

**Federal Agency Name:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Water, Office of Wastewater Management

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Training and Technical Assistance for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems for Clean Water Act Prevention, Reduction, and Elimination of Pollution

**Announcement Type:** Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

**Funding Opportunity Number (FON):** EPA-OW-OWM-24-01

**Assistance Listing Number:** 66.446

#### **Dates**

**Application packages must be submitted electronically to the EPA through Grants.gov ([Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)) by 11:59 Eastern Time (ET), Monday November 25, 2024 to be considered for funding. Late applications will not be considered for funding.**

**Questions about this announcement must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency contacts identified in Section VII by Monday November 4, 2024. Written responses to [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) will be posted on the EPA's [Training and Technical Assistance \(TA\) Program for Rural, Small, and Tribal Wastewater Systems](#) website. The EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.**

**Note to Applicants: Following the EPA's evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status.** If you name subawardee/subgrantees and/or contractor(s) including individual consultants in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at [EPA's Solicitation Clauses](#).

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## Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

### A. Program Overview

All communities deserve access to safe, clean, and reliable water. Yet too many communities across America face challenges in providing clean and safe water to their residents. The Clean Water Rural, Small, and Tribal (RST) grant program is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Water Technical Assistance (WaterTA) efforts that supports communities' efforts to identify water challenges, develop plans, build technical, financial, and managerial capacity, comply with the Clean Water Act, and access water infrastructure funding.

The EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, publicly owned wastewater treatment works, and decentralized wastewater treatment systems for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution. Eligible activities include training and technical assistance only. For examples of Water Technical Assistance, please see the [Implementation of EPA Water Technical Assistance memo](#). Infrastructure construction projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting, or rehabilitating existing equipment are not eligible for funding under this announcement.

The Agency is seeking applications from organizations that serve a range of geographic service areas with project budgets appropriate to the number of rural, small, and Tribal entities to be supported.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (P.L. 117-58, Nov. 15, 2021) provides an

additional \$11.7 billion in funding to the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) with 49% of those funds available as grants and principal forgiveness loans to communities that meet the state's affordability criteria or certain project types, consistent with the Clean Water Act. This is a historic opportunity to upgrade clean water infrastructure in rural, small, and Tribal communities.

Note that this announcement is not funded by the IIJA. However, awards made under this announcement can help communities access CWSRF funds, including IIJA funds, as described herein.

The EPA's current priorities include working to advance equity, address climate change, and responsibly support and implement the IIJA. These priorities include helping ensure that communities that have struggled to access public funding receive the help they need. The EPA aims to maximize the potential for the IIJA funds to significantly benefit rural, small, or Tribal communities with clean water projects. The result is that more communities will have applications for funding, quality wastewater infrastructure, and reliable wastewater services. Awards made through this announcement are intended also to enable communities to comply with environmental regulations and build their technical, managerial, and financial capacity to sustainably operate wastewater infrastructure. Providing this support will allow communities to better protect both public health and the environment.

## **B. Minority Serving Institutions:**

The EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available minds to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, the EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by including members of communities which may have not previously participated in such dialogues to participate in EPA programs. For this reason, the EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III, including minority serving institutions (MSIs), to apply 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](#)

### C. Project Components

Each application, regardless of the Priority Area being addressed, must address the five project components outlined in this section. Additional information, requirements and example technical assistance and training activities are provided below in Section I.D. Description of Four Priority Areas.

1. Priority Areas:

Each application must explicitly identify and thoroughly address one and only one of the Priority Areas listed in Section I.D.

2. Technical Assistance and Training Experience and Approach:

Applicants should describe in detail their existing experience and proposed approach for providing training and technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, treatment works and/or communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment systems in the targeted geographic area. (Further information on the targeted geographic area is below.)

Applicants should describe a thorough and flexible approach that tailors the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience identified in the application. The application should describe the applicant's proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to serve communities in the geographic area to be served. The application should discuss how the applicant will use the most appropriate techniques and materials to address the needs of various audiences. For example, different approaches may be appropriate for publicly owned treatment works versus decentralized wastewater treatment systems. Likewise, within the targeted communities and defined geographic area, unique needs or issues may differ for audiences based on location, cultural context, socio-economic status, system-type, experience or level, or other factors.

