



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

**Deadline:** May 27th, 2020 at 11:59 PM EST

### A. OVERVIEW

The objective of this opportunity is to secure a contract for the creation and implementation of an evaluation study to assess the process, implementation and outcomes of a collaborative program administered through a subcontract of a financial assistance award to the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Education. The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to define the requirements, solicit proposals, and to gain adequate information to assess such services.

### B. TIME FRAME

\*While this is the planned timeline for this project, we anticipate some flexibility may be needed to adjust to the evolving situation around the COVID-19 health emergency. NAAEE will work with the selected consultant to modify this timeline as needed.

NAAEE anticipates selecting an evaluation consultant by July 1, 2020. The selected consultant will implement an evaluation of funded activities occurring through 12/31/2021. Final evaluation report will be due no later than 05/31/2022.

### C. NOAA-21ST CCLC WATERSHED STEM EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Education [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular

academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

Through the NOAA-21stCCLC Watershed STEM Education Partnership Program, grants from the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) will provide access to dynamic academic enrichment experiences to program participants at a minimum of 60 21st CCLC program sites primarily in the seven geographic areas served by the [NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training \(B-WET\) program](#). Grant activities will focus on delivering components of [Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences](#), or MWEEs, led by a network of high-capacity NOAA B-WET grantees and partners, to this high need audience. MWEEs are learner-centered experiences that focus on investigations into local environmental issues that lead to informed action and civic engagement. They are composed of multi-stage activities that include learning both indoors and outdoors, and aim to increase the environmental literacy of all participants. MWEEs help increase student understanding of basic watershed concepts as well as the interaction between natural systems and social systems, highlighting the connection between human activity and environmental conditions. MWEEs include four essential elements for student experiences and five supporting practices that educators engage in to support students during a MWEE. The MWEE is the core B-WET program experience and is based on research literature, evaluation results, and lessons learned from over a decade of program implementation. Please see the NAAEE program website and request for project proposals for more background:

<https://naaee.org/our-work/programs/eeblue/21CCLC>

#### **D. PREVIOUS EVALUATION**

The NOAA B-WET program has been an agency leader in evaluation. It was identified by the [National Research Council](#) as “the most rigorous evaluation design employed among the NOAA evaluation programs.” This recognition was in reference to a Chesapeake B-WET program evaluation in 2007 that showed a link between students’ participation in B-WET-funded MWEEs and an increase in their environmental stewardship and literacy. The B-WET program has also developed resources to support grantee reporting and evaluation and is currently implementing a national evaluation system. This system helps the program monitor and adjust activities based on information about best practices, and support grantees in using those practices. More information about B-WET evaluation work is available here:

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

The work funded under this request for proposals will build on an evaluation conducted in the pilot year of this program in 2017. The report from the pilot program implementation study is available at:

[https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/PDF-NOAA\\_21stCCLC\\_Implementation\\_Evaluation-122017-BWET.pdf](https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/PDF-NOAA_21stCCLC_Implementation_Evaluation-122017-BWET.pdf). It is also expected that this project will draw on, to

the extent practicable, previous evaluations of the NOAA B-WET and U.S. ED 21st CCLC programs, as well as other similar federal agency STEM partnerships. The U.S. Department of Education is partnering with three federal agencies in addition to NOAA: the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Park Service (NPS), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). These programs all employ a variety of mechanisms (direct, face to face engagement, both real-time and archived web-based professional development and technical assistance) to make high quality STEM programs available to student participants and to build capacity among participating 21st CCLC staff. Each of these partners retains an independent evaluator to conduct implementation or evaluation studies in order to determine what aspects of these partnerships work well, what may be improved, and to assess impact on participants. These evaluations rely on a range of evaluation methods. However they have all included the use of the Dimensions of Success (DoS) observation tool that defines twelve indicators of STEM program quality in out-of-school time (e.g., after school, summer camps, etc.) For more information, visit: <https://www.thepearinstitute.org/>

#### **E. WORK STATEMENT**

This request for proposals (RFP) is intended to identify an evaluator to assess the implementation and outcomes of this collaborative program. Evaluation findings will be used to produce lessons for the field around promising strategies for inspiring and engaging K-12 youth in watershed-related activities during out-of-school and expanded learning time using the natural environment as an outdoor classroom. The total amount available for this RFP is \$235,000.

