

U.S. EPA GULF OF MEXICO DIVISION

Federal Agency Name: Environmental Protection Agency - Region 4
Funding Opportunity Title: Understanding Water Quality through Monitoring Activities
Announcement Type: Modification
Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM
Assistance Listing: 66.475

KEY DATES: All dates listed below are tentative.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| August 6, 2024 | A recorded presentation will be posted to provide helpful hints to develop your application. You can find the presentation, Q&A, and the common errors document at the Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunities link . If you have a question not included in the Q&A or presentation, please submit questions to GMP-RFP@epa.gov . Q&A will be updated weekly if new questions are received. EPA will respond to questions through November 12, 2024 , but cannot guarantee a response to questions received thereafter. |
| November 22, 2024 | Applications due to the Gulf of Mexico Division at 11:59pm ET |
| February 2025 | Anticipated Notification of Selection |
| July 2025 | Anticipated Award |

Related Funding Opportunities

- **EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFW: Trash Free Waters –Micro/ Nanoplastics in the Gulf of Mexico**
 - Approximately \$5,000,000 for available for 8 to 12 10 projects
- **EPA-R4-GM-2024-FISHER: Fisher-Led Aquatic Trash Prevention and Abatement in Urban and Inland Disadvantaged Communities**
 - Approximately \$3,000,000 available for 5 projects; one in each of the 5 Gulf states
- **EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFWASC: Trash Free Waters Art and Slogan Competition**
 - Approximately \$3,000,000 available for 5 projects; one in each of the 5 Gulf states

Contents

- I. APPLICATION INFORMATION..... 3
- II. AWARD INFORMATION Amounts, Targets, and Number of Projects..... 8
- III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION 9
- IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION 12
- V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS..... 14
- VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION..... 16
- VII. AGENCY CONTACTS 17
- VIII. OTHER INFORMATION 18
- Appendix A. Grants.gov Application Submission Instructions 20
- Appendix B. Helpful Links 23
- Appendix C. Project Narrative Guidance and Budget Table Format 24
- Appendix D. Eligible Coastal County List..... 28

I. APPLICATION INFORMATION

I.A. Background and Authority

Gulf of Mexico Division (GMD) is a non-regulatory division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) founded to facilitate collaborative actions to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico in ways consistent with the economic well-being of the Region. To carry out its mission, GMD continues to maintain and expand partnerships with state and federal agencies, federally recognized Tribes, local governments and authorities, academia, regional business and industry, agricultural and environmental organizations, and individual citizens and communities. For more information, please see [EPA's Work in the Gulf of Mexico](#).

GMD's statutory authority to award assistance agreements is the **Clean Water Act, §104(b)(3)**, which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution as codified in [33 U.S Code 1254\(b\)\(3\)](#).

I.B. Scope of Work

The goal of this funding opportunity is to support water quality studies that are useful to stakeholders in decision-making for their community. This funding opportunity is intended to generate applications for water quality monitoring projects in eligible Gulf Coast counties that improve understanding of water quality issues.

Applications **must**:

- Determine data gaps where water quality monitoring data are limited or lacking (see potential sources below)
 - [How's my Waterway](#)
 - [Gulf of Mexico Open Data Platform](#) (GOMOD)
 - [Gulf Coast Monitoring and Assessment Portal](#) (CMAP)
 - [Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System](#) (GCOOS)
- Perform water quality monitoring in water bodies in the Gulf Coast Region; examples are:
 - Physical assessments (temperature, pH, DO, conductivity, odor, sediment, and turbidity)
 - Nutrient assessments (nitrogen, phosphorous)
 - Biological assessments (bacterial, viral, algae/algal indicators, aquatic life)
 - Chemical assessments (mineral, metals, pesticides)
- Leverage or complement existing or ongoing water quality monitoring efforts
 - Describe how the data will be utilized and how activities support existing monitoring efforts or plans
 - Potential monitoring efforts: Federal, state, local, and/or non-governmental organization level
 - Potential water quality plans: Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans, watershed plans, or data management plans
 - Ensures data comparability/compatibility among leveraged efforts

Background: Water bodies in the Gulf Coastal Region such as rivers, bayous, creeks, lakes, estuaries, and streams are used for public water supplies, propagation of fish and wildlife, recreation, industry, agriculture, and navigation. Stormwater runoff can carry trash, bacteria, heavy metals, and other pollutants to these water

bodies and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. As a result, polluted runoff can degrade water quality and result in negative consequences to ecosystems and human health. States, territories, and authorized tribes adopt water quality criteria to protect the designated uses of water bodies and to attain fishable/swimmable goals, but data is not always available or comprehensive. See EPA's [Water Quality Criteria website](#) for more information. It includes a compilation of national recommended water quality criteria and state specific criteria for the protection of aquatic life and human health in surface water.

Project Design. In addition to the information requested for [project design](#) in the project narrative guidance, the applicant must:

- Describe how the applicant will determine where water quality monitoring is needed, any existing data gaps, and how project activities improve understanding of water quality.
- Provide a detailed explanation of the experimental design for water quality monitoring project(s), which includes where sampling will occur and how frequently, the parameters to be determined, and describes methods to be used for identifying water quality contaminants.
- Describe how these activities will be coordinated with or complement existing or ongoing water quality monitoring efforts.

Environmental Results. In addition to the information requested for [environmental results](#) in the project narrative guidance, the applicant **must** include:

Outputs as a result of training, education, monitoring, surveys, demonstrations and other activities authorized by CWA 104(b)(3). These must include:

- Identification and quantification of water quality parameters in eligible water bodies in Gulf Coast Region.
 - Examples of water quality parameters that could be demonstrated in monitoring activities include but are not limited to nutrients, metals, biologicals, chemicals, turbidity (and/or total suspended solids), dissolved oxygen, pH, and temperature.
- Report on water quality data use, data uploads, data publications, etc developed from this project.

Outcomes as a result of training, education, monitoring, surveys, demonstrations and other activities authorized by CWA 104(b)(3) must include:

- Water quality and/or understanding of water quality conditions are improved (report number of water segments or water bodies).
- Data are utilized for future water quality improvement projects or programs.

