

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: FY2006 Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program, Hawai'i

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.473, Coastal Services Center

Dates: For applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the program office. Proposals must be time stamped by Grants.gov or received by the Pacific Services Center no later than 5:00 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on October 14, 2005. Proposals will not be accepted before August 15, 2005.

Funding Opportunity Description: The 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 Hawai'i. Funded projects provide meaningful outdoor experiences for students and professional development opportunities for teachers in the area of environmental education.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program was established in 2002 to improve the understanding of environmental stewardship of students and teachers through education. Recognizing that an educated community is the key to understanding and sustaining the Nation's ocean and coastal environments, NOAA has developed B-WET Programs in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (which includes the jurisdictions of New York, West Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia), California, and Hawai'i.

The B-WET Program provides opportunities to create a population that is knowledgeable about the environment by supporting organizations that use the

environment as the context for learning. Using the outdoors, a bay, stream, or the surrounding landscape; provides the opportunity to teach students about their connection to the greater environment. This has been shown to increase a student's academic performance, enthusiasm and engagement for learning, and encourages greater pride and ownership in the environment. The environment can provide a platform that interests learners and revitalizes teachers.

The 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 Hawai'i. Funded projects provide meaningful outdoor experiences for students and professional development opportunities for teachers in the area of environmental education. Environmentally educated individuals can become effective future workers, problem solvers, and thoughtful community leaders and participants.

1. Definitions

The terms used above and throughout each Section are defined as follows:

- a. Hawai'i- the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, Lana'i, Moloka'i, O'ahu, Kaua'i, Ni'ihau;
- b. Teachers- formal (school-based) and non-formal (not school-based) educators for kindergarten through high school;
- c. Students- kindergarten through high school

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must address one or both of the two areas of interest: (1) Meaningful Outdoor Experiences for Students; or (2) Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers. If proposals do not address one of the areas of interest, they will be returned without further review. If a project will address both areas of interest substantially (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 should submit one proposal under the area of interest that represents the majority of funding requested. Please note that proposals including both areas of interest must address both sets of elements and activities as outlined below.

1. Meaningful Outdoor Experiences for Students

The NOAA Pacific Services Center seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students to participate in a meaningful outdoor experience. The Hawai'i and their surrounding waters provide an excellent opportunity for environmental education. In many cases, tidal and non-tidal 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 islands' complex, diverse, and unique ecosystems can be brought alive to the classroom through a strong complement of outdoor and classroom experiences.

Historically, the Hawaiians developed a stewardship philosophy that sustained the island's ecosystems and provided the foundation for developing a sustainable society. Consequently, the islands' ecosystems can provide a genuine, locally relevant source of knowledge that perpetuates the island tradition of sustainability and can be used to help advance student learning skills and problem-solving abilities across the entire school curriculum.

Proposals submitted under this area should address the following elements and types of activities:

a. Meaningful outdoor experiences should make a direct connection to the marine or estuarine environment and the watershed system: Experiences should demonstrate to students that local actions within an island watershed can impact the greater marine environment. Experiences do not have to be water-based activities; as long as there is an intentional connection made to watersheds, water quality, and the coastal and marine environment, outdoor experiences may include terrestrial activities (e.g., erosion control, buffer creation, groundwater protection, and pollution prevention).

b. Meaningful outdoor experiences are an integral part of the instructional program: Experiences should be clearly part of what is occurring concurrently in the classroom. The experience should be part of the curriculum and be aligned with the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards (these Standards are available through the Hawai'i Department of Education via the Internet at <http://doe.k12.hi.us/standards/hcps.htm>). Experiences should occur where and when they fit into the instructional sequence.

c. Meaningful outdoor experiences are project-oriented, hands-on, and investigative: Experiences should be focused around questions, problems, and issues that are investigated through data collection, observation, and hands-on activities. Experiences should stimulate observation, motivate critical thinking, develop problem-solving skills, and instill confidence in students.

d. Meaningful outdoor experiences are part of a sustained activity: Experiences should not be tours, gallery visits, demonstrations, or "nature" walks. Meaningful experiences are part of a sustained activity that stimulates and motivates the student from beginning to end. Experiences should consist of more than just the outdoor experience. Though an outdoor experience itself may occur as one specific event, occurring in one day, the total duration leading up to and following the experience should involve a significant investment of instructional time. An experience should consist of three general parts - a preparation phase; an outdoor phase; and an analysis, reporting phase. Projects should provide teachers with the support, materials, resources, and information needed to conduct these three parts. The preparation phase should focus on a question, problem, or issue and involve students in discussions about it. The action phase should include one or more outdoor experiences sufficient to conduct the project, make the observations, or collect the data required. It is strongly encouraged that the action phase includes restoration projects or activities that result in the

environment changing. The reflection phase should refocus on the question, problem, or issue; analyze the conclusions reached; evaluate the results; assess the activity and the learning; and include sharing and communication of the results.

