

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL 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: Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education & Training (B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

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

Dates: Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. eastern standard time on October 18, 2004.

Funding Opportunity Description: The Chesapeake 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 entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Funded projects assist in meeting the Stewardship and Community Engagement goals of the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*. Projects support organizations that provide students "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences and teachers professional development opportunities in the area of environmental education related to the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program was established in 2002 to provide environment-based education to students, teachers, and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Using the environment as the context for learning has been shown to increase a student's academic achievement performance, enthusiasm and engagement for learning, and encourages greater pride and ownership in accomplishments. The environment can provide a platform upon which educators can create a curriculum that interests learners and revitalizes teachers.

The Chesapeake Bay 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 entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Funded projects assist in meeting the Stewardship and Community Engagement goals of the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*. Projects support organizations that provide students "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experiences and teachers professional development opportunities in the area of environmental education. The B-WET Program has an opportunity to help create a population that is knowledgeable about the Chesapeake Bay watershed environment. Environmentally educated individuals can become effective future workers, problem solvers, and thoughtful community leaders and participants.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals should address one of the two areas of interest: (1) "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; or (2) Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers. If a project will address both areas of interest equally (e.g., each area represents 25% or greater of the total amount requested), potential recipients should submit separate proposals for each area. If one area of interest constitutes less than 25% of the requested funding, the applicant may submit one proposal under the area of interest that represents the majority of funding requested. The definition of a meaningful bay or stream outdoor experience can be found in the Chesapeake Bay Program's A Stewardship and Meaningful Watershed Experiences document found on the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office B-WET website at: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/education.htm> or by contacting Shannon Sprague at 410-267-5664 or Shannon.Sprague@noaa.gov.

1. "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students

The NCBO seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students (K through 12) to participate in a "meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or stream outdoor experience. The Chesapeake Bay, with its tributaries, provides an excellent opportunity for environmental education. In many cases, its tidal and non-tidal waters and the surrounding landscape provide

"hands-on" laboratories where students can see, touch, and learn about the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the greater environment. In other cases, the Bay watershed can be brought alive to the classroom through a strong complement of outdoor and classroom experiences. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries should be considered a living resource that provides a genuine, locally relevant source of environmental knowledge that can be used to help advance student learning skills and problem-solving abilities across the entire school curriculum.

2. Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

The NCBO seeks proposals for projects that provide K-through-12 teachers within the Chesapeake Bay watershed 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.

3. Continuing Projects

The NCBO has existing grants that were identified as multi-year projects in previous application processes. Renewal grants will be awarded to continue these multi-year projects under this announcement pending successful review of a new application package, and adequate progress reports and/or site visits. Therefore, funding for new proposals may be limited due to funding of renewal projects.

C. Program Authority

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, at 16 USC 661, authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitat, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, and in minimizing damages from overabundant species. Under 15 U.S.C. 1540, the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements and other financial agreements with any nonprofit organization to aid and promote scientific and educational activities to foster public understanding of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its programs.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately \$2.2M may be available in FY 2005 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. About \$1.1M will be for proposals that provide opportunities for students (K through 12) to participate in a "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience. About \$1.1M will be for proposals that provide opportunities for Professional Development in the area of Environmental Education for Teachers within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Approximately 10% of the amount available will be awarded to smaller, community-based organizations that work at a local level to provide environmental education programs.

The NCBO anticipates that typical project awards for "Meaningful" Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers will range from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Proposals will be considered for funds greater than the specified ranges, however, no recipient will be awarded funding that exceeds 10% of the funding available.

It is the intent of the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office to continue funding for with several existing relationships and to make awards through this program to these organizations pending successful review of a new work plan, and adequate progress reports and/or site visits. Therefore, funding for some proposals may be limited to ongoing projects.

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 obligate 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

Proposals may be considered eligible for continuation beyond the first project period. Proposals may be submitted for up to 3 years. However, funds will be made available for only a 12-month award period and any continuation of the award period will depend on submission of a successful proposal subject to technical and panel reviews, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding to continue the award. No assurance for a funding continuation exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA.

Projects that plan to request continuing funding must include in their first-year submission a full description of the activities and budget for the first year as described in this announcement, as well as a summary description of the proposed work and estimated budget by line item (e.g. personnel, equipment, supplies) for each subsequent year. No federal budget forms or detailed budget narrative are required for outyears.

C. Type of funding instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the amount of NCBO's involvement in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if NCBO 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 for both areas of interest (i.e., "Meaningful" Chesapeake Bay or Stream Outdoor Experience and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers Within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed) are K-through-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 in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program, however, the NCBO strongly encourages applicants applying for either area of interest to 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 versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the review process. Priority selection will be given to proposals that propose cash rather than in-kind contributions.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages in a computer fillable format are available on the Chesapeake Bay B-WET website at: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/education.htm> or on the NOAA Grants Management website at: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>

The required forms are as follows:

Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424

Budget Information, Nonconstruction Programs: SF-424A

Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

Applicant for Federal Assistance: CD-346 (Required for the following individuals- Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations, Joint Venture, Non-profit Organizations)

If the applicant has difficulty downloading the required forms, they should contact Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-267-5664, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at shannon.sprague@noaa.gov. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office does not have a direct telephonic device for the deaf (TDD capabilities can be reached through the State of Maryland-supplied TDD contact number, 800-735-2258, between the hours of 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.)