Applicants should describe their relevant experience in providing technical assistance towards projects for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution, including specific examples depending on the application priority area. Examples of relevant experience may include but are not limited to:

- Wastewater treatment, such as primary and secondary treatment, advanced treatment, sewer system, combined sewer overflow correction, and climate resilience
- Onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment systems
- Sewer collection

- Planning and assessment, such as feasibility studies, asset management, and capital improvement plans
- Project development, such as preparation of preliminary engineering reports and environmental reviews
- Partnerships and community engagement
- Funding and financing, such as rates and revenue analysis and financial planning
- Program management support, such as bid support and domestic preference and Davis Bacon assistance
- Other relevant CWSRF eligible projects as noted in [Clean Water State Revolving Fund Eligibilities](#).

The applicant should identify and use existing publicly available training and technical assistance materials for the rural, small, and Tribal communities in their geographic area to build on proven best practices and to increase efficiencies of grant funds awarded. The applicant should take into consideration how state and local regulations and policies impact the accessibility of financing/funding or the implementation of national standards in the targeted geographic area.

Applicants should describe how their assistance will help rural, small and/or Tribal communities and wastewater utilities to better assess and plan for climate risks to and impacts on their stormwater and/or wastewater infrastructure.

- a) Training and technical assistance approaches identified in the application may take different forms, including face-to-face and on-site technical assistance or training, which may include but is not limited to classroom training, workshops, system site visits and circuit-riders to provide on-site technical assistance to individual systems; and
- b) Remote technical assistance and training which may include but is not limited to webcasts, video conferencing, hotlines, online courses, and other forms of distance learning.

On-site technical assistance and site visits may be especially relevant to best serve rural, small, and Tribal communities. Face-to-face/on-site techniques often result in a high level of understanding, knowledge retention and results for participants, but can be more expensive and resource intensive.

Applicants should indicate in their applications an estimate as to what portion of the training and technical assistance would be on-site face-to-face and what portion would be remote training and technical assistance.

The applicant should provide an estimate of the number of training and technical assistance activities throughout the project period, as well as the types of training and technical assistance activities that are projected to be offered within the geographic

area based on the specific need(s) in the area. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible (e.g., 10 operation and maintenance trainings for Tribal communities).

3. Geographic Area and Targeted Municipalities and Systems:

Applications should clearly describe the specific geographic scope of the proposed work (e.g., whether it will be regional, state-wide, multi-state, national or other as appropriate) and the rural, small and/or Tribal municipalities and treatment systems being targeted for training and technical assistance. Applicants should provide a rationale for the targeted geographic area and why they are well qualified and positioned to support municipalities and systems in this area.

Applicants should describe factors to identify municipalities and/or systems that are in the greatest need of receiving information (e.g., disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, disadvantaged community<sup>1</sup>, permit violations, future permit limits, etc.). The description should include the applicant's qualifications and cultural competencies for working with such systems and any prior relevant experience. If Tribally-owned treatment works or decentralized water systems are a focus of the proposed work, applicants should describe how they will reach out to those entities in the defined geographic area and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems.

Applicants can either generally describe types of municipalities and systems they will support in their geographic area and/or they can provide the specific names of the municipalities, Tribes, and systems. Applicants should identify communities with which they have a current or recent experience working with in their targeted geographic area.

4. Consultation and Coordination with State, Territorial and/or Tribal Governments:

Consultation and communication with the appropriate state and/or Tribal government authorities is required. Communication with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and/or the territory or Tribal funding authorities is required for applications that address planning, development, and acquisition of financing. Applications must include a description of the process to notify with CWSRF programs and/or Tribal and territorial funding authorities. The CWSRF state contacts can be found at [State CWSRF Program Contacts](#).

Likewise, the applications must include a description of the process to communicate

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this announcement and reporting under Justice 40, disadvantaged communities are defined as: Any census tract that is included as disadvantaged in the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#). Additionally, disadvantaged communities may also include: (1) Any census block group that is at or above the 90th percentile for any of EJSreen's Supplemental Indexes when compared to the nation or state; (2) Any geographic area within Tribal lands as included in EJSreen: Alaska Native Allotments, Alaska Native Villages, American Indian Reservations, American Indian Off-reservation Trust Lands, and Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas; and/or (3) a community that meets the affordability criteria established by a state for the CWSRF program.

with the appropriate regulatory authority (such as the state or territorial primacy agency or EPA regional direct implementation coordinator) in each state, Tribe, or territory in which the assistance is to be provided. The EPA issues all National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) water quality permits in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, and on federal and Tribal lands.

