

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY12 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-NMS-2012-2003052

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.429, Marine Sanctuary Program

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by www.grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on October 7, 2011. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to two business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The Great Lakes B-WET grant program is a competitively based program that supports existing environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new programs, and encourages the development of partnerships among environmental education programs throughout the Great Lakes watershed. Projects support organizations that provide students "meaningful" watershed educational experiences and teachers professional development opportunities in the area of environmental education, while helping to support regional education and environmental priorities in the Great Lakes.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that supports experiential learning through competitive grant awards in specific geographic regions. Currently, B-WET Programs are implemented in the Chesapeake Bay, California, the Hawaiian Islands, New England, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest. In 2011, a B-WET program was established in the Great Lakes with funding provided by the EPA through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For purposes of this solicitation, the "Great Lakes" includes the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. NOAA recognizes that knowledge and commitment built from firsthand experience, especially in the context of one's community and culture, is essential for achieving environmental stewardship. Carefully selected experiences driven by rigorous academic learning standards, engendering discovery and wonder, and nurturing a sense of community will further connect students with their watershed, help reinforce an ethic of responsible citizenship, and promote academic achievement. Experiential learning techniques, such as those supported by the NOAA B-WET Program, have been shown to increase interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), thus contributing to NOAA's obligations under the America COMPETES Act (33 USC 893a(a)).

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must adhere to the structure set out in the following 2012 Great Lakes B-WET Program Priorities: (1) Select a Basic Approach to Watershed Education; (2) Determine the proper Grant Category; (3) Address the B-WET Great Lakes Regional Priorities.

1. Basic Approaches

Proposals should address one of the three basic approaches to watershed education: (1) Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students; (2) Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers; (3) Exemplary Programs combining Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students.

A. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students to participate in a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. The Great Lakes environment and the surrounding watershed provide an excellent opportunity for environmental education. In many cases, Great Lakes waters and the landscape around them can provide "hands-on" laboratories where students can see, touch, and learn about the

environment. In other cases, the environment can be brought alive to the classroom through a strong complement of outdoor and classroom experiences. The watershed environment can provide a genuine, locally relevant source of knowledge that can be used to help advance student learning skills across the entire school curriculum.

Proposals submitted under this area should address the specific elements and types of activities that define a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. The definition of a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience can be found at the NOAA Office of Education website at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET>.

B. Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide teachers opportunities for professional development in the area of environmental education. As the purveyors of education, teachers can ultimately make meaningful environmental education experiences for students by weaving together classroom and field activities within the context of their curriculum and of current critical issues that impact the watershed. Systematic, long-term professional development opportunities will reinforce a teacher's ability to teach, inspire, and lead young people toward thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources.

Proposals submitted under this area should be designed so that teachers not only understand what a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience is, but why this type of pedagogy is important. The goal is to ensure that professional development experiences for the teacher ultimately benefit the student. Projects should be designed so that teachers are capable of conducting a meaningful watershed educational experience and provide the resources and necessary technical support needed to implement an experience in their classroom.

C. Exemplary Programs combining Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their Students

The NOAA B-WET Program seeks proposals for exemplary projects that combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term K-12 classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their students. Systematic, long-term professional development for teachers coupled with multiple meaningful watershed experiences for students that are fully supported in the classroom by their teachers will ensure that the concepts of watershed education are fully reinforced throughout the school year.

2. Grant Categories

The NOAA B-WET Program responds to regional education and environmental priorities through local implementation. To extend this opportunity to organizations and partnerships of various sizes, and to new as well as developed projects, two grant categories or funding levels have been established. Therefore, in addition to using one of the basic approaches listed above, applications should fall under one of the two B-WET Great Lakes grant categories (funding levels):

A. Category (Funding Level) A (\$100,000-\$150,000): Extending Watershed Education Opportunities for Youth

Numerous large organizations and institutions, including universities, science centers, public

zoos and aquaria, school districts, city, county and state government entities serve large audiences. These audiences often include underserved populations of students for whom Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences represent cultural, logistical and educational challenges. Larger organizations putting forward new or existing programs serving these audiences should apply under Category A for a minimum of \$100,000 and a maximum of \$150,000 per year for a performance period of one year. Proposals must articulate the specific needs of the intended audiences and the organization's unique qualifications for successfully creating watershed education opportunities for those students. Any of the three approaches (listed above) may be proposed.