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements by the deadline of 5 p.m. local time on October 18, 2004. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in proposals being returned without review.

1. New Proposals

Proposals must be complete and must follow the format described in this notice. If a project will address both areas of interest equally (e.g., each area represents 25% or greater of the total amount requested), potential recipients should submit separate proposals for each area. If one area of interest constitutes less than 25% of the requested funding, the applicant may submit one proposal under the area of interest that represents the majority of funding requested. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the NCBO or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

(1) Applicants are required to submit one signed original and two copies of the full proposal (submission of seven additional hard copies is strongly encouraged to expedite review process).

(2) Original proposal must be in at least a 10-point font, double-spaced, unbound, and one-sided. Copies of the proposal should be double-sided and stapled.

(3) Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the required elements described below may not exceed 15 pages excluding federal forms.

(4) Appendices in addition to the page limit referenced above may be included as follows: example curriculum and lesson plans (5 pages), resumes (5 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.

2. Required Elements: Proposals must include the following information and it is strongly recommended that they follow the format outlined below:

(1) Federal Forms:

-SF 424 & SF 424A should be placed on top of application package with additional required federal forms placed directly behind.

(2) Project summary (1 page limit):

-Organization title.

-Principal Investigator(s) (PI).

-Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).

-Area of interest for which you are applying (i.e., A Meaningful Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers).

-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.

-Primary period objectives for entire anticipated project period.

-Summary of work to be performed this fiscal year(include number of teachers and/or students to be reached by project & cost per student and/or teacher).

-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.

(3) Project description (10 page limit): Describe in detail what your project will achieve, including why, how, who, and where. Specifically, describe how your project addresses each of the Evaluation Criteria defined in Section V.A.

-Why: Explain the purpose of your project. This should include a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and include the following: Explain which area of interest your project addresses (i.e., @Meaningful@ Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; or Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers).

-How: Outline a plan of action pertaining to the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Explain your strategy, objectives, activities, delivery methods, and accomplishments to establish for reviewers that you have realistic goals and objectives and that you will use effective methods to achieve them. When accomplishments cannot be quantified, list the activities in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and target completion dates. Project Objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why." Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

-Who: Explain who will conduct the project. Include the following: List each organization, cooperator, or other key individuals who will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution; and identify the target audience and demonstrate an

understanding of the needs of that audience (include specifically how many students and/or teachers are involved in your project).

-Where: Give a precise location of the project and area(s) to be served.

(4) Need for government financial assistance: Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work.

(5) 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 teacher directly affected by this grant this project year. Also, include a per teacher and/or per student calculation for this project year.

(6) Project Evaluation: NOAA Chesapeake Bay B-WET has established an evaluation process for its recipients. All recipients will be required to participate in this activity as a condition of the grant. If your project requires additional evaluation, explain the need for this and outline the design and costs of the evaluation.

(7) Total project costs: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and includes contributions and donations. Provide a detailed spreadsheet and narrative to support the requested items or activities (personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs). Supplies and equipment should be listed out in as much detail as possible to ensure accountability. The budget detail and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on required forms.

Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness. Please note the following funding restrictions:

-The budget may include an amount for indirect costs only if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government, see Funding Restrictions, Section IV.E.2. (a copy of the negotiated rate must be included with the application).

-Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. Hourly rates and projected hours worked on the project and/or percentage of time and yearly salary should be included for all salary requests. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

2. Continuing Projects: Applicants can only use this option if they identified that they would be requesting continuing funding and detailed specific funding amounts for this project period in previous grant applications.

(1) Federal Forms:

-SF 424 & SF 424A should be placed on top of application package with additional required federal forms placed directly behind

(2) Project summary (1 page limit):

- Organization title.
- Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- Area of interest for which you are applying (i.e., A Meaningful Bay or Stream Outdoor Experiences for Students; Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers).
- Project title.
- Project period (12 month project period starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month). Specify whether the project will be requesting funding beyond the current fiscal year.
- Primary project objectives over the entire project period.
- Summary of work to be performed this fiscal year (include number of teachers and/or students to be reached by project & cost per student and/or teacher).
- 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.

(3) Accomplishments to date (2 page limit): Continuing projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant. Briefly describe the objectives of the previously funded B-WET project(s) (include your award number) and the progress to date on those objectives. Specifically, demonstrate to reviewers that the project goals and objectives have been/are being met and that the grant is on schedule. If the grant is behind schedule or is not meeting the objectives as defined in the previous year's grant, explain why and how you are remedying the situation.