Other states have been delegated authority by the EPA to issue their own permits. Applicants should describe a plan to regularly communicate with their local state and/or EPA regional NPDES program; further details may be found at [NPDES permits](#).

Applicants must indicate how they will:

- (i) notify the state, territory, or the EPA to identify communities, municipalities, Tribal governments, and systems in greatest need of assistance; and
- (ii) keep those agencies informed regarding the implementation and outcome of training and technical assistance activities.

Routine and regular communication with the EPA regional and state decentralized wastewater treatment system contacts is required when decentralized systems are supported. For a list of decentralized wastewater treatment system EPA regional contacts and State contacts, please visit: [Contact Us About Septic Systems](#).

Applications should also include a discussion of how the applicant will report on and disseminate results, effective compliance strategies and resources developed (such as tools, videos, and training materials) where the project is conducted and to entities similarly situated to those served by the project.

5. Partnerships:

Effective partnerships with other technical assistance providers or organizations may be important for the success of projects solicited under this announcement. In their applications, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project. Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components/tasks. If you choose not to partner, applications will be evaluated based on how the applicant demonstrates how it will successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.C. without the use of partners. If the applicant chooses to identify any partner entities who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants), please pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#) before doing so as the EPA will not consider their qualifications unless the applicant selects them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. Partnerships between organizations can greatly benefit from one another's experience and expertise.

#### D. Description of Four Priority Areas

Each application submitted under this announcement must address one, and only one of the four Priority Areas. **Only one application may be submitted for each Priority Area per applicant.** Eligible organizations may submit more than one application under this competition as long as each one is separately submitted and addresses only one Priority Area.

**Priority Area 1 - Acquisition of Financing/Funding: Training and technical assistance for rural, small, and Tribal municipalities for planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funding for CWSRF eligible activities.**

Funding is available to provide training and technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, in consultation with the state, as appropriate, for the purpose of assisting such municipalities and Tribal governments in the planning, developing, and acquisition of federal financing.

Applications under Priority Area 1 should assist rural, small, and/or Tribal communities in acquiring financing from any sources, but the application should explicitly describe the approach to provide technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities on how to acquire funds, for example by providing technical assistance on how a project may be included on CWSRF State Intended Use Plans (IUPs). Applicants should specifically describe their approach to increase the number of applications for funding through their training and technical assistance activities. **Applicants should seek to maximize the potential for IJA funds to provide significant benefit to rural, small or Tribal municipalities or publicly owned treatment works or decentralized systems.**

Training and technical assistance for the planning, development, and acquisition of financing can assist the communities for the range of projects and activities that are described under the CWSRF program. However, applicants may support communities in applying for other federal funding. Table 1 below provides a summary of eligible technical assistance activities to assist municipalities for acquisition of financing and funding. [A more detailed description of CWSRF eligible activities is available.](#) The applicant can provide any of the types of technical assistance described below as best meets the needs of the community in the targeted geographic area.

Table 1 Planning, Development and Acquisition of Financing/Funding	
Technical assistance can be provided to rural, small, and Tribal communities for the planning, developing, and acquisition of financing/funding:	
1	for the construction of publicly owned treatment works.
2	for the construction, repair, or replacement of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that treat municipal wastewater or domestic sewage.

3	for the implementation of nonpoint source management program plans established under <a href="#">Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319</a> .
4	for the development or implementation of Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans established under <a href="#">CWA Section 320</a> .
5	for measures to manage, reduce, treat, or recapture stormwater or subsurface drainage water.
6	for measures to reduce the demand for publicly owned treatment works capacity through water conservation, efficiency, or reuse.
7	for watershed projects meeting the criteria in <a href="#">CWA Section 122</a> .
8	for measures to increase energy efficiency for publicly owned treatment works.
9	for projects for reusing or recycling wastewater, stormwater, or subsurface drainage water.
10	for measures to increase the security of publicly owned treatment works.

Examples of eligible technical assistance activities for planning, developing, and acquisition of financing/funding may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide direct technical assistance in the planning, developing and acquisition of financing to support a project's (or projects') inclusion on state IUPs for the CWSRF program, or funding from other federal funding programs, and provide additional technical assistance through completion of funding process.
- Provide direct technical assistance through community-based planning, development, and financial workshops.
- Develop and deliver information, training materials and courses related to successfully funding and financing for environmental projects eligible for federal funding.
- Work with publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems to conduct analyses on the potential benefits of partnerships and collaboration with other systems.
- Assist municipalities with planning processes that identify community goals and seek to have infrastructure investments, consider, and as appropriate, support broader community goals, through processes such as augmented alternative analysis.
- Planning, design and project development activities towards federal funding applications including development of preliminary engineering reports, facilities plans and specifications.
- Provide direct technical assistance to lagoon systems in the planning, developing and acquisition of financing by being added to a state IUP through completion of the funding process.
- Support for municipalities to access financing for water harvesting and water reuse, water audits and water conservation plans that are reasonably expected to result in a capital project is also eligible.