Additional outputs and outcomes accomplished as a result of project activities should also be included.

Outreach and Communication. In addition to the information requested for [outreach/communication](#) in the project narrative guidance, the applicant must:

- Describe how project data and information collected or created under this project will be made discoverable by and accessible to the public. Other publicly accessible databases may be used as well, but at the minimum data must be added to the Water Quality Portal, [see VIII.B](#) for more information.
- Describe how data obtained from the project will be utilized for future water quality improvements either through development of an actionable plan or how data will be used to support existing water quality plans.

Partnerships. In addition to the information requested for [partnerships](#) in the project narrative guidance, the applicant must:

- Describe how existing and/or anticipated partnerships with state and local governments or other stakeholders and how it will inform the monitoring and/or how they plan to use the data.

Location Eligibility Criteria. All project monitoring activities must be in water bodies (lakes, streams, rivers, estuaries, tributaries) within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states (see Figure 1 and eligible counties in [Appendix D](#)).



Figure 1

I.B.1 Subawards If subawardees are identified, the recipient must comply with applicable provisions of 2 CFR Part 200 and the [EPA Subaward Policy](#), including the [National Terms and Conditions](#) for subawards. Additional guidance on compliance is available in EPA's [Subaward Frequent Questions](#).

I.B.2 Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) EPA recognizes that it is important to engage a diverse group of stakeholders to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by including members of communities which may not have previously participated in such dialogues to engage in EPA programs. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III.A., including MSIs, to apply and/or partner under this opportunity. For purposes of this solicitation, the following are considered MSIs:

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#).
2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at [American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities](#).
3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#).
4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions](#). and

5. Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at [Predominately Black Institutions](#).
6. Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C § 1059f(b)(2); and
7. Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (AANHs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C § 1059d(b)(2) and (b)(4)).

I.B.3 Federally Recognized Tribes EPA recognizes the importance of the nation-to-nation relationships with Federally Recognized Tribes in the environmental challenges the U.S. faces. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages Federally Recognized Tribes in the Gulf states to apply and/or partner under this opportunity.

I.C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage, Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes and Performance Measures

Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7A1, “Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements,” EPA must link proposed assistance agreements with the Agency’s Strategic Plan. EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements. See [EPA Order 5700.7A1, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements](#).

I.C.1.Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan Funded awards must advance protection and restoration of the Gulf of Mexico watershed in support of the [FY2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan](#). Awards made under this solicitation must support Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds. Applicants are also encouraged but not required to describe if project activities will also support EPA’s Goal 1: Tackle the Climate Crisis, Objective 1.2: Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts.

I.C.2. Environmental Results Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the priorities described above. See NOFO terms for definitions of outputs and outcomes. See [Sections I.B](#) for expected outputs and outcomes in this funding opportunity.

I.C.3. Performance Measures Applicants should describe how they plan to track and monitor their project performance and progress throughout the project period. The applicant should also develop performance measures they expect to achieve through the proposed activities and describe them in their application. These performance measures will help gather insights and will be the mechanism to track progress concerning successful processes and output and outcome strategies and will provide the basis for developing lessons to inform future recipients. It is expected that the description of performance measures will directly relate to the project outcomes and outputs.

Outputs and outcomes (as defined in [Section I.D.](#)) are critical components of an applicant’s overall plan for measuring project performance. The following are questions to consider when developing output and outcome measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

- What are the measurable short-term and long-term results the project will achieve?
- How does the plan measure progress in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes) and how will the approach use resources effectively and efficiently?
- Are the projected outputs and outcomes specific and detailed? Are specific target measures included where possible? Are target measures reasonable and achievable within the project period and for the

funding amount? How will the approach use resources effectively and efficiently?

I.D. NOFO TERMS

The following are defined for the purposes for this NOFO only:

Community means any group of people working on or planning for strengthening community resilience. This can include municipalities, cities, towns, states, specific Gulf of Mexico watershed waters, regional planning commissions, and other groups. *Community should be defined within the project by the applicant.*

Demonstration Projects must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. The applicant must clearly explain in the proposal how the technologies, methods, or approaches used are new or experimental and how the project otherwise meets the requirements of a demonstration as described in this NOFO. If your project uses technologies, methods or approaches that have been used previously in other geographic areas and/or other situations, then your proposal must include an explanation as to how your demonstration project is different from such prior projects. The applicant must also explain what will be learned from the demonstration project.

Disadvantaged Community refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life such as communities with environmental justice concerns and/or vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, people of color, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, and homeless populations that may be disproportionately impacted by environmental harms and risks. More examples are identified in [Section 2 of the Biden Administration's Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities](#). Disadvantaged communities also include communities that are adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental, climate and human health harms and risks including remote, rural, and urban communities.

Diverse refers to including or involving people from a range of backgrounds and expertise.

Output (or deliverable) means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable over the term of the grant funding period.

Outcome means the result, effect or consequence that will be that will occur from carrying out a program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective and are used to gauge a project's performance. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must also be quantitative. Outcomes may be short-term (changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (changes in condition of the natural resource).

I.E. Additional Provisions

Additional provisions that apply to sections III, IV, V, and VI of this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These provisions are important for applying to this solicitation and applicants must review them when preparing applications for this solicitation. If you are unable

to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact listed in this solicitation (usually in Section VII) to obtain the provisions.

II. AWARD INFORMATION Amounts, Targets, and Number of Projects

II.A. Award Amounts

EPA expects to provide approximately \$3.75 million for four to six projects. Proposed project periods may be up to three years. The maximum amount of federal funds that will be awarded for any project in this funding opportunity is \$750,000.

The actual award amounts and number of projects awarded may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards under each priority or change the ratio of assistance agreements it awards among the priorities.

Please note, however, that the specified maximum amount of \$750,000 that will be awarded for an individual project establishes a per-project limit for the EPA funding; applications seeking EPA funding in excess of that amount will be rejected. In addition, an application for a multi-phase project will be treated as a request for the full amount for all phases. If that combined amount exceeds the specified maximum, the application will be rejected.