e. Meaningful outdoor experiences reflect an integrated approach to learning: Experiences do not have to be based solely on science disciplines. Experiences should involve the use of materials, resources, and instruments to address multiple topics, such as maritime heritage, history, economics, math, English, art (including traditional art), and the cultural significance of our natural resources. Experiences make appropriate connections between subject areas and reflect an integrated approach to learning.

f. Projects involve external sharing and communication: Projects should promote peer-to-peer sharing and emphasize the need for external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages the students to share their experiences with other students or with the community, e.g., through a mentoring program, newsletters, journals, or community presentations.

g. Projects demonstrate partnerships: Project proposals should include partners involving any of the eligible applicants. A partnership is a collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations. All partners should be actively involved in the project, not just supply equipment or curricula. Letters of support from each partner must be submitted with the application package to demonstrate the level of commitment and involvement. The B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants to partner with a school or school system; therefore preference will be given to applicants that partner with a school or school system.

h. Experiences are for all students: The B-WET Program is strongly committed to expanding the knowledge and participation of a low income and underserved student population in marine and environmental education. It is crucial for all citizens to have an understanding of and connection with their own environment, therefore all students should be provided an outdoor experience regardless of where they live or go to school. Preference will be given to those applicants that work with a low income or underserved student population (e.g., Title I school).

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

The NOAA Pacific Services Center seeks proposals for projects that provide teachers opportunities for professional development in the area of environmental education related to the Hawai'i. 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 Islands. 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 address the following elements and types of activities:

a. Projects should provide teachers the understanding and essence of a meaningful outdoor experience: Professional development opportunities should instruct teachers about the content and meaning of a meaningful outdoor experience (for the definition of a meaningful outdoor experience please refer to Section B.1.a-e). Professional development opportunities should be designed so that teachers not only understand what a meaningful outdoor experience is, but why this type of pedagogy is important. Projects should be designed so that teachers are capable of conducting an experience in their classroom. For example, professional development courses could result in a lesson plan (aligned with the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards) or provide teachers with materials or resources needed for carrying out a meaningful outdoor experience in their classroom. In addition to providing the resources needed to conduct an experience, projects should also include a mechanism to encourage the teacher to implement an experience in their classroom. The goal is to ensure that professional development experiences for the teacher ultimately benefit the student. For example, encouragement to implement an experience in the classroom can be done through small implementation grants for the teacher (the Federal requested amount may include funds for implementation grants), a grant writing workshop so that the teacher can apply for outside funds to conduct the experience, and/or the applicant should provide a contact person for technical support during the school year.

b. Projects involve external sharing and communication: Projects should promote peer-to-peer sharing and emphasize the need for external sharing and communication. Projects should include a mechanism that encourages teachers to share their experiences with other teachers and with the environmental education community, e.g., through mentoring opportunities, presentations at conferences, in-school service days, or other public forums.

c. Projects demonstrate partnerships: Project proposals should include partners involving any of the eligible applicants. A partnership is a collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations. All partners should be actively involved in the project, not just supply equipment or curricula. Letters of support from each partner must be submitted with the application package to demonstrate the level of commitment and involvement. The B-WET Program strongly encourages applicants to partner with schools and/or school systems, therefore preference will be given to applicants that partner with a school or system.

d. Experiences are for all teachers: The B-WET Program is strongly committed to expanding the knowledge and participation of teachers who serve a low income and underserved student population. Therefore, preference will be given to applicants who work with teachers that serve this community (e.g., partnering with a Title 1 school).

3. Renewed Projects

The NOAA Pacific Services Center may renew funding for existing grants that

were funded in the previous application process. New grants will be awarded to renew these projects under this announcement pending successful review of a new application package, and adequate progress reports and/or site visits. Therefore, funding for some proposals may be limited to renewed projects.

C. Program Authority

15 U.S.C. 1540; 33 U.S.C., 883d

D. Cost Principles

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."

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately \$1,000,000 may be available in FY 2006 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds. The NOAA Pacific Services Center anticipates that approximately 15 -20 grants will be awarded with these funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program.

It is anticipated that typical project awards for Meaningful Outdoor Experiences and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers will range from approximately \$10,000 to \$100,000. Proposals will be considered for funds greater than the specified ranges if there is sufficient demonstration that the project requires additional funds and/or if the proposal includes multiple partners.

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

Proposals may be considered eligible for renewal beyond the first project period. Proposals may be submitted for up to 3 years for either priority area. However, funds will be made available for only a 12-month award period and any renewal 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 renew the award. No assurance for funding renewal exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA.