- Support municipalities with access to financing for green infrastructure projects.
- Support municipalities with access to financing for projects to reuse agricultural wastewater, stormwater, or subsurface drainage water.
- The EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 1 must address Section I.C. Project Components and should thoroughly describe how the applicant plans to address the issues described for Priority Area 1 in this section. Applicants may choose and should identify one, multiple, or all eligible activities in Table 1 for which they anticipate they may assist rural, small, and/or Tribal communities in their defined geographic region.

All eligible applications under Priority Area 1 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 1 is addressed.

**Priority Area 2 - Protect Water Quality and Compliance Assistance: Training and technical assistance for rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater systems to help improve water quality and to achieve and maintain compliance.**

Funding is available to provide training and technical assistance for rural, small, and/or Tribal publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater systems to help improve water quality and to achieve and maintain compliance. Rural, small, and Tribal wastewater systems often face common challenges including: (1) a lack of capacity to assess current operations and identify short- and long-term opportunities for improvement; (2) frequent turnover of operations personnel; (3) personnel who lack necessary technical, financial or managerial skills; (4) limited rate bases; (5) aging infrastructure; (6) lack of knowledge of increasingly stringent discharge limits; and (7) lack of knowledge of newer techniques to reduce discharges, assess and improve operations, and analyze infrastructure alternatives to meet wastewater quality goals.

The goal of Priority Area 2 is to provide training and technical assistance to rural, small, and/or Tribal publicly owned treatment works, decentralized systems, and municipalities to better ensure sustained operations and maintenance of wastewater treatment systems over the long run. The training and technical assistance provided should build the financial, technical, and managerial capacity, as defined in the Appendix, of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized systems. Applicants should describe the process of consultation with the state, Tribes, or territories to identify priorities for training and technical assistance in the defined geographic area and for identifying the communities most in need of technical assistance and training. Applicants should identify communities with which they have a current or recent experience working with in their targeted geographic area.

Examples of eligible training and technical assistance activities to build technical, managerial, and financial capacity in system operations and maintenance at rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment systems may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Perform on-site trainings or technical assistance to improve specific performance at local facilities (e.g., assessment of the system’s overall strengths and areas for improvement, asset management, energy management, climate change risk assessment and risk mitigation, rate design, improved communications with local officials, effective utility management, or other topics that help facilities maintain long-term managerial, financial, and technical operational success).
- Perform on-site trainings or technical assistance that focus on improving performance at local lagoon facilities (e.g., training on nutrient removal technologies, asset management, development of maintenance schedules, rate structures, climate changed risk assessment and risk mitigation, energy efficiency opportunities, and assessments of sustainability and proper management of small publicly owned treatment works).
- Provide operator training and technical assistance on CWA compliance.
- Assist with workforce development and training for operator certification and continuing education units (CEUs). Applicants should describe how they will obtain state approval for CEU credits for their training courses.
- Assistance forming Responsible Management Entities (RMEs) for decentralized systems and supporting the development of long-term business plan(s) for RMEs.
- Provide one-to-one technical assistance and/or develop a regular schedule of visits or circuit rider program to rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoons facing non-compliance issues.
- Work with lagoon systems to conduct analyses on the potential benefits of partnerships and collaboration with other systems, including shared operators and treatment, restructuring and physical and/or managerial consolidation, thereby enabling them to become financially sustainable and to ensure wastewater is safely and affordably treated.
- EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 2 must address Section I.C Project Components and should thoroughly describe how the applicant plans to address the issues described for Priority Area 2 in this section. All eligible applications under Priority Area 2 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 2 is addressed.

**Priority Area 3 - Tribal:**

**Training and technical assistance focused specifically on Tribes for planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funding, to help improve water quality and achieve and**

**maintain compliance, and/or to support emerging contaminants project development.**

The October 2021 publication *Strengthening the Nation-to-Nation Relationship with Tribes to Secure a Sustainable Water Future*: [EPA Office of Water Action Plan](#) reaffirms the EPA's responsibilities in upholding the United States' trust responsibility to the 574 federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages and the Agency's commitment to support Tribal nations as they protect and steward their waters.