II.B. Anticipated Project Start and End Dates

This NOFO instructs applicants to submit certifications and other documentation required for a full and complete funding package so that their projects could, if selected, proceed expeditiously. The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation will begin in Calendar Year 2025. Proposed project periods may be up to three years.

II.C. Funding Type

Successful applicants will be issued a grant or cooperative agreement as appropriate. A cooperative agreement is an assistance agreement that is used when there is substantial federal involvement with the recipient during the performance of an activity or project. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the performance of the project. EPA will negotiate the precise terms and conditions of “substantial involvement” as part of the award process. Federal involvement may include:

- close monitoring of the recipient’s performance; collaboration during the performance of the scope of work; in accordance with [2 CFR 200.317](#) and [2 CFR 200.318](#), as appropriate,
- review of proposed procurements; reviewing qualifications of key personnel; and/or
- review and comment on the content of printed or electronic publications prepared.

EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.

II.D. Additional Funding Information

Additional Awards: EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

Award Funding: Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

Future Funding: Selection or award of funding under this NOFO is not a guarantee of future funding.

Partial Funding: In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund an application, then it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process.

Pre-Award Costs: Recipients may incur otherwise eligible and allowable pre-award costs up to 90 days prior to award at their own risk without prior approval from EPA's award official. Pre-award costs must comply with [2 CFR 200.458](#) and [2 CFR 1500.9](#). If EPA determines that the requested pre-award costs comply with the relevant authorities, and that the costs are justified as allocable to the project, then these costs may be included as allowable expenditures at the time that the assistance award document is prepared. However, if for any reason EPA does not fund the application or the amount of the award is less than the applicant anticipated, then EPA is under no obligation to reimburse the applicant for these costs incurred. Applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk. Costs incurred more than 90 days prior to award require the approval of EPA Region 4's Award Official.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

III.A. Eligible Entities

In accordance with Assistance Listing [66.475](#), governmental entities, including state agencies, interstate agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, [institutions of higher learning](#), and [nonprofit organizations](#) are eligible to apply for funding under this NOFO. School districts or high schools designated as one of the eligible entities above are eligible.

An intertribal consortium must meet the definition of eligibility in the Environmental Program Grants for Tribes Final Rule, at [40 CFR 35.504](#) and be a nonprofit organization as defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#).

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law.

For-profit organizations are not eligible entities for this funding opportunity. Additionally, nonprofit

organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

III.B. Eligible Activities

Projects submitted must align with the **Clean Water Act 104(b)(3)**, which authorizes the award of grants to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.

Demonstration projects must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. The applicant must clearly explain in the proposal how the technologies, methods, or approaches used are new or experimental and how the project otherwise meets the requirements of a demonstration as described in this NOFO. If your project uses technologies, methods or approaches that have been used previously in other geographic areas and/or other situations, then your proposal must include an explanation as to how your demonstration project is different from such prior projects. The applicant must also explain what will be learned from the demonstration project.

III.C. Match or Cost-share

There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement as a condition of eligibility under this NOFO.

III.D Ineligible Activities

If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible. The following are ineligible activities:

- Projects that do not comply with Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order; or specified as a required mitigation measure under a state, local, or federal permit for a specific project; however, grant funding may be used to enhance or expand such projects beyond minimum requirements for compliance.
- Work involving only routine maintenance of storm water infrastructure and other facilities.
- Projects which fall under the existing planning responsibilities of an individual state or local government (e.g., development of TMDLs or MS4 permits)
- Solely “gray infrastructure” projects (e.g., installation of sewer lines)
- Projects whose sole purpose is to improve federal lands; Any improvements to Federal land must be incidental to the overall purpose of the project and review by EPA legal personnel is required before the activity on Federal land commences.
- **Construction activities that are not a part of a demonstration project.** This includes, but is not limited to, preliminary planning to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of a facility;

the engineering, architectural, legal, fiscal, and economic investigations and studies; surveys, designs, plans, working drawings, specifications, procedures, and other actions necessary to the construction of a facility; the erection, acquisition, alteration, remodeling, improvement, or extension of a facility; and the inspection and supervision of the construction of a facility.

III.E. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III. to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration because of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. **Substantial Compliance:** Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in [Section IV.B](#) of this announcement or else they will be rejected. **Where a page limit is stated for the Project Narrative in Section IV.B with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages more than the limitation will not be reviewed.** Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
2. **Grant.gov submission:** In addition, initial applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](#) as stated in [Section IV.A](#) of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Appendix A) on or before the application submission deadline published in [Section IV.A](#) of this announcement. **Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV and Appendix A of this announcement to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Appendix A, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.**
3. **Application Deadline:** Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](#) or [SAM.gov](#). **An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a submission outside of Grants.gov.**
4. **Project Scope:** Each application must address the project scope as described in [Sec. I.B.](#) or it will not be considered.
5. **Project Location:** Application activities must take place within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states (see Figure 1 and eligible counties in [Appendix D](#))
6. **Funding Request Limit:** Applications seeking funding more than \$750,000 of EPA funding for an individual project will be rejected. In addition, an application for a multi-phase project will be treated as a request for the full amount for all phases. If that combined amount exceeds the specified maximum, the application will be rejected.
7. **Eligible activities:** An application must identify how its activities meet the funding authority described in [Sec. III.B.](#) In addition, if an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities (see above definitions of applicant eligibility, eligible activities, and ineligible activities), the application will NOT be considered.
8. **The application will NOT be considered unless it includes each of the following:**
 - Anticipated Environmental Results
 - Budget Table

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

IV.A. Requirement to Submit Through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Complete application packages must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on **November 22, 2024**. Please see the complete instructions for submitting applications via Grants.gov and the limited exception procedures in Appendix A of this announcement.