B. Category (Funding Level) B (\$25,000-\$75,000): Building Capacity for Watershed Education Among Smaller, Community-based Organizations

Throughout the Great Lakes Region, smaller, community-based organizations provide Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences by connecting students to local watershed issues and by introducing them to watershed protection and restoration activities unique to their communities. Such organizations include school districts, nature centers, non-profit organizations, social service organizations, Boys and Girls clubs and many other, similar education providers. These types of organizations should apply under Category B for a minimum of \$25,000 and a maximum of \$75,000 per year for a performance period of one year. Proposals must articulate the specific needs of the intended audiences and the organization's unique qualifications for successfully creating watershed education opportunities for those students. Any of the three approaches (listed above) may be proposed.

3. Great Lakes Regional B-WET Priorities

The NOAA B-WET Great Lakes Program is funded through the EPA-administered Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Applicants must demonstrate how their project supports and aligns with the goals, strategies, and principles of the GLRI Action Plan and the Great Lakes Literacy Principles developed by Great Lakes COSEE, Sea Grant and NOAA(see below).

A. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan

In the past, policy and procedure regarding the health of the Great Lakes has worked to minimize harm. Recently, public demand for a new standard of care has surged throughout the region. That standard of care is that we must leave the Great Lakes better for the next generation than the condition in which we inherited them. We must continue to go beyond minimizing harm to proactively rehabilitating the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is the largest investment in the Great Lakes in two decades (\$475 million in FY10 and \$300 million in FY11). A task force of 11 federal agencies developed an action plan to implement the initiative. This action plan covers fiscal years 2010 through 2014 and addresses five focus issues:

- * Cleaning up toxics and areas of concern
- * Combating invasive species
- * Promoting nearshore health by protecting watersheds from polluted run-off

* Restoring wetlands and other habitats

* Working with partners on outreach.

According to the action plan, outreach and education are crucial in the effort to restore the Great Lakes. If the change we seek is to leave the Great Lakes better for the next generation than the condition in which we inherited them, then we must educate upcoming decision-makers so tomorrow they are capable of learning from and extending today's restoration efforts. The growth of service learning programs is an encouraging sign that school systems are placing an increasing value on stewardship of and hands-on learning about the Great Lakes. A handful of Great Lakes curricula exist that satisfy state and other relevant learning standards, yet these rarely find their way into core education objectives for Great Lakes schools. We must continue to reach traditional classroom teachers and nature centers, but also reach non-traditional education outlets such as homeschoolers, national lakeshore and state park visitor centers, zoos, aquariums, and museums. Moreover, while there will always be some demand for the development of new curricula, alarmingly few resources are available today by the funding community for executing existing high-quality education specifically centered on the concept and practice of Great Lakes "restoration" that can show demonstrable results.

Additionally, current education efforts often lack coordination, duplicate efforts and fail to move the Great Lakes education community toward collaborative best practices supportive of Great Lakes restoration. Support is especially lacking for the sustained implementation of existing high quality standardized curricula through, for example, teacher training, funding for field trips, support for teachers' professional development opportunities and efforts focused on underserved communities, among other activities. For more information, please visit: <http://greatlakesrestoration.us/>

B. Great Lakes Literacy Principles

The Great Lakes Literacy effort had its origins in Ocean Literacy, a movement by hundreds of scientists and educators who contributed time and expertise to develop a concise framework for conveying the most important science principles and interconnected concepts that all Earth citizens should know. From the beginning it was apparent that Ocean Literacy principles and concepts provided useful guidance for teaching about the marine environment. Most of the concepts were easily transferrable to Great Lakes teaching as well, but educators using Ocean Literacy in the Great Lakes found themselves stretching to say "ocean" while they were teaching on a lake. The below Great Lakes Literacy Principles are the product of careful study and review by about 80 individuals around the region. Please download the Great Lakes Literacy brochure for a detailed description of each principle and its development: http://greatlakesliteracy.net/_downloads/gllp-brochure-web.pdf

1. The Great Lakes, bodies of fresh water with many features, are connected to each other and to the world ocean.
2. Natural forces formed the Great Lakes; the lakes and continue to shape the features of their watershed.

3. The Great Lakes influence local and regional weather and climate.
4. Water makes Earth habitable; fresh water sustains life on land.
5. The Great Lakes support a broad diversity of life and ecosystems.
6. The Great Lakes and humans in their watersheds are inextricably interconnected.
7. Much remains to be learned about the Great Lakes
8. The Great Lakes are socially, economically, and environmentally significant to the region, the nation and the planet.