#### **F. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

Through this RFP, a consultant organization will be selected to work collaboratively with NAAEE to design, develop, and implement an evaluation plan for this program. Equitable and culturally responsive evaluation should be considered within the proposal and process, as outlined in the [American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation](#). Program partners are interested in the following questions:

##### **Implementation:**

To what extent do the projects funded by this program adhere to the MWEE model, and how does an organization's past experience with the NOAA B-WET program influence this? How is the MWEE model adapted to the after school setting? What is the quality of the afterschool STEM experiences in terms of instructional practice? Have any of the implementation challenges identified in the pilot project improved and what implementation challenges still exist?

##### **Student Experience:**

What are participating students taking away from the experience? Can students demonstrate STEM practices? What meaning are they deriving from participating (to them or their community)?

**Capacity Building:**

To what extent has participation in this program increased 21stCCLC staff and/or organizational capacity? This may include changes in individuals (e.g. increased familiarity with MWEEs, confidence, and intention to do MWEE activities) or organizations (e.g. incorporation of MWEE programming into core activities, increased leadership and staff support for MWEE activities, securing additional resources to support MWEE activities.)

**Synergistic Partnerships:**

To what extent has this program helped establish strong relationships between 21st CCLCs and Environmental Education providers?

Implementation of the evaluation plan will be in accordance with relevant policies, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office of Management and Budget Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requirements, as applicable. If any aspect of the data collection will require IRB or PRA approval, the consultant will facilitate that process with the goal of having approval in place by the end of 2020, and factor a realistic timeline for approval into the evaluation design and timeline for data collection. Applicants should consider approaches that will not trigger PRA clearance to the extent practicable. The evaluator will also have to be aware of, and adhere to, any relevant policies pertaining to data collection from program audiences, as provided by grantees. The proposed evaluation plan will need to be reviewed and approved by the program partners.

The program evaluation should include:

1. Input on program logic model, evaluation questions, and outcomes;
  2. Descriptive summary of program outputs and implementation;
  3. Assessment of program implementation challenges and successes;
  4. Analysis of program outcomes; and
  5. Recommendations for future program improvements.
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1. Input on program logic model, evaluation questions, and outcomes

During the development of the evaluation plan the consultant will work with NAAEE and NOAA program staff to provide input on and refine the program logic model and evaluation questions identified in this RFP. See Appendix 1 for the anticipated program outcomes.

## 2. Descriptive summary of program outputs and implementation

The consultant will receive data from program managers on outputs collected from grant reports to be included in the evaluation report. The consultant will be asked to advise on relevant outputs to collect. These metrics may include: number of students served by gender, race and ethnicity, special needs status, location type (i.e. rural, suburban, urban), and organization type (e.g. charter school, college/university, community-based organization) of sites. In addition, the evaluation should provide a summary of the different approaches to program implementation and the types of activities done. In year 1 of program implementation an interim evaluation report will be required documenting program outputs and preliminary findings from any observational data collection to date.

## 3. Assessment of program implementation challenges and successes

The consultant should collect data from a sample of projects to identify potential implementation challenges and determine what models of implementation work well for the 21st CCLC audience and site staff.

The consultant is strongly encouraged to include observational data collection using the Dimensions of Success (DoS) observation tool, illustrated below. DoS observations can only be completed by external evaluators or internal program staff who have completed DoS certification training. Having pairs of internal-external observers can facilitate translating the results into practice.

In order to provide quality data with DoS, observations should meet the following criteria:

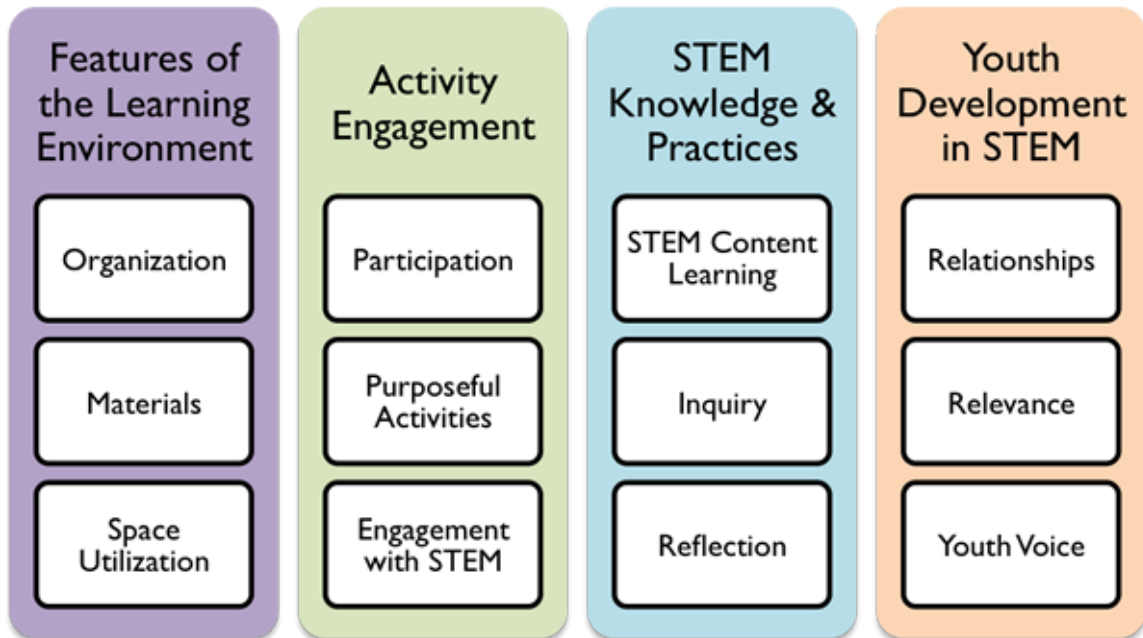
- observe at multiple 21st CCLC program sites across a variety of project types, locations, age levels, etc.
- complete at least 2 observations (3-5 recommended) per site at approximately similar intervals (early in collaboration, middle, late, etc.)
- observation process involves live observation of an activity, written data report, and some plan for sharing feedback with staff (this will depend on the local 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC site director's existing feedback structure).

Applicants should review the 2017 [Implementation Evaluation Report](#) for more information about how DoS may be used to evaluate MWEEs in out of school time settings, and the challenges and benefits of using this tool for this purpose. An observational tool to assess the quality of the MWEE was also piloted as part of the 2017 implementation study and could be further developed as part of this project.

For specific information about the kinds of variables that should be tracked and assessed using DoS as part of the evaluation, please see "Appendix 1. Overview of the DoS

Dimensions.” To learn more about how to get trained in DoS, please visit: <https://www.thepearinstitute.org/>

Program activities will be implemented at 21st CCLC sites on variable timelines through the end of calendar year 2021. The evaluator and/or their trained designees should aim to conduct observations at programs throughout this time period, as appropriate for the evaluation plan. The evaluation plan should also include strategies for improving 21st CCLC program site capacity to carry out evaluation activities, such as supporting a cycle of quality improvement using the DoS planning and feedback/coaching tools.



DoS measures twelve dimensions that fall in 4 broad domains: *Features of the Learning Environment, Activity Engagement, STEM Knowledge and Practices, and Youth Development in STEM.* (<https://www.thepearinstitute.org/>)

#### 4. Analysis of program outcomes

NAAEE is also interested in understanding program outcomes related to the student experience, capacity building, and synergistic partnerships, as described above and in Appendix 2 of this Request for Proposals. The evaluation plan should explore this to the extent possible given the program timeline and budget. The outcome(s) to be explored will be agreed on in collaboration with the program partners as part of the development of the evaluation plan. In addressing these outcomes, the consultant should utilize existing instruments and tools to the extent possible. Applicants should review existing instruments developed for the B-WET national evaluation system and attempt to align this evaluation work with that system, as appropriate. Background on the B-WET

national evaluation may be found here:

<http://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/grantee-resources/national-evaluation>

Another tool that may be relevant to this project is the [Stern and Powell EE21 Questionnaire](#), a cross-cutting assessment tool for measuring outcomes of environmental education programs for adolescents (ages 10 and up).

#### 5. Recommendations for future program improvements

The evaluation report will include recommendations for future implementation of NOAA's Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences pursued as part of STEM programming initiatives under U.S. ED's 21st CCLC program, and in out of school time generally. The report should include recommendations that program managers can use to address program challenges through modifications to the request for proposals, resources and support provided by NOAA, or other aspects of program design.