IV.B Content of Application Submission

Unless otherwise stated, the application package must include the following materials:

- 1. Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance:** Complete the form. Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, fax, and e-mail address. This form also requires a registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov), and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. See [Appendix A](#) for more information. The contact individual provided in Block 8.f. should be different than the Authorized Representative listed in Block 21.
- 2. SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs:** Complete the form. Provide overall budget information. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22.
- 3. EPA Form 5700-54, EPA Key Contacts Form:** Complete the form. A minimum of two individuals (contacts) should be identified. Please be sure the contacts on this form are consistent with all other forms, as applicable.
- 4. EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report:** See [Tips for Completing EPA Form 4700-4](#) for guidance on completing this form.
- 5. Project Narrative Attachment Form – Prepared as described in [Appendix C](#):** Includes **the Summary Information Page; Workplan; Detailed Budget Narrative; and Maps**. The project narrative must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the threshold eligibility criteria in [Section III.E.](#), the requirements of [Section I.B.](#), and address the evaluation criteria set forth in [Section V.A.](#) The project narrative cannot exceed a maximum of 12, single-spaced typewritten pages, including the summary page, workplan, and detailed budget narrative. Excess pages will not be reviewed. **The project narrative must substantially comply with the specific instructions, format and content as defined in [Appendix C](#) or it will be rejected.**
- 6. Other Attachments Form – Budget Table.** A fillable template for the budget table is available for download with the NOFO on [grants.gov](#) and at the [Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunities link](#). Prepare as described in the [budget table](#) section of the announcement. Applicants are strongly

encouraged to use the budget table template. This file should be submitted using the “Other Attachments Form” in Grants.gov and may be uploaded as an excel file.

7. **Other Attachments Form - Resumes or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigators and critical staff.** Use the “Other Attachments Form” to attach a copy of the resume or curriculum vitae of principal investigators and critical staff for the proposed project. Such documentation should outline the education, work history, and knowledge/expertise of the individual(s) that relate to managing the proposed project. ***Please consolidate all resumes into one file and include the word “resume” in the filename.***
8. **Other Attachments Form – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable.** Use if indirect costs other than the 15% *de minimis* are included in the project budget. Use the “Other Attachments Form” to attach a copy of your organization’s Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable. See Application Preparation and Submission Instructions below for more details. Please include the words “cost agreement” in the filename. Please see [EPA's Indirect Cost Policy for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for more information about indirect cost rate requirements.
9. **Other Attachments Form (if applicable)– Support Letters.** Use the “Other Attachments Form” to attach relevant letters from partners, collaborators or communities in support of the project. Please consolidate all support letters into one file and include the word “Letters of support” or “LOS” in the file name.

Communications: See [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#) for general provisions regarding communications with applicants. A recorded presentation with helpful hints to develop your application, a Q&A and common errors document can be found at the [Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunities link](#). Any questions you have after reading the Q&A and the common errors document should be submitted to gmp-rfp@epa.gov. EPA will update the Q&A weekly with responses to questions received through November 12, 2024, but cannot guarantee that it will respond to questions received thereafter.

Documents 1 through 5 listed under Application Materials above should appear in the “Mandatory Documents” box on the Grants.gov Grant Application Package page.

For documents 1 through 4, click on the appropriate form and then click “Open Form” below the box. The fields that must be completed will be highlighted in yellow. Optional fields and completed fields will be displayed in white. If you enter an invalid response or incomplete information in a field, you will receive an error message. When you have finished filling out each form, click “Save.” When you return to the electronic Grant Application Package page, click on the form you just completed, and then click on the box that says, “Move Form to Submission List.” This action will move the document over to the box that says, “Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission.”

For document 5, you will need to attach electronic files. Prepare your narrative proposal as described above and in [Appendix C](#) and save the documents to your computer as a PDF file. When you are ready to attach your proposal to the application package, click on “Project Narrative Attachment Form,” and open the form. Click “Add Mandatory Project Narrative File,” and then attach your proposal (previously saved to your computer) using the browse window that appears. You may then click “View Mandatory Project Narrative File” to view it. Enter a brief descriptive title of your project in the space beside “Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename;” the filename should be no more than 40 characters long. If there are other attachments to submit to

accompany your proposal, you may click “Add Optional Project Narrative File” and proceed as before. When you have finished attaching the necessary documents, click “Close Form.” When you return to the “Grant Application Package” page, select the “Project Narrative Attachment Form” and click “Move Form to Submission List.” The form should now appear in the box that says, “Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission.”

Other Attachments: Documents 6 through 9 are submitted using the Other Attachments form. You must submit document 6 – Budget Table and document 7 - Resumes or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigators and critical staff. You are required to submit document 8 – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement – if you have included any indirect costs in your proposed budget. You are required to submit document 9 – Support Letters – to demonstrate evidence of the partnership. To attach documents 6 - 9, use the “Other Attachments Form”. After attaching the documents, please remember to highlight the “Other Attachments Form” and click “Move Form to Submission List” Please submit each document from 6 through 9 as a separate file.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

Application Review: Applications meeting the threshold eligibility criteria in [Sec. III.E](#) will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth below. **Applicants should explicitly address these criteria as part of their application package submittal and should follow the Project Narrative Format in [Appendix C](#).** If not, applicants risk the possibility of information being left out, overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored. Each application will be rated under a points system, with a total of 140 points possible.

Applicants will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they address the criteria; the failure to provide applicable information in the application may affect the score assigned for a criterion.

