, whenever that MWEE is completed. The teacher questionnaires require about 30 minutes to complete. Grantees will receive a password-protected report link to view aggregate data from teacher-participants from their project only. Grantees with teacher-participants can view a summary of responses from their participating teachers.

Participation in the national evaluation does not replace project-level evaluation. The national evaluation will not provide the detail needed to understand, describe, and improve an individual project. However, grantees can use national evaluation information to inform and plan their project-level evaluations. For example:

** Grantees may not need to include questions in their project-level evaluation that will be answered in the national evaluation teacher instrument.
** Grantees should try to incorporate teacher participation in the national evaluation system into their professional development training requirement. B-WET encourages the use of incentives to promote teacher participation, offered upon completion of professional

development training, in the national evaluation.

B-WET grantee and teacher respondents to the questionnaires will always be anonymous to B-WET and NOAA. NOAA will view the resulting data in aggregate-only at the national or regional level.

All data collection will be considered in a manner consistent with White House Office of Management and Budget guidelines (OMB Control No. 0648-0658). This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

When? Include a timeline, broken down by year, and a Logic Model, describing outcomes and objectives annually and over the entire project. 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. Does the project include more than 30 hours of professional development time, and is more than 10 hours of professional development time spent outdoors? This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

Sustainability. How will the funding request create a sustainable project after NOAA grant funding ends? What curricula and other resources will be available to sustain the lessons learned? List any other sources of funding that have been requested or will be sought for the project and the status of those requests. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 3, “Project impact."

Organization and Personnel. Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Demonstrate the applicant’s knowledge and experience in delivering the project defined in the application. The principal investigator may or may not be an employee of the applicant. If she/he is not an employee of the applicant, you must provide an explanation of the relationship and roles between the applicant and the principal investigator. Include the resume or curriculum vitae of all principal investigators and any consultants and/or subcontractors, and clearly indicate their relationship to, and involvement in, the project. Include copies of any agreements between the applicant and other participants or partners, describing the specific tasks to be performed by all. Agreements and resumes (2-page maximum for each major participant) should be included in the application as attachments. These agreements and resumes will not count toward the Project Narrative’s 12-page maximum.

Describe any partnerships with other organizations and/or schools which are integral to the project. Wherever reasonable, proposals should include partnerships with school districts or

divisions and/or the state department of education, if your organization is not one of these entities. We also encourage collaboration with NOAA entities as partners. NOAA entities include, but are not limited to, NOAA programs, offices, and organizations such as the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the National Sea Grant College Program, the National Weather Service, the Office of Ocean Exploration, the NOAA Cooperative Institutes, the Northeast Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, among others. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 4, “Qualifications of the applicant team."

If you anticipate collaborating (virtually or in-person) with other regional B-WET recipients to conduct a regional conference or to allow former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B-WET projects or confer on regional B-WET programming, describe this collaboration in your Project Narrative and include in the budget Travel category funds for transportation (airfare, rental car, shuttle, or taxi), lodging, and per diem. We strongly encourage meaningful partnerships and collaboration. Such a conference or presentation is an outreach and education opportunity, but it should not be the sole item or event addressing the outreach and education criterion. Other local communication with the public is required. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 5, “Outreach and education."

Outreach and Education. The project should include significant external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience (typically students and teachers). Partnerships may be a central element of this outreach and education function, as sponsors as well as recipients. Projects should include mechanisms that encourage students and/or teachers to share their knowledge with peers, their school, and their local community. Outreach mechanisms could include (both virtual and face-to-face venues) the media (newspaper articles, websites, etc.); mentoring; presentations at conferences; in-school service days; documented sharing with other students, teachers, administrators, and the community; or other public works or forums that advance the goal of environmental stewardship, such as attending town meetings, meetings with town committees and administrators, etc. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 5, “Outreach and education."

3. Detailed Budget Narrative (four (4)-page limit, not included in the two (2)-page Project Summary and twelve (12)-page Detailed Project Narrative limits).

The Detailed Budget Narrative should explain the need for federal financial assistance. Provide a detailed spreadsheet, with the narrative, separated into federal and non-federal shares (if there is a match), as they relate to specific, requested line items or activities (personnel and salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contracts, indirect costs).

If you are applying for more than one year of funding, the budget should be separated out by year, with a final, total budget for all years included as well. Use the recommended B-WET budget template found at:

https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/content/resources-prospective-chesapeake-bay-b-wet-grantees

The Detailed Budget Narrative submitted with the application MUST match exactly the dollar amounts and line item/object classes on the required forms SF-424 and the SF-424A. Round off to the nearest dollar. Do not use cents! We recommend you prepare the Detailed Budget Narrative and spreadsheet first, then insert these numbers into the appropriate line items found on the SF-424A, and finally, complete items 18a-g on the SF-424 (see Section IV.B.). This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

If there are costs beyond your application’s proposed federal funds (and non-federal share) needed to complete the project, list all other sources of funding that have been, or will be, sought for the project and the status of each request. If no other funding has been sought, explain.