Long-standing water challenges in Indian country are negatively impacting Tribes. Tribal communities are more likely than other populations in the United States to lack access to wastewater services.

To be successful, Tribal water infrastructure programs need resources and support to build technical, managerial, and financial capacity.

While the other Priority Areas in this announcement allow and encourage supporting Tribes in the defined geographic area through training and technical assistance, the EPA is establishing a Priority Area specifically targeted at Tribal training and technical assistance needs for both:

- Support in planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funds; and
- Sustained protection of water quality and compliance through training and technical assistance that builds technical, managerial, and financial capacity building.

Examples of eligible training and technical assistance activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Develop and deliver information, training materials and courses about funding and financing of CWSRF-eligible environmental projects.
- Perform on-site trainings or technical assistance to improve specific performance at local facilities, for example assessment of the system's overall strengths and areas for Improvement, asset management, energy management, climate risk assessment and risk mitigation, rate design, water reuse, improved communications with local officials, effective utility management, and other topics that help facilities maintain long-term managerial, financial, and operational success.
- Provide technical assistance to improve the knowledge and skill of Tribal municipalities, publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment system personnel in the areas of technical, managerial, and financial capacity.
- Provide operator training and technical assistance on CWA compliance.
- Conduct preliminary engineering evaluations to assess wastewater treatment, storage, and conveyance system issues, and identify low-cost alternative and innovative technology and management techniques. Assist with technology deployment.
- Assistance forming RMEs for decentralized systems and supporting the development of long-term RME business plan(s).

- EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 3 must address Section I.C Project Components and should thoroughly address the issues described for Priority Area 3 in this section. All eligible applications under Priority Area 3 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 3 is addressed.

#### **Priority Area 4 - Decentralized Systems:**

**Information Dissemination, Training and Technical Assistance focused specifically on decentralized wastewater treatment systems to support planning, development and acquisition of financing.**

Decentralized wastewater treatment systems such as septic systems, are used to treat and dispose of small volumes of wastewater onsite, usually from houses and businesses located in suburban and rural locations not served by a centralized public sewer system. Septic systems treat wastewater from household plumbing fixtures (e.g., toilet, shower, laundry, etc.) through both natural and technological processes. Decentralized wastewater treatment systems may face significant maintenance and management challenges that affect their ability to maintain compliance with the CWA, including: (1) lack of information on system location, performance, age, and maintenance history; (2) improper design or siting; (3) lack of owner knowledge of proper preventative maintenance techniques; (4) lack of life-cycle management; and (5) lack of owner/service provider knowledge of advanced treatment and dispersal technologies.

More than one in five households in the United States depend on individual onsite or small community cluster systems (decentralized wastewater treatment systems) to treat their wastewater. Homeowners face many challenges in providing wastewater treatment and commonly have difficulty obtaining the assistance needed to keep their systems in good working order. These challenges often include lack of information about sources of timely information and technical assistance on:

- Decentralized wastewater treatment system ownership, system construction, operation, maintenance, and/or testing;
- Local and state health regulations;
- Local water quality and quantity concerns; and/or
- Emergency contacts and procedures.

Planning, developing, and acquiring financing and/or funding for decentralized systems and ensuring that these decentralized infrastructure investments are well managed has been a particular challenge in the sector. While the other Priority Areas in this announcement encourage interested applicants to support decentralized systems in their defined geographic area, the EPA is establishing a Priority Area specifically targeted at decentralized systems. The training and technical assistance under this Priority Area is for the planning,

development, and acquisition of financing/funds for decentralized systems and for financial capacity building. For financial capacity building, applicants should prioritize assisting decentralized systems to develop long term management plans that enable the systems to operate as designed during the planned life of the infrastructure. For example, establishing RMEs is a preferred approach and information can be found at [Using Responsible Management Entity](#) and the [Handbook for Managing Onsite and Clustered Systems](#).