V.A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the completeness and strength to which the project narrative demonstrates the applicant’s ability to:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Project Design (35 points)</p> | <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Describe the proposed project approach, rationale and plans for project execution (30 points). B. Describe how the project meets the GMD’s Statutory Authority AND how the results will support: FY 2022-26 EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds (5 points). <p>Applicants should refer to Project Design in the Project Narrative Format for information to include.</p> |
| <p>Environmental Results: Outputs and Outcomes</p> | <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which it demonstrates anticipated results (outputs and outcomes), including but not limited to those identified in Secs. I.B. This will include evaluating whether they described specific outputs and outcomes, including target numbers. <i>Points will be deducted if no quantitative targets are identified.</i></p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| (30 points) | Applicants should refer to Environmental Results in the Project Narrative Format for information to include. |
| Milestone Schedule (10 points) | Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they provide a clearly articulated milestone schedule for project activities, tasks, and deliverables. The table should include reporting to EPA (quarterly and final) and be organized by year and quarter. |
| Outreach and Communication (15 points) | <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the application includes information about how they will disseminate project-related information to stakeholders and communities as specified in I.B.</p> <p>Applicants should refer to Outreach/Communication in the Project Narrative Format for information to include.</p> |
| Partnerships (15 points) | <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they provide a plan to work with appropriate partners to effectively and efficiently complete the proposed project as specified in I.B.</p> <p>*Applicants that do not plan on collaborating with other groups will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such collaboration.*</p> <p>Letters of Support must be included for partners with substantial involvement and/or if project success is based on partner involvement/subaward.</p> <p>Applicants should refer to Partnerships in the Project Narrative Format for information to include.</p> |
| Past Performance and Programmatic Capability (10 points) | <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to Section 6 of Appendix C and (ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 6 of Appendix C, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. If such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported why not. (iii) organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving objectives of the proposed project, and (iv) staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. Supporting documentation (e.g., resumes, curricula vitae for key staff) should be included as part of your application package and can be referred to in this section. <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under i and ii of this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If the applicant does not have any</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and the application will receive a neutral score (2.5 points) for these subfactors. If the applicant does not provide any response for these items, the application will receive a score of 0 for these factors. |
| Timely Expenditure of Award (5 points) | Applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. |
| Budget (20 points) | Applications will be evaluated based on the reasonableness , necessity and allowability (of costs) of the proposed budget for the level of work proposed and for the expected benefits to be achieved. This section will be evaluated based on two items: 1) budget table and 2) budget narrative (located within the project workplan). The budget table should be easy to understand and link the expenses to the tasks and deliverables from the project workplan. The budget narrative should be used to provide a description of costs not easily understandable in the budget table. |

V.B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in [III.E](#). Only eligible applications meeting threshold criteria will advance and be evaluated by review panels, composed of federal agency staff, using the criteria listed [in V.A](#). Review panels will rank the applications based on the criteria in V.A. and develop preliminary recommendations for funding to the Selection Official(s). Information pertaining to proposed recommendations may be shared with appropriate governmental departments or agencies before selections are made to determine whether potential selections (a) are expected to be funded by another funding source or (b) could be affected by permitting or regulatory issues.

V.C. Other Factors

Final funding decisions will be made by a Selection Official. In making the final funding decisions, the selection official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider the following factors: any duplicate funding issues; the amount of the organization’s unliquidated obligations on previous GMD grants; program priorities; funding availability; appropriate balances of geographic and jurisdictional distribution of projects; and organizational diversity in terms of applicant type selected to receive awards (e.g., local government, state agency, Indian Tribe, college and university, other not for profit entity) in order to help ensure a broad representation of entity types receiving awards to promote program effectiveness.

Any final selections out of rank order must be documented and justified based on the factors listed above. Once selections have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA approving and awarding official.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

VI.A. Award Notices and Status

Following evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status, as follows:

1. EPA anticipates notification to *unsuccessful* applicants will be made via email to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application.
2. EPA anticipates that notification to *successful* applicants will be made via email to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the EPA Region 4 Grants Management Office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding, or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

Administrative and National Policy Requirement: The successful applicants will be required to adhere to federal grants requirements, particularly those found in applicable Cost Principles (2 CFR 200 Subpart E), Administrative Requirements (2 CFR 200 and 1500), and Audit Requirements (A-133). This includes government-wide requirements pertaining to accounting standards, lobbying, minority or woman business enterprise, publication, meetings, construction, and disposition of property. Additional EPA regulations are codified in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Visit [EPA Policies and Guidance for Grants](#) for general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements.

VI.B. Reporting Requirements

Applicants selected for funding shall provide narrative technical progress reports addressing financial and work progress. Specific conditions requiring quarterly progress reporting, a detailed final technical report, and post-project reporting will be added to awards. Applicants should budget time and resources for these activities.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For further information, contact:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Gulf of Mexico Division
ATTN: Matt Beiser
2510 14th Street – Suite 1212
Gulfport, MS 39501
GMP-RFP@epa.gov

Please send all questions to gmp-rfp@epa.gov. Questions and answers will be posted at the [Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunities link](#) and will be updated weekly as new questions are received. **Note: Prior to submitting**

a new question, please check the Q&A to ensure your question is not already answered there.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

VIII.A. Quality Assurance

Assistance agreements that involve environmental information and that are expected to exceed \$200,000 (in federal funding) at solicitation issuance or award shall develop a written QA system commensurate with the degree of confidence needed for environmentally related data operations as defined in 2 CFR 1500.12. Environmental information is defined as data and information that describe environmental processes or conditions which support EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment. Environmental information includes but is not limited to data from direct measurements or analytical testing results; data produced from environmental modeling; and data compiled from other sources such as databases or literature.

GMD uses a graded approach to QA requirements for awardees depending on the environmental information being collected and how it will be used. Prior to collecting environmental information, the recipient must develop and implement QA procedures, specifications, and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives through a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). A QMP is an organization-specific document that describes the quality control, policies, qualifications, and procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating work and may apply to multiple projects. A QAPP is a project-specific planning document that describes comprehensive details about the QA requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure the project objectives are met and are of sufficient and known quality. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA Directive No: CIO 2105-S-01.1: Quality Management Plan Standard, and the QAPP should be prepared in accordance with EPA Directive No: CIO 2105-S-02.1: Quality Assurance Project Plan Standard. EPA can assist successful applicants in determining which QA document(s) is required for the proposed project. The recipient shall ensure that subawards involving environmental information issued under this agreement include appropriate quality requirements for the work. The recipient shall ensure those subrecipients develop and implement QA planning document(s) in accordance with EPA Quality policy and terms and conditions of the award. The QMP and/or QAPP must be approved by EPA at least 30 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process.