Projects that plan on renewal 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 by line item (without the supporting budget detail pages) 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, renewed projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant in their subsequent grant submissions.

C. Type of funding instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the amount of the NOAA Pacific Services Center's involvement in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if the NOAA Pacific Services Center 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 Outdoor Experience and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers) are K-through-12 public and independent schools and school systems, institutions of higher education, commercial and nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, and Indian tribal governments. Applicants that are not eligible are individuals and Federal agencies.

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 Pacific Services Center 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 Pacific Services Center 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 with cash being the preferred method of contribution.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit application packages through www.Grants.gov. All application materials can be found on this Web site in the FIND and APPLY sections. If you are not submitting a proposal through www.Grants.gov, all of these forms can be obtained from <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
- 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, he or she should contact the NOAA Pacific Services Center office:

Divina Corpuz at 737 Bishop Street, Mauka Tower, Suite 2250, Honolulu, HI 96813-3212 or by phone at (808) 522-7481, or via internet at psc@noaa.gov. Telephonic device for the deaf (TDD) capabilities can be reached through the TDD contact number, 1-800-735-2922, 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. Hawai'i standard time on October 14, 2005. Proposals will not be

accepted before August 15, 2005. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in proposals being returned without review.

1. Proposals

Proposals must be complete and must follow the format described in this notice. If a project will address both areas of interest substantially (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 NOAA Pacific Services Center as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

a. Proposal Requirements:

(1) Application Submission – Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>.

(2) Applicants are required to submit one signed original and two copies of the full proposal (submission of eight additional hard copies is strongly encouraged to expedite the review process, but it is not required).

(3) Proposal format must be in at least a 10-point font, double-spaced, unbound, and one-sided. Copies can be double-sided.

(4) Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the required elements described below may not exceed 25 pages.

(5) Appendices may be included but may not exceed a total of 10-pages. Appendices may include information such as curriculum, resumes, and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded.

2. Required Elements

Proposals should include the following information and it is recommended that they follow the format outlined below:

a. Proposal Format:

(1) Project summary (1-page):

- Organization title.
- Applicant name
- Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- Address, telephone number, and email address of applicant and PI.
- Area of interest for which you are applying (i.e., Meaningful Outdoor Experiences for Students; Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers).

- Project title.
- Project duration (1-year project period beginning to end dates, 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 renewal beyond the first year.
- Project objectives.
- Summary of work to be performed (include number of teachers and/or students that will be involved in your project)
- Total Federal funds requested.
- Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.
- Total project cost.

(2) Accomplishments to date (if applicable): In addition to the requirements for new proposals, renewed projects should include the accomplishments to date on the previous year's grant. Describe precisely your accomplishments to date from previously funded projects through the B-WET Program (include your award number). Specifically, if your project is being considered for renewal beyond the first year, describe your accomplishments to date to demonstrate to reviewers that the project goals and objectives have been/are being met.

(3) Project description: Describe precisely what your project will achieve why, how, who, and where.

- 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 Outdoor Experiences for Students; or Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers). Specifically describe how your project addresses each of the elements and types of activities relating to the project's particular area of interest (i.e., Section I.B.1. for Meaningful Outdoor Experiences for Students or Section I.B.2. for Professional Development in the area of Environmental Education for Teachers). If your proposal addresses both areas of interest, your proposal must address both sets of elements and activities.
- 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. 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 and the target audience. 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; identify the target audience and demonstrate an understanding of the needs of that audience; identify 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: Demonstrate the need for 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.

(6) Project evaluation: Explain how you will ensure that you are meeting the goals and objectives of your project. Evaluation plans may be quantitative and/or qualitative and may include, for example, evaluation tools, pre and post tests, and/or surveys.

(7) Budget narrative: The budget narrative should include the total project costs that are required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and includes contributions and donations. The budget narrative should provide the information needed to determine how the numbers outlined in the Budget Information form (SF-424A) were derived. The narrative should explain the specific budget categories that are outlined in the SF-424A form, such as personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs. The budget narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on all required Federal forms (SF-424, SF-424A). 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 B-WET Program should not be considered a long-term source of funds; therefore it is crucial that you explain how you will ensure that ongoing programs, once initiated, will be sustained.
- 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.1. If the applicant has an established indirect cost rate, 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. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

(8) Letters of support from partners: Letters of support from each partner that is making a significant contribution to the project are required with the application package, if applicable.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. Hawai'i standard time on October 14, 2005. Proposals will not be accepted before August 15, 2005. Proposals received after that time will not be considered for funding and will be returned to the applicant. The NOAA Pacific Services Center determines whether an application has been submitted before the deadline by date/time stamping the applications as they are physically received in the NOAA Pacific Services Center office. For applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.