Examples of training and technical assistance under Priority Area 4 may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assistance in accessing funds for communities with decentralized wastewater system projects, specifically on getting onto state IUPs.
- Assisting communities in establishing RMEs and supporting their long-term sustainability.
- Training community leaders, service providers, and regulatory officials to assist in consideration of funding access/ mechanisms, construction alternatives, highlighting the importance of maintenance and management, and to facilitate a properly trained workforce (e.g., certification of installers and operators).
- Outreach to individual decentralized wastewater system owners and residents reliant on decentralized systems on funding and financing options and/or proper use and preventative/corrective maintenance techniques.
- Developing and/or providing information, training, and technical assistance to organizations that work with decentralized wastewater system owners (e.g., county public health offices).
- The EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applicants under Priority Area 4 should describe in detail their approach to community outreach to communities and residents reliant on decentralized systems. All applications under Priority Area 4 must address Section I.C Project Components and should thoroughly address the issues described for Priority Area 4 in this section. All eligible applications under Priority Area 4 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 4 is addressed.

#### **E. EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results**

The activities to be funded under this solicitation support the [FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan](#). Awards made under this solicitation will support Goal 5 Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.1 Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure of the [Strategic Plan](#).

The EPA also requires that applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7A1, [Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements](#)). Applications must include specific

statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs. To the maximum extent practicable, the application should include well-defined outcomes that demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall protection of human health and the environment by preventing water pollution. The outputs and outcomes should directly address the goals of providing training and technical assistance.

### **Outputs**

Environmental outputs (or deliverables) refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective, that will be produced or provided over a period or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

#### **Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 1 Acquisition of Financing may include but are not limited to the following:**

- Increased number of municipalities receive technical assistance to apply for CWSRF eligible activities.
- Increased number of rural, small, and/or Tribal municipalities are added to state IUPs.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoon wastewater treatment systems accessing infrastructure funding and technical assistance sources.
- Increased number of lagoon wastewater projects/communities on the state IUPs.
- Increased number of municipalities receiving technical assistance to apply for and access funding for decentralized wastewater treatment system construction.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater projects/communities on the state IUPs.
- Increased number of municipalities and systems receive engineering support for pre-project development.
- Increased number of municipalities' personnel with understanding and skills to develop competitive proposals for available funding and financing resources.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal systems engaged in augmented alternative analysis and other planning processes that maximize community benefits from infrastructure investments and community resilience from climate change and other stressors of water infrastructure.

#### **Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 2 Protect Water Quality and Compliance Assistance may include but are not limited to the following:**

- Increased number of systems' personnel with skills to conduct diagnostic and troubleshooting analyses to determine factors affecting performance and compliance with NPDES permits.
- Increased number of systems with capacity to assess steps to adapt to climate change and/or mitigate greenhouse gas emissions for example through Climate Resilient Water Utilities.
- Increased number of municipalities with training and knowledge of available infrastructure funding and financing resources for decentralized systems.
- Increased number of system managers and operators receiving training and technical

assistance in:

- Regulatory requirements,
  - Financial and managerial capacity concepts and practices,
  - Basic wastewater system operations,
  - Asset management,
  - Climate risk assessment and planning,
  - Effective utility management, and
  - Advanced treatment and process issues.
- Increased number of municipalities with training on decentralized RMEs.
  - Increased number of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that have been inventoried, inspected, or have maintenance schedules or manuals for new or upgraded systems.
  - Increased number of state or local partners distributing and ensuring financial and technical assistance information that are reaching rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoon wastewater treatment systems.
  - Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoons wastewater treatment systems receiving on-site/virtual training on technical, managerial, and financial concepts.

**Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 3 Tribal may include but are not limited to the following:**

- Increased number of Tribal systems' personnel and decision-makers with knowledge of available funding programs and skills to successfully apply for funding.
- Increased number of Tribal systems' personnel with skills to conduct diagnostic and troubleshooting analyses to determine factors affecting performance and compliance with NPDES permits.
- Increased number of Tribal systems with capacity to assess steps to adapt to climate change and/or mitigate greenhouse gas emissions for example through Climate Resilient Water Utilities.
- Increased number of Tribal system managers and operators receiving training and technical assistance in:
  - Regulatory requirements,
  - Financial and managerial capacity concepts and practices,
  - Basic wastewater system operations,
  - Asset management,
  - Climate risk assessment and planning,
  - Effective utility management, and
  - Advanced treatment and process issues.
- Increased number of Tribal municipalities with training on decentralized RMEs.
- Increased number of Tribal decentralized wastewater treatment systems that have been inventoried, inspected, or have maintenance schedules or manuals for new or upgraded systems.

**Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 4 Decentralized may include but are not limited to the following:**

- Increased number of municipalities receiving technical assistance to apply for and access funding for decentralized wastewater treatment system construction.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater projects/communities on the state IUPs.
- Increased number of municipalities with training and knowledge of available infrastructure funding and financing resources for decentralized systems.
- Increased number of municipalities and systems that receive engineering support for pre-project development for decentralized systems.
- Increased number of municipalities' personnel with understanding and skills to develop competitive proposals for available funding and financing resources for decentralized systems.

**Outcomes**

Environmental outcomes are the result, effect or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Environmental outcomes are used to gauge a project's performance and take the form of output measures and outcome measures. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature. Outcomes must be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within an assistance agreement funding period. 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).

**Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 1: Planning, Developing, and Acquisition of Financing/Funding, may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities awarded financing and funds for clean water protections.
- Increased number of people in rural, small, and Tribal communities with enduring, sustainable and climate-resilient clean water infrastructure solutions.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems participating in water system partnerships, such as shared wastewater treatment and operators, restructuring, physical and/or managerial consolidation, or other collaboration or partnership actions with other systems.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoon wastewater treatment systems receiving infrastructure funding.
- Increased the number of communities successfully accessing financing and funds for decentralized wastewater projects eligible under the CWSRF.

**Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 2: Protect Water Quality and Achieve Clean, may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned wastewater treatment

systems in compliance with NPDES regulations or making substantial progress toward compliance.

- Fewer public health-related or public nuisance-related complaints associated with malfunctioning decentralized wastewater treatment systems.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works that have improved their resiliency, developed infrastructure designed to perform in a changing climate, and/or reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that are managed under RMEs.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoon wastewater treatment systems in compliance with the CWA and reducing public health and environmental concerns.
- Increased number of community leaders, service providers, and regulatory officials with the ability to assist homeowners to access funding for their decentralized systems and educate them on the importance of maintenance, management, etc.
- Increased number of private homeowners with well-performing decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

**Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 3: Tribal, may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Increased number of Tribal communities awarded adequate financing and funds for clean water protections.
- Increased number of people in Tribal communities with enduring, sustainable, and climate-resilient clean water infrastructure solutions.
- Increased number of Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems participating in water system partnerships.
- Increased number of Tribal publicly owned wastewater treatment systems in compliance with NPDES regulations or making substantial progress toward compliance.
- Fewer public health-related or public nuisance-related complaints associated with malfunctioning decentralized wastewater treatment systems.
- Increased knowledge and capacity of Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment system operators in the areas of technical, financial and/or managerial capacity.

**Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 4: Decentralized, may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Increased number of communities successfully accessing financing and funds for decentralized wastewater projects eligible under the CWSRF.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that are managed under RMEs.
- Increased number of community leaders, service providers, and regulatory officials with the ability to assist homeowners to access funding for their decentralized systems and educate them on the importance of maintenance, management, etc.

- Increased number of private homeowners with well-performing decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

As part of the Project Narrative, an applicant will be required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to the Agency’s Strategic Plan and to the goals of: (i) assisting rural, small, and Tribal municipalities to access financing/funding; and/or (ii) enabling small publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment systems to achieve and maintain compliance with the CWA. In addition, applicants will have to describe their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes. Additional information regarding the EPA’s discussion of environmental results in terms of “outputs” and “outcomes” can be found at [Linking Assistance Agreements to Environmental Results](#) (see [EPA Order 5700.7A1](#), Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements).

## **F. Statutory Authority**

The statutory authority for the funds anticipated to be distributed under this announcement is Section 104(b)(8) of the Clean Water Act as codified by 33 U.S.C. § 1254, which authorizes the EPA to award grants to nonprofit organizations, as defined in 33 U.S.C § 1254(w):

“(1) to provide technical assistance to rural, small, and tribal municipalities for the purpose of assisting, in consultation with the State in which the assistance is provided, such municipalities and tribal governments in the planning, developing, and acquisition of financing for eligible projects and activities described in [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(c)];

(2) to provide technical assistance and training for rural, small, and tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems to enable such treatment works and systems to protect water quality and achieve and maintain compliance with the requirements of [the Clean Water Act]; and

(3) to disseminate information to rural, small, and tribal municipalities and municipalities that meet the affordability criteria established under [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(i)(2)] by the State in which the municipality is located with respect to planning, design, construction, and operation of publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems.”

## **G. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into The Solicitation**

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.