#### **Specific responsibilities of the evaluator include:**

- Participation in a kick-off meeting with key staff to review program goals and objectives, associated activities, evaluation criteria, questions and strategy, data collection (what, who, when, where, how), timeline, etc.
- Review and feedback on the program's logic model and priority program outcomes.
- Development and execution of the evaluation plan.
- Review of program reporting template to ensure descriptive information requested for funded projects is useful to the evaluation plan.
- Design and/or identification of data collection instruments/process.
- Facilitation of Institutional Review Board and Paperwork Reduction Act clearance of data collection, as applicable.
- Implementation of data collection procedures.
- Designation of staff to complete required training and related activities for purposes of administering and collecting data using the DOS observation tool, as applicable.
- Advice for the program partners on how to incorporate into the evaluation work scope any planning, coordination, follow-up activities, and additional analyses, as applicable.
- Preparation and submission of interim and final reports.
- Participation in program training meetings (i.e., share information about evaluation, data collection process, etc.).
- Participation in monthly coordination calls.

- Presentation of findings to NAAEE program team and partners (NOAA, and U.S. ED).

**Responsibilities of NAAEE:**

- Ensure compliance across the program.
- Educate the evaluator about the program and desired outcomes.
- Provide feedback about proposed evaluation design and approach.
- Update evaluator on program changes.
- Provide guidance around reporting.
- Collaborate with the consultant in collecting data.
- Regularly monitor contract

<b>Communication Expectations</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Touch base with NAAEE staff via email	Weekly
Communicate via phone with NAAEE staff	Monthly
Travel to meet with program team	If needed

**G. DELIVERABLES**

1. Descriptive evaluation plan, approved by NAAEE
3. Feedback on program grant reporting template to include information valuable for evaluation
4. Data collection to address program implementation and outcomes (as determined in collaboration with the program partners as part of the evaluation plan)
5. Interim evaluation report summarizing program outputs initial observational data collection and recommendations in year 1 of program implementation (2020)
6. Final cumulative report and presentation - A summary report incorporating findings from data collection and analysis from years 1 and 2 of program implementation with formal presentation of findings to program team and lead partners. Report should be digestible by program managers and partners.

**H. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE AND MILESTONES**

*\*Please note that dates may shift due to COVID-19 (refer to Section B).*

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Consultant selected	July 1, 2020
Kickoff meeting	within two weeks of consultant selection
Submission of draft evaluation plan to program partners	July 30, 2020



Submission of final evaluation plan to program partners	August 15, 2020
Year 1 data collection may begin	September 1, 2020
Submission of draft interim evaluation report	December 15, 2020
Submission of final interim evaluation report	December 31, 2020
PRA approval of data collection (if required)	December 31, 2020
Year 2 data collection may begin	January 1, 2021
All project activities are planned to end	No Later than December 31, 2021
Submission of draft cumulative evaluation report	April 15, 2021
Final cumulative evaluation report and summary presentation	May 31, 2021

## I. INFORMATION REQUIRED FROM ALL PROPOSAL SUBMITTERS

### Preferred Contractor Qualifications

The selected contractor is required to have the following qualifications:

- Minimum 5 years professional experience, specifically in evaluating education programs
- Familiar with the *Dimensions of Success (DoS)* tool and certified to conduct DoS observations, or ability to quickly become certified (training is offered frequently and there are calibration exercises required afterwards).
- Ability to multitask and work under tight deadlines.
- Selected contractor shall have knowledge of the NOAA Office of Education and the NOAA B-WET program and the U.S. Department of Education and 21st CCLC program (mission, management, current priority issues and programs, as well as rules and regulations).
- Contractor is available to travel on site or arrange for designees to conduct DoS observations and work with NOAA and U.S. ED staff.
- Selected contractor shall work well with a team, contributing to common goals; and shall take and give criticism constructively, assimilating suggestions and directions into positive results.
- Contractor shall be willing to make suggestions and offer solutions as appropriate and be able to maintain a high level of professionalism and integrity at all times.

- Contractor should demonstrate experience and success working with a diverse audience.