C. Program Authority

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

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

It is anticipated that up to approximately \$850,000 will be available in FY2012 for all Great Lakes projects.

NOAA anticipates making up to approximately 12 new awards during FY 2012. NOAA will consider only projects with duration of one year. The total Federal amount that may be requested from NOAA shall not exceed \$150,000 per year under Grant Category A, and \$75,000 under Grant Category B. The minimum Federal amount that must be requested from NOAA for one year is \$100,000 under Grant Category A, and \$25,000 under Grant Category B. Applications requesting Federal support from NOAA outside of these parameters will not be considered for funding.

Proposals may be considered eligible for continuation beyond the first project period.

However, funds will be made available for only a one-year award period and any continuation of the award period will depend on submission of a successful continuation proposal subject to panel reviews, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding to continue the award. No assurance for funding for a continuation exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA. Projects that plan on continuation must include in their first-year submission a full description of the activities and budget for the first year as described in this announcement, and a summary description of the proposed work and estimated budget for each subsequent year. If selected for funding, the applicant will be required to submit a full proposal each subsequent year by the deadline announced in the

following competitive cycle. In addition to the requirements for new proposals, continuation projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant in their subsequent grant submissions. No proposal will be considered for continuation more than two times.

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

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not begin before May 1, 2012. Applications should cover a project period of 12 months duration. Applications must include a project description and a budget for the entire period.

Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended to include in your project description the flexibility of the requested start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the amount of involvement by the federal government in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if the NOAA B-WET Program shares responsibility for management, control, direction, or performance of the project with the recipient. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions.

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 nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NOAA B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants share as much of the costs of the award as possible. Funds from other Federal awards may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash vs. in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration during the review process. Priority selection is given to proposals that propose cash rather than in-kind services.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

N/A

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic application packages are strongly encouraged and are available at: <http://www.grants.gov/>. Paper application packages are available on the NOAA Grants Management website at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/forms.cfm>. If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NOAA website, the applicant should contact: Seaberry Nachbar, NOAA's B-WET Program, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries; 299 Foam Street, Monterey, CA 93940; 831-647-4204; seaberry.nachbar@noaa.gov.

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must be complete and must follow the format described in this notice. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA staff or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. If applying by paper application, applicants are required to submit one copy of the full proposal with original signatures on all required forms.

Federal Forms:

- (1) Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424. Funding on this form should reflect the total of all years of funding requested in the application.
- (2) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A. Separate SF-424A budget forms should be submitted for each year of requested funding.
- (3) Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B
- (4) Additionally, the following Department of Commerce forms may be required:
- (5) Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511
- (6) Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

In addition to the Federal Forms outlined above, proposals must include the following information. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Proposal narratives should not exceed the project summary page PLUS 12 pages. Proposals must be in at least a 10-point font, and be double-spaced.

(1) Project summary (1 page limit):

- * Organization title.
- * Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- * Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- * Basic Approach you are using (i.e., Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for Students; Professional Development for Teachers related to Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences; or Exemplary Programs)
- * Grant Category (A or B) for which you are applying.
- * Project title.
- * Project duration (12-month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month). Specify whether the project is being submitted with the intention of continuation beyond the first year.
- * Summary of work to be performed during the project period: 3-5 sentences that succinctly describe the entire project period (including number of teachers/students reached). This will be used as a project summary in funding reports for NOAA B-WET.
- * List primary objectives for entire anticipated project period broken out by year (include number of teachers and/or students to be reached each year).
- * Budget Information:
 - * Total Federal funding requested this fiscal year.
 - * Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.
 - * Total project cost this fiscal year.
 - * Cost per student and/or teacher.

(2) Project description (12 page limit): Describe in detail what your project will achieve. Project Design: Proposals should outline how the project proposes to implement the various components of a meaningful watershed educational experience, including alignment with state standards.

(3) Organization and Personnel: Proposals should demonstrate knowledge and experience in delivering the type of project requested in this application or otherwise explain why this organization can reasonably be expected to succeed in the delivery of this project.

(4) Partnerships: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project are required with the application package (see "(10) Appendices" below). Please limit letters of support to persons with substantial involvement in the project. Wherever reasonable, proposals should include partnerships with school divisions and/or the state department of education (if the applicant is not one of these entities). Projects are also encouraged to collaborate with NOAA entities as partners. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the National Marine Sanctuary Program, National Sea Grant College Program, National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Coastal Management Programs, National Estuarine Research Reserves, NOAA Cooperative Institutes, and Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.