Grant recipients are encouraged to attend a state or regional B-WET meeting once during the duration of their grant--after the COVID-19 pandemic is under control. These meetings are an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B-WET project and to learn from each other. This meeting may be part of an existing state environmental or science education conference, thus minimizing travel expenses. Proposal budgets should include in the Travel category funds estimated for attendance at this meeting (e.g., registration fees, transportation, meals, lodging, per diem, etc.). You may allocate up to $1,000 for this expense.

The budget may include indirect costs. These are overhead costs, which cover basic operational functions (lights, rent, water, insurance, etc.) incurred for common or joint objectives, expenses which therefore cannot be assigned to a single project. If you request indirect costs, you must provide a current, approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) established with a cognizant Federal agency or an acknowledgment letter from the cognizant agency stating that you, the applicant, have submitted a request for a NICRA. An applicant without a NICRA may also propose all allowable project charges as direct costs.

If an applicant has never established an indirect cost rate with any Federal agency, the

recipient may either request the de minimus rate described in 2 CFR 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 procedures required by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section B.06, (see:

https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf)

require that within 90 days of an award start date, recipients must submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation, plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review and establish a new rate. The NOAA Point of Contact for information regarding indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-628-1308
Lamar.revis@noaa.gov

4. Appendices and Attachments (no page limit) Appendices and attachments may include:
*Resumes/Curriculum Vitae of major participants, including partnerships, Participant Agreements.

*Partnership Letters of Commitment (NOT letters of endorsement). These are required, if the applicant organization has partners, such as school divisions, state agencies, community-based organizations, etc., critical to successful performance of the project. Include letters of commitment and agreements from EACH of these partners, explaining their role in, and/or funding for, the proposed project. Do not include letters of endorsement from previous participants, teachers, or other not directly involved in project implementation, EXCEPT letters demonstrating support from the school(s) or school division(s). Letters must be included as part of the application package being submitted.
This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 4, “Overall qualifications of applicants."

*Timeline. The applicant must include a project schedule and work plan that indicates when each action event, milestone, product development, and evaluation will occur. This section

will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

*Logic Model. Projects should be accomplishment-oriented and describe expected outputs and outcomes. An example of a basic logic model template is available at

https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/evaluation/evaluation.html

This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 2, “Approach and methodology."

*Results from prior NOAA Support. If any principal investigator or other co-principal investigator identified in the proposal has received NOAA B-WET support in the past five years, provide the following information:

**The NOAA award number, the amount of financial support, the period of support, and the title of the project.
** A summary of the results of the completed work, including the numbers of teachers and students, reached.
** Indicate whether this proposal is for renewed support.
** Describe the relationship of the completed work to the proposed work.

NB: This information has particular relevance to applications submitted under Priority No. 2, Second Glance.

*Data Management Plan. Proposals submitted in response to this NOFO must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages. This plan should be aligned with the NOAA B-WET Data Management Guidance provided below.

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly available 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. Final, pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly journal articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be submitted to the 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. The NOAA B-WET program has developed this guidance to help applicants plan the sharing of 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.

This definition describes environmental data 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.
Two types of Data Management Plans are anticipated for NOAA B-WET proposals:

If applicants are not collecting data to share with scientists outside of the educational program, they may request permission not to make data collected publicly accessible, if funded. For example, environmental data may be collected or generated as part of a project but primarily to demonstrate and practice making observations using scientific techniques and methodology, e.g., measuring the pH of water with a refractometer or measuring atmospheric humidity with a sling psychrometer or measuring percent vegetative cover using a transect. If this is the case, the application should include a brief paragraph under the heading “Data Management Plan," describing the intended use of the data and requesting an exemption from NOAA’s data sharing requirements. Historically, this option has applied to most New England B-WET projects.

If environmental data collected as part of the project is for citizen science or for sharing with scientists outside of the educational project, the applicant must identify how data will be shared and how it will be made accessible based on the following guidance:

Contents of Data Management Plans for projects collecting data for purposes beyond education. A typical Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information 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 Data Management Plan should describe or reference data quality control techniques that will be used or note that the data will not be quality controlled. Data that are not quality controlled should include a description of the limitations of the data or an indication of the degree of uncertainty in the data.