### **Proposal Content and Requirements**

In order to be considered for selection and a possible agreement, your proposal must be complete and include the items listed below:

- A **cover page** with the individual or firm's name, date, mailing address, telephone number, fax number, email address, and website.
- A **concise description** of the contractor's principal expertise including education, past experience, clients, knowledge strengths, and products and services offered (1 page limit). The partners are particularly interested in organizations that have a demonstrated history of evaluating out-of-school time STEM learning programs and using the Dimensions of Success (DoS) tool.
- A **proposal** providing the scope of services noted above in this RFP, proof of history and capacity to provide deliverables similar in size, complexity, and nature to those described in this RFP (*5 page limit with no less than 11pt font*). Proposal should include the proposed evaluation approach, a potential timeline describing major steps in the evaluation process, and information about potential constraints and how they will be addressed
- An approximate, high level **budget**. Your price quote, not to exceed \$235,000 should cover the full scope of services and define estimated expenses for project management, design, and travel. Budget should include totals for these cost categories: Personnel, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contracts, Other and Indirect costs. This project may include significant travel depending on the evaluation design. Rates quoted must be guaranteed for the duration of the contract.
- **Qualifications**, related to the specialized qualifications noted above with titles, bios, and brief list of clients served in the capacity proposed. Include any accreditations, licenses, or special training related to the services requested. Attaching a resume or CV is acceptable.
- **Links to and examples of other work** similar to what is requested, produced for past clients. (*1 page limit*).
- At least **three references** for similar clients or projects produced by you or your company. Please include the name of the organization, name of the contact

person, address, telephone number, and email. Please include references who can speak not only toward end product satisfaction, but toward project management experience. (1 page limit).

## **J. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL**

Please submit your proposal, along with necessary document links, in a single PDF to T’Noya Thompson at [tnoya@naaee.org](mailto:tnoya@naaee.org) by May 27th, 2020 at 11:59 PM EST. Any questions on this Request for Proposals should be directed to T’Noya Thompson at [tnoya@naaee.org](mailto:tnoya@naaee.org).

## **K. SELECTION**

Proposals will be evaluated based on experience, proposal, and price quote. Each submission will be evaluated for how well the proposal meets project’s goals and the goals of the NOAA-21st CCLC Watershed STEM Education Partnership Grants Program, quality of the presentation, and the qualifications of the proposed contractor.

## **L. DEFINITIONS**

21st CCLC – 21st Century Community Learning Centers provide academic enrichment

opportunities during non-school hours for children, especially students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.

B-WET – NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training Program. The NOAA B-WET program funds locally relevant, authentic experiential STEM learning in seven regions of the United States: California, Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, New England, and Pacific Northwest

DoS – Dimensions of Success is an overarching framework that defines key aspects of a quality STEM learning experience. DoS forms the backbone of a suite of tools and guides designed to help out-of-school-time programs (e.g., afterschool programs, summer camps, etc.) improve the quality of their STEM offerings.

MWEE – Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. MWEEs are multi-stage activities that include learning both outdoors and in the classroom, and aim to increase the environmental literacy of all participants. The MWEE is the core B-WET program experience and is based on research literature, evaluation results and lessons learned.

NAAEE – North American Association for Environmental Education

NOAA – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[STEM](#) – Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

[U.S. ED](#) – U.S. Department of Education

## **M. RESOURCES**

National Research Council. (2015). Identifying and Supporting Productive STEM Programs in Out-of-School Settings. Committee on Successful Out-of-School STEM Learning. Board on Science Education, Division of Behavior and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC. National Academies Press.

The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education and Resilience. The PEAR Institute is a nonprofit organization created to promote innovation in education.

<https://www.thepearinstitute.org/>

Marc J. Stern, Robert B. Powell & Dawn Hill (2014) Environmental education program evaluation in the new millennium: what do we measure and what have we learned?, Environmental Education Research, 20:5, 581-611, DOI:

10.1080/13504622.2013.838749 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.838749>

## **APPENDIX 1: Anticipated Program Outcomes**

Projects funded under this grant should align with the following anticipated program outcomes.

21st CCLC students will:

- improve STEM skills
- gain awareness of applications and relevance of STEM to their own lives and communities
- be more engaged and enthusiastic about learning
- gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivations to protect and restore watersheds
- meet new people and explore new places in their communities
- have opportunities to spend time learning outside
- gain self-esteem and confidence to address community issues

21st CCLC site staff will:

- learn more about watershed conservation and the importance of environmental education in advancing environmental literacy
- have skills and confidence to incorporate environmental education into out-of-school programming (e.g., confidence to teach outdoors)
- be aware of relevant NOAA resources to enhance student experiences
- increase skills and capacity to form and maintain effective partnerships with environmental education providers and other local partners

Environmental education providers will:

- understand the goals and objectives of the 21st CCLC program
- know how to design and implement out-of-school programs appropriate for partnerships with 21st CCLCs
- increase skills and capacity to form and maintain effective partnerships with 21st CCLCs