Organizations may be granted an exception or modification to the QMP requirement if they meet certain criteria, which may include but are not limited to one-time, short-term, and special projects or projects of limited scope; and/or organizations generating, collecting, compiling, and/or using environmental data for public education purposes. EPA Requirements for QMPs and QAPPs can be found here: <http://www.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial>.

See [Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS](#) for Agency Contact information for referral to an EPA QA staff member.

VIII.B. Water Quality Exchange (WQX)

If water quality data are generated, either directly or by subaward, the successful applicant must ensure all data are transmitted into the Agency's Data Warehouse annually or by project completion using the Water Quality Exchange (WQX) in accordance with an EPA approved QAPP. Water quality data that are appropriate include

physical, chemical, and biological sample results for water, sediment and fish tissue. The data include toxicity data, microbiological data, and the metrics and indices generated from biological and habitat data. WQX is an online tool for EPA data partners to upload and share data with EPA and the public. Water quality data collected using continuous monitors, either by the recipient or by subaward, are not required to be uploaded into the EPA Data Warehouse. More information about WQX including tutorials, can be found at www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-wqx.

Appendix A. Grants.gov Application Submission Instructions

A. Requirement to Submit Through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined [here](#). Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in section Appendix A. under Technical Issues with Submission.

B. Submission Instructions

1. SAM.gov (System for Award Management) Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will need to create an account using login.gov to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining a Unique Entity Identification (UEI). This is a 12-character alphanumeric ID that is assigned to an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you to renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining a UEI only validates your organization's legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current eBusiness (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday, 8am – 8pm ET.

2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the [Grants.gov Applicant Registration instructions](#). As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can

affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). **Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov.** Please review the [Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles and Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

Please note that this process can take a month or more for new registrants. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through Grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the application submission deadline.

Contact [Grants.gov](#) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov to resolve technical issues with Grants.gov. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. The Grants.gov Support Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays.

3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click on the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. If the submit button is grayed out, it may be because you do not have the appropriate role to submit in your organization. Contact your organization’s EBiz point of contact or contact [Grants.gov](#) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Applicants need to ensure that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose UEI is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the UEI listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM.gov account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

Please Note: All applications must now be submitted through Grants.gov using the “Workspace” feature. Information on the Workspace feature can be found at the [Grants.gov Workspace Overview Page](#).

4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization’s AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](#) **no later than November 22, 2024, 11:59pm (ET)**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Please note that successful submission of your application through Grants.gov does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

A. Technical Issues with Submission If applicants experience technical issues during the submission of an application that they are unable to resolve, follow these procedures **before** the application deadline date:

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.

2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3. Send an email with the Funding Opportunity Number: **EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM** in the subject line to gmp-rfp@epa.gov **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:
4. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
5. Description of the issue
6. The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, EPA may not be able to consider applications submitted outside of Grants.gov. Any application submitted after the application time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and **not** be considered.

EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by-case basis. EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to be submitted through Grants.gov due to Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov.

C. Application Materials

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below using the Grants.gov application package, accessed using the instructions above. The following forms and documents are required under this announcement, as described in Section IV.B. of this announcement:

Mandatory Documents

1. Standard Form 424, *Application for Federal Assistance*.
2. Standard Form 424A, *Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs*
3. EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contacts Form
4. EPA Form 4700-4, *Pre-Award Compliance Review Report for All Applicants Requesting Federal Financial Assistance*
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form (See Appendix C for additional information)
6. Other Attachments Form – Budget Table
7. Other Attachments Form – Resumes
8. Other Attachments Form - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)
9. Other Attachments Form –Letters of Support (from partners with substantial involvement, if applicable)

Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with Matt Beiser (gmp-rfp@epa.gov) as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

Appendix B. Helpful Links

1. For assistance in filling out forms, please see the Common Errors document found on the [Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunity link](#) for the document and other NOFO information.
2. For EPA guidance on budget development, please follow this [link](#).

Appendix C. Project Narrative Guidance and Budget Table Format

The project narrative and budget table must substantially comply with the instructions, format, and content described below. It must also address the evaluation criteria in [Section V.A.](#) of the NOFO. The project narrative, including the cover page, workplan, and budget narrative, must not exceed a maximum of 12 single-spaced typewritten pages. Excess pages will not be reviewed.

Supporting materials, such as project team biographies, letters of support, and negotiated indirect cost rate agreements can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 12-page limit. Supporting materials should be submitted using the Optional Attachments form.

Applicants should ensure that their project narratives are written clearly using understandable terms. Doing so will help ensure that the evaluation team members understand the purpose, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project.

Each Project Narrative must be formatted for 8½" x 11" paper and should use no smaller than an 11- point Calibri font with 1" margins. Do not use a "double column" (aka newspaper) format. Readability is of paramount importance. Do not include more than one application in any file. Please do not zip the file or use a zip extension for your file because it will not be accepted.

Do not include confidential business information in your application.

Project Narrative Format:

Project Narrative (12-page limit including the summary information page). Citations, maps, and quality assurance statement (required for awards over \$200,000) do not count towards page limit and should be included at the end of this section.

SUMMARY INFORMATION PAGE (SHOULD NOT EXCEED ONE PAGE)

- **Funding Opportunity and FON.** [EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM](#) Understanding Water Quality through Monitoring Activities
- **Project Title.** Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience.
- **Applicant Information.** Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, e-mail address and UEI number. Do not include private information.
- **Type of Organization.** Specify, consistent with your SF-424, one of the following eligible entities:
 - Local Government (as defined in 2 CFR 200.1)
 - State Agency (includes Interstate)
 - Indian Tribe
 - College and University (includes private and state institutions)
 - Not for Profit/Nonprofit
 - Other
- **Proposed Funding Request.** The total dollar amount requested from EPA must be within the limits specified in [Sec.II.A](#), or your application will be rejected.
- **Project Period.** Provide anticipated project start date and anticipated project completion date, up to three years. See "Anticipated Start and End Dates" in [Sec. II.B](#).
- **Brief Project Description.** Summarize the proposed project in 100 words or less in a clear and succinct

manner in PLAIN LANGUAGE. Include environmental KEY TERMS that could be used as search terms (e.g., water quality, habitat restoration, community resilience). Do not use acronyms. If the application is selected and a grant awarded, this description may be posted to an EPA website. EPA reserves the right to make unilateral changes to conform to posting requirements.