(5) Outreach and Education: Projects should include significant external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages students and/or teachers to share their experiences with peers and with the environmental education community, e.g., through mentoring opportunities, presentations at conferences, in-school service days, or other public forums, and media.

(6) Benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities this project period and over the entire prospective project. Include the number of students and/or teachers directly affected by this grant this project year. Also, include a per-teacher and/or per-student calculation for this project year.

(7) Budget Justification: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and includes contributions and donations from sources other than NOAA. The budget justification submitted with the application must match the dollar amounts on required SF-424 and SF-424A forms. For multi-year projects: Ensure that there is a detailed budget narrative explaining the budget requested for each year matching the SF-424A form.

Applicants should use the NOAA B-WET Budget Justification Spreadsheet and the budget guidelines available online at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET>.

It is anticipated that grant recipients for this round of funding will be asked to attend a two-day regional B-WET conference to be held in the Great Lakes area (location TBD, but in an easily accessible gateway city) at some point during the grant. All B-WET Great Lakes grant recipients will be asked to present their B-WET projects. Your budget should include, in the travel category, funds for airfare and transportation (rental car, shuttle, or taxi), and lodging. The B-WET Program will provide food.

Although this is considered an outreach and education opportunity, it should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criteria; local communication is required as well.

(8) Need for government financial assistance: List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project and the status of each request. If no other funding has been sought, explain.

(9) Project evaluation: Evaluation here is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about the 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. Although a range of budgets for project evaluations will be accepted, it is not unreasonable for 10 percent of the budget to be allotted to a comprehensive evaluation of the project. For detailed information on how to create an evaluation plan, please use the California B-WET website at

<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/news/bwet/welcome.html>. In addition, grantees will be required to participate in a national level B-WET evaluation as a condition of funding. (10)

Appendices may be included as follows and are not included in the 12-page limit: sample curriculum and lesson plans (five pages), resumes (five pages), letters of endorsement (encouraged from users and other non-partner entities - unlimited page limit), and/or letters of support (required from partner organizations - unlimited page limit). Additional informational material will be discarded prior to review.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m. EDT, October 7, 2011. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to two business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline.

Applications received after the deadline will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No email and/or facsimile pre-proposals and/or full applications will be accepted. Applications that are late or are received by fax or email will be deemed to not fulfill minimum requirements and will not be considered for review.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received in the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Great Lakes B-WET Program, 500 W. Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 49707 (Note that late-arriving hard copy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5 p.m., Eastern Time, October 7, 2011 will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time, and if the proposals are received before 5 p.m., Eastern Time, no later than two business days following the closing date. Applicants are recommended to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g, Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.).

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Cost Rates: Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award, or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date.

However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 25 percent may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading, please contact 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. For non-Windows computer systems, please see <http://www.grants.gov/MacSupport> for information on how to download and submit an application through Grants.gov.

Do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

* New applicants should not begin submission of Grants.gov the date this announcement closes.

* To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). You should allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

* Applications must comply with any page limit requirements described in this notice.

* After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number.

* Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by two automated receipts of the date and time of submission (the first confirms receipt, the second confirms that there are no errors with your application submission and it has been forwarded to

NOAA for further processing). If you do not receive both notifications you need to follow up with both the Grants.gov helpdesk and the Great Lakes B-WET Program to confirm receipt of your submission.

* NOAA may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.

Proposals being submitted in hard copy must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Friday, October 7, 2011. They should be addressed to: Cathy Green, B-WET Great Lakes Manager, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 500 West Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 49707; telephone 989/356-8805 extension 10. Applicants are advised to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.).

Proposals being submitted in hard copy must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Friday, October 7, 2011. They should be addressed to: Cathy Green, B-WET Great Lakes Manager, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 500 West Fletcher Street, Alpena, MI 49707; telephone 989/356-8805 extension 10. Applicants are advised to send hard copies via expedited shipping methods (e.g., Airborne Express, DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.).

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (30 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the project make a direct connection to the larger Great Lakes environment? Does the proposal make an intentional connection to the watershed system and how actions within that system can affect the Great Lakes environment? What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve the general understanding of the environment? Does the experience focus around questions, problems, or issues pertaining to specific region? Is the project design project-oriented, hands-on, investigative, and part of a sustained activity? Does the project include pre and post-project activities? Does the project address multiple disciplines?