(4) Work Plan (3 page limit): Describe how your proposal will build on the work for which you have previously received B-WET funding. List specific objectives for this project period, including the number of students and/or teachers reached in this proposed project period. Also include what effect not receiving additional federal funding will have on the overall project as defined in previous B-WET project plans.

(5) Total project costs: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish the proposed activities outlined in the Work Plan and include matching funds. Provide a detailed spreadsheet and narrative to support the requested items or activities (personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs). Supplies and equipment should be listed out in as much detail as possible to ensure accountability. The applicant must justify any increase in funding over the amount referenced for this project period in prior year grant application(s). The budget detail and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on required forms. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness. Please note the following funding restrictions:

- The budget may include an amount for indirect costs only if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government, see Funding Restrictions, Section IV.E.2. (a copy of

the negotiated rate must be included with the application).

-Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. Hourly rates and projected hours worked on the project and/or percentage of time and yearly salary should be included for all salary requests. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. local time on October 18, 2004. Proposals received after that time will not be considered for funding. NCBO determines whether an application has been submitted before the deadline by date/time stamping the applications as they are physically received in the NCBO office.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

1. 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.

2. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

F. Other Submission Requirements

All applicants are to submit hard copy proposals only. Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of proposals will not be accepted. The hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery. Proposals must be submitted to: NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; Education Coordinator; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A; Annapolis, Maryland 21403.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/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 B-WET Program this includes the following questions: What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve the general understanding of the environment? Is the project fully integrated into the classroom (e.g. does this project provide a meaningful way for teachers to meet state standards of learning in science and other disciplines) or teach methods to integrate the meaningful bay experience into the classroom in an integrated manner? Is the project part of the division curriculum or are the applicants attempting to create division curriculum in cooperation with the schools to fill a recognized gap? Is the project meaningfully aligned with academic learning standards in science and other disciplines (examples should be given of meaningful alignment (not just listed out) with several standards of learning from each jurisdiction represented)?

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 B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Is the project part of a sustained activity (e.g. preparation, outdoor action, and reflection)? Is the project design investigative (use equipment, take measurements, and make observations to reach conclusions) or project oriented (restoration, monitoring, protection)? Does the project provide an intentional connection to the watershed that will increase student and/or teacher awareness of their relationship to the stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay watershed? Is the project hands-on for the students and/or teachers? Are the objectives defined in the proposal focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives can be reached within the proposed project period?

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 B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant document past collaborations with schools or school systems? Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the proposal include partnerships? Are the partnerships working relationships with all entities meaningfully contributing to the project? Are there letters of support from all partners

necessary to carry out the project? Does the applicant partner with a school division or school system? Are there letters from the participating school divisions or school systems?

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 B-WET Program this includes the following questions: Is the budget request reasonable for the number of students and/or teachers being reached? Is a significant percentage of the budget directly related to bringing students and/or teachers in contact with the environment? Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind; if it is in-kind are all contributions reflected accurately? Does the applicant adequately justify the proposed budget request? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project; is this a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project? Review Panel Only: Is the proposed budget suitable to the geographic area?

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 B-WET Program this includes the following question: Does the project involve significant external sharing and communication, including conferences, community events, in-service days, media, etc.?

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

Once a full application has been received by NCBO, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Technical Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo an external technical review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three mail reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section 5A. This review will generally involve individuals in the field of environmental education from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

3. Review Panel

The NCBO will convene a review panel consisting of at least three experts in the field of environmental education from NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The review panel will evaluate new projects as a panel, incorporating the evaluation provided by the technical reviewers. The reviewers may then take into account the following: (a) diversity of geographic location, (b) diversity of applicants, and (c) suitability of proposed budget to geographic area. Each member of

the panel will individually review the rank order of the proposals and make recommendations to the Chesapeake Bay B-WET Coordinator. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel members.

C. Selection Factors

The Chesapeake Bay B-WET Coordinator may, in consultation with NCBO staff, review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel and make recommendations to the Selecting Official. The average numerical ranking from the review panel will be the primary consideration for the Selection Official in deciding which of the new proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. However, the Selecting Official will select proposals after considering the technical reviews, recommendations of the review panel, and recommendations of the Chesapeake Bay B-WET Coordinator. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in section I.A. and B.
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

Projects considered for continuation will be evaluated by the Director of the NCBO, in consultation with the Chesapeake Bay B-WET Coordinator and other NCBO staff, to determine whether to be continued for funding based upon the advice of the review panel. If there has been satisfactory prior award performance, projects considered for continuation may take priority over new proposals.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the three months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to the NCBO. Funding should begin during summer 2005 for most approved projects. June 1, 2005 should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise authorized by the Program Officer (see agency contact in Section VII).

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued through postal mail to the Authorizing Official of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

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.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

OAA 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.eh.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 and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (Education Coordinator for NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office). Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Please visit the B-WET website for further information at: <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/education.htm> or contact Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office; 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403, or by phone at 410-267-5664, or fax to 410-267-5666, or via internet at Shannon.Sprague@noaa.gov.