Data Accessibility. The NOAA B-WET program recommends that grantees ensure public access to grant-produced data in any one of a number of ways:

* An existing, publicly accessible, online data server at the funded institution may host these data (describe in the application).
* Data may be submitted to a public data repository appropriate to the scientific domain (describe in the application). Examples:
The GLOBE Program, http://www.globe.gov CoCoRaHS Community, http://www.cocorahs.org/

* Funding recipients may establish their own data hosting capability (describe in the application's Data Management Plan).

Proposals may include the costs of data preparation, of accessibility, or of archiving in their budgets.
The contact official for data management questions is in Section VII (Agency Contacts) of this funding announcement. This section will be scored using evaluation criterion 5, "Outreach and education."

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or a federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 C.F.R. 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by a federal awarding agency under 2 C.F.R. 25.110(d)) is required to (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application, i.e., a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number developed and regulated by Dun & Bradstreet ; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award, application, or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements, and if an applicant has not fully complied with the

requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and may use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Complete applications must be received at http://www.Grants.gov, or postmarked, or provided to a delivery service, with appropriate documentation, no later than 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), on the closing date, April 19, 2021. Electronic submission via Grants.gov is preferred. If use of Grants.gov is not feasible or practical, paper copy applications will be accepted, but use of the U.S. Postal Service or other delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Private meter postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than five (5) business days after the closing date will not be accepted. Facsimile or email applications will not be accepted. Any application not adhering to the postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program may not be subject to Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, if their states have chosen to participate in this intergovernmental review process. Any applicant submitting an application for funding from a participating state is required to complete item 19 on the Standard Form SF-424. To find out about, and comply with, your state’s procedures under E.O. 12372, see the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of participating Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) listed on the Office of Management and Budget home page:

https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Single_Point_of_Contact_List_ExecutiveOrder_12372_Requirements022019.pdf

F. Funding Restrictions

Allowable Costs. Federal funds cannot pay for all costs a recipient incurs in the course of project implementation. Generally, allowable costs include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are “necessary and reasonable” specifically for the purpose of the award. For allowable costs, see 2 C.F.R. Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." All sub-awards (subgrants,

subcontracts, etc.) are also subject to the Federal Cost Principles found in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, effective December 26, 2014.

Pre-award costs are generally not allowed. Any costs incurred before NOAA's Grants Officer issues a notice of award approved are assumed at your own risk.

G. Other Submission Requirements

None.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

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

1. Relevance to program goals and priority (25 points)
2. Approach and methodology (40 points)
3. Project impact (19 points)
4. Qualifications of the applicant team (10 points)
5. Outreach and education (6 points)

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

Criterion 1. Relevance to program goals and priority (25 – 0 points). Is the proposal consistent with Federal, NOAA, regional, state, and or local initiatives and the designated priority, given the exigencies imposed by a pandemic emergency?

1. Is the proposal relevant to the NOAA Education Strategic Plan, and to the GARFO FY2015-FY2019 Strategic Plan? 4 points.
2. Does the proposal support the B-WET ocean, climate, and environmental literacy goals during a pandemic? Does applicant clearly define the pandemic-induced challenge to K-12 environmental education that the proposed project will address? 9 points
3. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the MWEE? 8 points
4. Does the project clearly increase environmental stewardship of New England rivers,

estuaries, coastlines, and watersheds among participants? 4 points

Criterion 2. Approach and methodology (40 - 0 points). Is the approach technically sound, and does the approach meet the definition of the MWEE? Are goals and objectives clearly defined? Are costs reasonable for the number of participants, the target audience(s), the timeline, the effort required?

1. Are best practices articulated and proposed? Are objectives well described, realistic, appropriate within the context of an ongoing pandemic? Can the objectives be achieved within the proposed project period? Are the objectives appropriate for the target audience(s) and has the applicant included members of the targeted audience in the proposed planning and implementation processes? 5 points
2. Is the audience served within the six New England states? 3 points
3. Does the target audience include low income or underserved populations, and is the target audience well described? 6 points
4. Do proposed teacher and/or student experiences meet the full definition of the MWEE? 8 points
5. Does teacher participation satisfy the definition of the MWEE and include recommended teacher professional development training (multi-day, equal to or more than 30 hours, with at least 10 hours or more, outdoors) and support throughout the project period and possibly thereafter? 10 points
6. Are NOAA resources used? 4 points
7. Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel directly involved in implementation? 2 points
8. Does the budget adequately detail the individuals and the amount of time each individual will spend on the project? Is there a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? 2 points

Criterion 3. Project impact (19 - 0 points). What is the likelihood of success, given time, schedule, available resources, including proposed budget?