- **Environmental Results.** Please describe major anticipated environmental results from this project.
- **Place of Performance.** Identify the locations where project activities will take place. Project activities must be located in water bodies anywhere within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states.

* For more details on location, please see Figures 1 and Appendix D.

Specify a single, representative project location within the Gulf of Mexico Watershed, including 8- or 12-digit HUC code (available from <http://water.usgs.gov/wsc/reg/04.html>). Please identify a single, representative location within the Gulf of Mexico watershed even if the work will be done at multiple locations or by applicants who are located outside the watershed. Please include the reason for the location you identify if that is not self-evident.

In addition to the single best representative location, for projects with multiple locations, specify up to five cities, counties, states, zip codes, or congressional districts where work will be performed. If your project includes more than five locations, select the five that best represent the project.

PROJECT WORKPLAN (should not exceed 11 pages, excess pages will not be reviewed)

Applicants must ensure that the workplan addresses the evaluation criteria in [Section V.A.](#) of the NOFO. Applicants should use the section and subsection numbers and headings below which correspond with the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the NOFO.

Section 1. Project Design. Describe with specificity the nature of the proposed project including:

A. **What and why:** Describe what the project will do (ensure alignment with I.B.), why you are proposing this project, the goal(s) of the project, and relevance to the local community(ies).

How: Describe the activities and steps to be taken to accomplish the goal.

If your project is a demonstration project: Describe how your project is novel or innovative and cite technical or conceptual foundation for this approach – for example, studies, pilot projects, successful projects elsewhere, etc., where appropriate, that verify the need for your project. (Citations should be included in the Narrative Proposal but will not be counted in the page limit.)

Where: Explain where the project will take place. Include a map at the end of the narrative that delineates the project boundaries and/or shows the expected location(s) of project(s)

Additional Project Design Details: Include additional information specific to the funding opportunity for which you are applying as described in [Secs. I.B.](#)

B. Explain how your project meets [GMD's statutory authority](#) in Clean Water Act 104(b)(3) AND how the results will support: FY 2022-26 EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.

Section 2. Environmental Results – Outputs and Outcomes. The following items should be included in this section:

- Specify the estimated quantitative and qualitative expected results (outputs and outcomes) of the proposed project including but not limited to those specifically identified in [Sec. I.B](#) and any other measurable outputs and outcomes. Points will be deducted if no quantitative targets are identified.
- Additional Environmental Results Details: Include additional information described in [Sec. I.B.](#)

Section 3. Milestone Schedule.

Provide a timetable or schedule with target dates projected for major activities, accomplishments and deliverables, including development of quality assurance documents (if applicable) and the submittal of

quarterly progress and final reports (milestones in quarterly increments per year is encouraged). The link between the activities and achievement of identified outputs and outcomes should be clear.

Section 4. Outreach and Communication. The following items should be included in this section:

- Describe how project results (e.g., presentations, data and reports) will be disseminated to interested stakeholders (e.g., community, local, state and tribal environmental managers, academia and/or other interested stakeholders) in a timely manner and the potential of the project for transferability and applicability to other places.
- Include any additional information described in [Secs. I.B.](#)

Section 5. Partnerships. The following items should be included in this section:

- List partner and stakeholder groups that will be meaningfully engaged to ensure broad utility of the work and enhance likelihood of success. Applicants must provide letters of support and commitment from partners and stakeholders key to the successful completion of the project.
- Describe how you will coordinate activities of the project with related or complementary activities, projects, and studies and how they will result in a greater positive environmental impact, if applicable.
- If you do not plan on collaborating with other groups in project performance, demonstrate how you will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such collaboration.
- Include any additional information required in [Secs. I.B.](#)

Section 6. Past Performance and Programmatic Capability.

Submit a list of federally [and/or non-federally if offices want to allow that also] funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe:

1. whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements; and
2. your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
3. your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. These descriptions should be supplemented in a separate attachment with supporting documentation (i.e., resumes or curricula vitae for key staff).

In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (2.5 points for these subfactors). If you do not provide any response for these items, you will receive a score of 0 for these factors.

Section 7. Timely Expenditure of Award. Describe your organization's approach, procedures, and controls to ensure awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

Section 8. Detailed Budget Narrative (15 points evaluated in conjunction with budget table).

In the budget table, the applicant should provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each work plan component/task. In the budget narrative, please provide a narrative description of costs in the budget table.

Common examples include: 1) description of the roles and responsibilities of personnel, 2) description of what supplies will be used for, 3) description of why the equipment is needed and why purchase is preferable to rental of equipment, 4) description of activities of the contract, whether it will be sole source or competed, and why that choice was made, and 5) description of activities of a subrecipient, etc. All subaward funding should be located under the "Other Direct Cost" cost category. Please refer to [Appendix B](#) for EPA guidance on budget development. Describe each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine cost-effectiveness, reasonableness and allowability of costs.

Section 9. Map(s) (not counted towards page limit) Include a map that delineates the project boundaries and/or shows the expected location(s) of the project(s)

Section 10. Quality Assurance (not counted in page limit)

- For awards under this competition that are expected to exceed \$200,000 in federal funding AND involve the generation or use of environmental data, please provide a statement acknowledging: 1) the need to demonstrate competency prior to beginning work and 2) an understanding that a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required. Please see Section VI.o. at the following link for more information: [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). For further information, please see the Frequently Asked Questions Document regarding this EPA requirement: <https://www.epa.gov/measurements-modeling/documents-about-measurement-competency-under-assistance-agreements>.
- If the applicant or subrecipients plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain compliance with the QA requirements (see [Section VIII.A, QUALITY ASSURANCE](#), of this announcement for additional information).