2. Technical merit (35 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the instructional program?

* For exemplary programs only: Does the project combine Teacher Professional Development with long-term classroom-integrated Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences for their students.

* For student programs only: Is the project aligned with academic learning standards in

science and other disciplines? Does the project create multiple opportunities for outdoor learning? Is the outdoor component integrally related to pre- and post-activity classroom activities?

* For teacher professional development programs only: Does the teacher receive the needed support to fully participate in the program (i.e., continuing education credit, substitute teachers, stipends, etc.)? Is this support reasonable and necessary?

Does the applicant utilize NOAA programs, lesson plans, or a curriculum focused on Great Lakes issues? Does the applicant use NOAA personnel to enhance their project? Does the applicant demonstrate how their project is aligned and supports the goals and strategies of the NOAA Education Plan? Does the applicant show a knowledge and understanding of the NOAA Education Plan (http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/NOAA_Ed_Plan.pdf)?

Is the project aligned with Great Lakes Literacy Principles

http://greatlakesliteracy.net/_downloads/gllp-brochure-web.pdf

Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? Are the project outcomes measurable and have significant and lasting benefits for teachers and students? Does the evaluation component of the project focus on measuring changes in participants (changes can be in knowledge, attitudes, skills or conservation actions)? Do the changes measured in participants (outcomes) match the project goals and objectives, which include engaging participants in meaningful watershed educational experiences?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the proposal include resumes of the Principal Investigators and other staff members? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Content Standards for their state? Does the applicant document past collaborations with schools or school systems? Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Are the partners involved in the project qualified? Are letters of support and commitment from parties with substantial involvement in the project?

4. Project costs (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and teachers in contact with the environment?

Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project? Does the applicant demonstrate sustainability beyond the project period? Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will continue after NOAA funding has expired?

5. Outreach and education (5 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the nation's natural resources. For the NOAA B-WET Program, the following questions are posed to each reviewer: Does the project involve external sharing and communication? Does the target audience share their findings, experiences, or results to their peers or their community?

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a proposal by NOAA, an initial administrative review will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the proposal. All proposals that meet the minimum eligibility requirements will be evaluated and scored by a panel of independent reviewers. Reviewers serving on each panel may be Federal or non-Federal experts, each having expertise in areas relevant to the priority under consideration. The reviewers will score each proposal assigned to them using the evaluation criteria and relative weights provided above. The individual reviewers' ratings will be averaged for each application to establish rank order for that region. No consensus advice will be given by the review panels. Scores from separate panels will not be combined to establish an overall rank order among all geographical regions. The Program Officer will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review panels. The Program Officer will make his/her recommendations for funding based on rank order of each panel and the selection factors listed below to the Selecting Official for final funding decisions.

C. Selection Factors

The B-WET Program Manager will review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panels. The average numerical ranking from the review panel will be the primary consideration in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the Selecting Official.

The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds;
 - a) Geographic representation
 - b) By type of institutions
 - c) By type of partners

- d) By research areas
- e) By project types
- 3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
- 4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.B.1-3 and Section III.B. of the Full Funding Opportunity;
- 5. Applicant's prior award performance;
- 6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups;
- 7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendation for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Selected applicants may be asked to modify objectives, project plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), an oral interview summarizing reviews and review panel deliberations will be made available to the applicant.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur late 2011, and funding is expected to begin during May, 2012. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to May 1, 2012.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive electronic notification that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification will be sent by e-mail from Grants Online to the institution's Authorizing Official. The official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin.

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NOAA Office of Education staff. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for

funding (declined) or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements prescribed in IV.B (Content and Form of Applications).

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl, http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008(73 FR7696) is applicable to this funding opportunity.

2. Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified

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

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports and a comprehensive evaluation report.

1. Financial Reports

All financial reports shall be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer through the NOAA Grants Online system, <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>. Deadlines and financial forms can be found at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/finforms.shtml>.

2. Performance Reports

Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer. Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred through the NOAA Grants On-Line system, <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>. Semi-annual reports must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Performance reports should detail accomplishments that have occurred during the reporting period and correspond with the goals, objectives and milestones identified in the project narrative.

Paperwork Reduction Act: This document contains collection-of- information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Executive Order 12866: This notice has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism): It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act: Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)).

Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements for the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

Great Lakes B-WET: please contact Seaberry Nachbar, NOAA's B-WET Program, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 299 Foam Street, Monterey, CA 93940 or by email at: seaberry.nachbar@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

N/A