1. Has the applicant defined and described the underserved community (communities) that will be reached? Has the applicant properly defined the needs and limitations of the targeted population(s), broadly defined as teachers, students, school district(s), community (communities)? Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the targeted community (communities), including an in-depth understanding of its schools and school systems? 4 points
2. Does the Logic Model show a realistic understanding of desired outputs and project outcomes?

3. Does the budget line up with objectives of the proposed project? 5 points
4. Does the proposal address sustainability after NOAA funding ceases? Will teachers have the supplies they need to conduct MWEEs after training and NOAA support ends? 5 points
5. Is there an effective project evaluation to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? Does the applicant discuss if and how the B-WET National Evaluation will be incorporated into its evaluation plan? 5 points

Criterion 4. Qualifications of the applicant team (10 – 0 points). Does the applicant (and its partners) possess the education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project?

1. Has the applicant demonstrated the capability and experience to successfully complete similar projects? If the applicant was a previous Federal grantee, were grant administration and implementation successful? 5 points
2. Does the proposal describe meaningful partnerships and collaborations, including with community-based organizations, that are well supported and that will contribute to project implementation and capacity building? Are those partnerships justified and documented with support letters and agreements? 5 points

Criterion 5: Outreach and education (6 – 0 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy pertinent to NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources and B-WET's educational environmental mission. Specifically, what mechanisms or tools does the project propose to ensure significant external sharing and communication about the project by students, teachers, and/or project staff during a pandemic emergency, when social distancing and remote learning may be required? Will results be shared with community, as it is defined by the project?

1. Does the applicant discuss the relevance of data sharing to their project? 2 points
2. Does the application propose peer-to-peer sharing for teachers and/or students, e.g., via in-service days, school assemblies, etc.? 2 points
3. Does the application propose community events (including virtual events) that engage parents, other community members, etc., and/or will the project be publicized at conferences, in the media, etc.? 2 points

B. Review and Selection Process

There are two review steps for each application received:

Minimum requirements review: We will conduct an initial, administrative review on each, timely-received application to ensure that it is eligible, responsive to the solicitation, and complete. Applications deemed ineligible, not responsive, and incomplete will be eliminated from further review. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily remedied. Applications cleared for minimum requirements will move forward and be evaluated in a merit review, conducted electronically and/or virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Merit review will be performed by private and/or public sector expert reviewers, not by Program Office staff.

Merit review: Independent, written evaluations from at least three federal, public, or private sector experts with specific subject matter expertise will assess the merit of each application. Each application will be evaluated solely on the information in the application against the evaluation criteria described in Section V.A. Each merit reviewer will certify that she/he has no conflict of interest relative to each application he/she is reviewing before the review process begins. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score. There will be no consensual scoring.

NOAA will protect reviewer anonymity to the maximum extent permitted by law. Individual merit review scores will be combined and averaged to determine the final score for each application. Applications for both priorities will be ranked together in descending order according to averaged review scores. A final “cutoff score” may be established based in part on the amount of funding available for the program in Fiscal Year 2021. Applications below the cutoff will be eliminated from further consideration for this FY2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity. Reviewers’ comments (anonymous) may be shared, upon request, with unsuccessful applicants after the competition is over and awards have been made.

C. Selection Factors

New England B-WET Program Office staff will make preliminary recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official (the GARFO Regional Administrator), based on (1) rank order from the merit review process and (2) the selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official will then recommend funding based on rank order, unless a proposal is justified for selection out of rank order based upon one or more of the following seven (7) selection factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
   Geographic.
Institution or type of institution.
Research areas.

Project types.
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities.
5. Applicant's performance in a previous award. Factors considered here may include an applicant's fiscal accountability, implementation issues, or compliance with such grant conditions as timely and acceptable reporting. See also Section VI.B.7 (Review of Risk).
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of environmental (NEPA) information provided to NOAA staff, if appropriate.

The Selecting Official will make the final recommendations for awards, based on the final rank order and the selection factors referenced above, to NOAA'S Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding and execute the award.

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. Depending on availability of funding, a proposal may be considered for funding in another fiscal year without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

Not all activities submitted under an application may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official may recommend alternative activities, as appropriate, or only partial funding, based on selection factors and merit review written evaluations. When a proposal has been selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives and activities, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplementary information required by the agency prior to funding 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 period, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of the project will be determined in pre-award negotiations involving the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the New England B-WET Program Office.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

We anticipate that the competitive selection process and subsequent notification of applications considered for funding will be completed by June, 2021. The earliest start date for projects will be September 1, 2021, depending upon the availability of federal funding, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation, as requested.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Upon completion of the review and selection process, the New England B-WET Program Office will notify successful applicants that their application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grant Management Division. This notification is NOT an authorization to begin performance of the project and is NOT a guarantee of funding. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the only authorizing document that allows the project to begin. This notification will be issued to the Authorized Representative either electronically through Grants Online, NOAA's electronic grants management system, or in hard copy. Do not initiate project implementation in anticipation of federal funding until the applicant's Authorized Representative has received official notice of the award from NOAA's Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award in Grants Online.