Budget Table Format

(15 points - Evaluated in conjunction with budget narrative and not counted in page limit)

A budget table must be provided that identifies major costs associated with the application in an easily understandable format. Where possible, the budget table should link expenses to tasks and deliverables from the project description. The budget narrative should be used to provide a description of why costs in the budget table are necessary for the project. Subawards are included in the budget as Other Direct Costs. Each subaward should have its own line and aggregate cost. Budget resources necessary for completing a QMP or QAPP, if applicable, sharing project information broadly, and reporting progress, should be included. Utilizing the suggested budget table template is strongly encouraged or the applicant risks the possibility of information being left out, or overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored. The template is available for download on <https://www.grants.gov> and at the [Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunities link](#). EPA provides detailed guidance on preparing budgets in the [Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#).

Appendix D. Eligible Coastal County List



| STATE | COUNTY | ELIGIBILITY-ENTIRE COUNTY/PARTIAL COUNTY |
|---------|------------|---|
| Alabama | Baldwin | Entire |
| Alabama | Clarke | Entire |
| Alabama | Coffee | Entire |
| Alabama | Conecuh | Entire |
| Alabama | Covington | Entire |
| Alabama | Dale | Entire |
| Alabama | Escambia | Entire |
| Alabama | Geneva | Entire |
| Alabama | Henry | Entire |
| Alabama | Houston | Entire |
| Alabama | Mobile | Entire |
| Alabama | Monroe | Entire |
| Alabama | Washington | Entire |
| Florida | Alachua | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Baker | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Bay | Entire |
| Florida | Bradford | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Broward | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Calhoun | Entire |
| Florida | Charlotte | Entire |
| Florida | Citrus | Entire |
| Florida | Clay | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Collier | Entire |

| | | |
|---------|--------------|-------------------|
| Florida | Columbia | Partial - see map |
| Florida | DeSoto | Entire |
| Florida | Dixie | Entire |
| Florida | Escambia | Entire |
| Florida | Franklin | Entire |
| Florida | Gadsden | Entire |
| Florida | Gilchrist | Entire |
| Florida | Glades | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Gulf | Entire |
| Florida | Hamilton | Entire |
| Florida | Hardee | Entire |
| Florida | Hendry | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Hernando | Entire |
| Florida | Highlands | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Hillsborough | Entire |
| Florida | Holmes | Entire |
| Florida | Jackson | Entire |
| Florida | Jefferson | Entire |
| Florida | Lafayette | Entire |
| Florida | Lake | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Lee | Entire |
| Florida | Leon | Entire |
| Florida | Levy | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Liberty | Entire |
| Florida | Madison | Entire |
| Florida | Manatee | Entire |
| Florida | Marion | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Miami-Dade | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Monroe | Entire |
| Florida | Okaloosa | Entire |
| Florida | Palm Beach | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Pasco | Entire |
| Florida | Pinellas | Entire |
| Florida | Polk | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Putnam | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Santa Rosa | Entire |
| Florida | Sarasota | Entire |
| Florida | Sumter | Entire |
| Florida | Suwannee | Entire |
| Florida | Taylor | Entire |
| Florida | Union | Partial - see map |
| Florida | Wakulla | Entire |
| Florida | Walton | Entire |

| | | |
|-------------|----------------------|--------|
| Florida | Washington | Entire |
| Louisiana | Acadia | Entire |
| Louisiana | Allen | Entire |
| Louisiana | Beauregard | Entire |
| Louisiana | Calcasieu | Entire |
| Louisiana | Cameron | Entire |
| Louisiana | Iberia | Entire |
| Louisiana | Jefferson | Entire |
| Louisiana | Jefferson Davis | Entire |
| Louisiana | Lafayette | Entire |
| Louisiana | Lafourche | Entire |
| Louisiana | Orleans | Entire |
| Louisiana | Plaquemines | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. Bernard | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. Charles | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. James | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. John the Baptist | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. Landry | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. Martin | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. Mary | Entire |
| Louisiana | St. Tammany | Entire |
| Louisiana | Tangipahoa | Entire |
| Louisiana | Terrebonne | Entire |
| Louisiana | Vermilion | Entire |
| Louisiana | Washington | Entire |
| Mississippi | Forrest | Entire |
| Mississippi | George | Entire |
| Mississippi | Greene | Entire |
| Mississippi | Hancock | Entire |
| Mississippi | Harrison | Entire |
| Mississippi | Jackson | Entire |
| Mississippi | Lamar | Entire |
| Mississippi | Pearl River | Entire |
| Mississippi | Perry | Entire |
| Mississippi | Stone | Entire |
| Texas | Aransas | Entire |
| Texas | Bee | Entire |
| Texas | Brazoria | Entire |
| Texas | Brooks | Entire |
| Texas | Calhoun | Entire |
| Texas | Cameron | Entire |
| Texas | Chambers | Entire |
| Texas | Colorado | Entire |

| | | |
|-------|--------------|--------|
| Texas | DeWitt | Entire |
| Texas | Duval | Entire |
| Texas | Fort Bend | Entire |
| Texas | Galveston | Entire |
| Texas | Goliad | Entire |
| Texas | Hardin | Entire |
| Texas | Harris | Entire |
| Texas | Hidalgo | Entire |
| Texas | Jackson | Entire |
| Texas | Jasper | Entire |
| Texas | Jefferson | Entire |
| Texas | Jim Wells | Entire |
| Texas | Kenedy | Entire |
| Texas | Kleberg | Entire |
| Texas | Lavaca | Entire |
| Texas | Liberty | Entire |
| Texas | Live Oak | Entire |
| Texas | Matagorda | Entire |
| Texas | Montgomery | Entire |
| Texas | Newton | Entire |
| Texas | Nueces | Entire |
| Texas | Orange | Entire |
| Texas | Refugio | Entire |
| Texas | San Patricio | Entire |
| Texas | Tyler | Entire |
| Texas | Victoria | Entire |
| Texas | Waller | Entire |
| Texas | Wharton | Entire |
| Texas | Willacy | Entire |