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 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this program 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. Applicants whose indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs above 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. The indirect cost rate agreement must be included with the application package. 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

In addition to the proposal(s), the applicant must submit a complete NOAA grant application package. All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications through www.Grants.gov.

If the Grants.gov Web site is not used, the applicant must submit a hard copy directly to the NOAA Pacific Services Center. 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: Divina Corpuz, NOAA Pacific Services Center office, 737 Bishop Street Mauka

Tower, Suite 2250, Honolulu, HI 96813-3212.

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 B-WET Program this includes the following categories and questions:

a. Connection to the greater marine or estuarine environment (5 points): For both areas of interest: Does the project make a direct connection to the greater water environment? Does the proposal make an intentional connection to water quality, the watershed, and the coastal and marine environment? Specifically, does the project address the elements and activities as defined in Section I.B.1.a?

b. Meaningful Outdoor Experience (15 points): For both areas of interest: Does the proposal clearly meet the definition of a meaningful outdoor experience? Is the project design project-oriented, hands-on, investigative, and part of a sustained activity? Does the project include pre and post activities? Does the project address multiple disciplines? Specifically, does the project address the elements and activities as defined in Section I.B.1.c-e? For Professional Development for Teachers priority area, does the project proposal provide sufficient materials, resources, and information for the teacher to conduct a meaningful outdoor experience on his/her own? Is the project designed so that the teacher is encouraged to implement and conduct a meaningful outdoor experience in his/her classroom?

c. Partnerships (5 points): For both areas of interest: Does the proposal include partnerships? Is the partnership a working relationship with all entities contributing to the project? Are there letters of support from each partner? Does the proposal outline the specific activity and function of each partner? Do the partners enhance the project? Does the applicant partner with a school division or school system? Specifically, does the project address the elements and activities as defined in Section I.B.1.g. and Section I.B.2.c?

d. Target audience (5 points): For both areas of interest: Does the applicant work with an underserved or low income population? Specifically, does the applicant address project elements and activities under Section I.B.1.h. and Section I.B.2.d?

2. Technical merit (30 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 categories and questions:

a. Integration with school program (10 points): For both areas of interest: Does the proposal clearly outline how the project is an integral part of the instructional program? Does the proposal demonstrate how the project is aligned with the Hawai'i

Content and Performance Standards? Specifically, does the proposal address project elements and activities under Section I.B.1.b.?

b. Objectives (5 points): For both areas of interest: 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?

c. Environmental change (5 points): For both areas of interest: What is the likelihood of the proposed environmental activities to improve the general understanding of the environment? Does the project result in a change in the environment? Does the proposal suggest a new approach to environmental education, or just an application of previously accepted approaches? Are the project outcomes measurable and have significant and lasting benefits for teachers and students?

d. Evaluation (10 points): For both areas of interest: Does the project design include a project evaluation that ensures that the goals and objectives of the project will be met? Are the evaluation techniques appropriate for the project? Is the evaluation of the project explained sufficiently in Section IV.B.2.a(6).

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15 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 show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards? 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?

4. Project costs (15 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: 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 that the project will continue after NOAA funding has expired?

5. Outreach and education (10 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 questions: Does the project involve external sharing and communication? Specifically, does the project address the elements and activities in Section I.B.1.f. and I.B.2.b?

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

Once a full application has been received by the NOAA Pacific Services Center office, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and priorities of the application. If applications do not comply, they will be returned without further review.

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 reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A. This review will generally involve individuals in the field of environmental education from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations throughout the United States. 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

A review panel will be convened consisting of at least three regional experts in the field of environmental education from NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The review panel will review the technical review ranking and comments and discuss the projects as a panel. Each member of the panel will individually make recommendations and provide a numerical ranking to the B-WET Program Manager. No consensus advice will be given by the review panel members.

C. Selection Factors

The Hawai'i B-WET Program Manager will review the ranking of the proposals and recommendations of the review panel. 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. Geographically
 - 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/federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.B.1-3.
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups

Projects considered for renewal will be evaluated by the Director of the

NOAA Pacific Services Center, in consultation with the B-WET Program Manager and other NOAA Pacific Services Center staff, to determine whether to be renewed for funding based upon the advice of the review panel. If there has been satisfactory prior award performance, projects considered for renewal 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 two months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to the NOAA Pacific Services Center office. Projects should not begin before April 2006.

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. Applications will be disposed of through recycling.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. 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.

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.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. 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)

For further information please contact: Divina Corpuz, NOAA Pacific Services Center office; 737 Bishop Street, Mauka Tower, Suite 2250, Honolulu, HI 96813-3212 or by phone at (808) 522-7481, or via internet at psc@noaa.gov.