The New England B-WET Program Office will notify unsuccessful applicants that their proposal was either (1) not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements described in Section IV.B. (Content and Form of Application) or (2) that it did meet minimum requirements but was not recommended for funding at the conclusion of merit review. Unselected paper applications will be destroyed.

Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may also contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental or other compliance requirements and may lead to modification of the project's scope of work. These special award conditions will be applied on a case-by-case basis. The applicant's designated Authorized Representative who signed the original application should review award documents carefully before accepting a federal award, to ensure that the applicant is fully aware of the relevant terms of the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Uniform Administrative Guidance

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R Part 2300, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, are applicable to awards in this program. See:

https://gov.ecfr.io/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=befcbe397e1d1cd17e1e4f4013f00682&mc=true&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5

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

2. Pre-Award Notice

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, contained in the Federal Register Notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this Announcement and may be accessed online at:

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

3. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. These Standard Terms and Conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions, including those limiting the use of funds for compliance activities such as outstanding environmental compliance requirements, which will be applied on a case-by-case basis, and requirements for submitting progress reports. See:

https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf

4. Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for any or all qualified projects pursuant to this Announcement or that any proposal will be selected for funding.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the competition described in this Announcement and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of priorities. Publication of this Announcement does not obligate NOAA to award funding for specific projects or to obligate available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of any of these costs being included in a subsequent award.

There is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs for awards that have not been designated as “research," unless approved by NOAA’s Grants Officer as part of the terms when an award is made. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for proposal preparation costs. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded to a meritorious applicant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Funded awards are subject to the enforcement and termination provisions under 2 C.F.R. 200.339-200.343.

5. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that NOAA analyze the potential environmental impacts of applicant proposals seeking NOAA Federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, can be found at the NOAA NEPA website:

https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/

In describing proposed program activities, applicants must provide detailed information on activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species, and habitat 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. See also Section IV.B. (Content and Form of Application) of this funding announcement. In addition to providing specific information for any required impact analysis, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if an assessment is required. Applicants may be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to avoid or mitigate any identified adverse environmental impacts posed by their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. If additional information is required after an application is selected for funding, funds may 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 determine impacts that a project may have on the environment.

6. Certifications Regarding Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions

When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide applicants with a

certification, to be completed by the applicant's Authorized Representative, regarding anyfederally-assessed or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under federal law. If this form is provided to the applicant, NOAA will not issue an award until certification is executed, returned, and accepted by NOAA.

7. Review of Risk

After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the NOAA Grants Office will perform administrative reviews under 2 C.F.R. 200-205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility and qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of the applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports, and findings concerning the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific special award conditions that respond to the degree of risk found may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.206. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be made by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

8. Executive Order 12866

This federal funding announcement is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

9. Minority Serving Institutions

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.

10. 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 by searching under: NOAA Financial Assistance Assault and Harassment Policy.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will submit financial and performance (technical) reports in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.328-200.330 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

Financial Reports. Financial Status Reports (SF-425s) must be submitted to the Grants Officer semi-annually or as outlined in award conditions. Financial Status Reports are entered directly into NOAA's electronic Grants Online system.

Performance Progress Reports. These are required semi-annually, beginning on the award start date. The latest suggested B –WET progress report guidance is available at:

http://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. This Act (FFATA), 31 USC 6101 note, requires federal grant recipients to report information about first-tier sub awards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards. All recipients of a new federal grant or cooperative agreement equal to or greater than $25,000 are subject to FFATA sub award reporting requirements and must report to the Federal Sub award Reporting System (FSR). See:

https://www.fsrs.gov/

VII. Agency Contacts

For information on the New England B-WET program, contact Deirdre Kimball, New

England B-ET Federal Program Manager by telephone at 978-281-9290 or by email at Deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov.

You may also direct questions about NOAA's Office of Education and its B-WET Program and this Announcement to Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, at bronwen.rice@noaa.gov or by telephone at 202-482-6797.

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 personnel or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 USC 552, are available at 15 CFR Part 4, Public Information. These regulations describe rules for the Department regarding the availability of requested materials, information, and records for the public. Applications submitted in response to this Announcement may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. If an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information." Based on these designations, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.