## Section II. Award Information

### A. Amount of Funding

The total amount of federal funding potentially available under this announcement is approximately \$49,000,000, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. It is anticipated that approximately 12 to 28 cooperative agreements will be awarded. While the EPA expects to make 12 to 28 awards, there is no guarantee that this will be done, and the EPA may award fewer or more cooperative agreements based on the quality of applications received. It is anticipated that cooperative agreements funded under this announcement will have up to three-year project periods, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

**New Recipient Set-Aside:** To increase the number of grantees advancing improvements in training and technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, publicly owned wastewater treatment works, and decentralized wastewater treatment systems for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution, the EPA will reserve a portion of available funds for eligible applicants that have not received a Training and Technical Assistance for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems for Clean Water Act Prevention, Reduction, and Elimination of Pollution CWA 104(b)(8) award from EPA (see also Section V.B).

The EPA expects to select at least five new recipients for these funds. The actual number of projects awarded under the set-aside for applicants that have not received CWA 104(b)(8) awards from EPA may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, the EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number of awards under the set-aside.

Under this competition, **only one application may be submitted for each Priority Area per applicant.**

For a list of the anticipated number of awards, funding range and available funding in each priority area, please see the table below.

Priority Area	# Of Awards Anticipated	Funding Range	Available Funding
1. Acquisition of Finance/Funding	4-8	\$1,000,000-\$6,000,000	\$16.5 million

2. Protect Water Quality and Compliance Assistance	4-8	\$1,000,000- \$6,000,000	\$16.5 million
3. Tribal	2-6	\$1,000,000- \$4,000,000	\$8 million
4. Decentralized	2-6	\$1,000,000- \$4,000,000	\$8 million

Applicants requesting more than the highest funding range listed will not be reviewed.

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

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

In appropriate circumstances, the EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If the EPA decides to partially fund an application, 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.

The EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than anticipated. While the EPA expects to make between 12 and 28 awards, the EPA reserves the right not to do so. In addition, the EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

## **B. Type of Funding**

The EPA intends to award cooperative agreements under this solicitation. Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work supported. Although the EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for these projects may include the following.

1. Close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;

2. Collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
3. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, review of proposed procurement;
4. Approving qualifications of key personnel (the EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and
5. Review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

### **Section III. Eligibility Information**

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

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants under this competition are public and private nonprofit organizations, including public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education, subject to CWA 104(w), that are qualified and experienced in providing on-site training and technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities and/or small publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

Consistent with the definition of nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Note that 2 CFR 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. While not considered to be a nonprofit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this NOFO. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

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. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. § 1611. EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.

#### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

No cost-share or match is required.

If an applicant includes voluntary non-federal cost share/match in the project narrative and budget, the voluntary cost share/match must be for eligible and allowable project costs. Voluntary non-federal cost share/match may be provided by the applicant or partner organization or institution (subawardees). The cost share/match may be cash or in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions often include salaries or other verifiable costs and this value must be carefully documented. In the case of salaries, applicants may use either minimum wage or fair market value. Cost share/matching funds are considered grant funds and are included in the total award amount and must be used for the reasonable and necessary expenses of carrying out the workplan. All grant funds are subject to federal audit. Any restrictions on the use of grant funds (examples of funding restrictions are outlined in Section III.C. of this announcement) also apply to the non-federal cost share/matching funds. Other federal grants may not be used as cost share/match without specific statutory authority.

### C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the application closing date will result in the elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications that meet all these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration because of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. An applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III.A. of this announcement at the time of application submission.
2. Applications must address **one, and only one, of the four Priority Areas listed in Section I.D.** Eligible organizations may submit more than one application under this competition if each one is separately submitted and addresses only one Priority Area. Applications that address more than one Priority Area in a single application will not be reviewed.
3. Under this competition, **only one application may be submitted for each Priority Area per applicant.** Applicants may submit only one application per Priority Area. If an applicant submits more than one application for a single Priority Area, EPA will contact them before the review process begins to determine which application(s) will be withdrawn. If the applicant is not able to communicate a decision within two business days of being contacted by the EPA, the EPA will accept the application received by Grants.gov first. Additional information regarding the one application per applicant requirement may be found in the [FAQ document](#).
4. Applications must address the requirements in the Priority Area for which they are applying.
5. Applications must address all five project components listed in in Section I.C.
6. Applications under this announcement may not exceed \$6,000,000 in federal funds for Priority Area 1 and Priority Area 2. Applications submitted under Priority Area 3 and Priority Area 4 may not exceed \$4,000,000 in federal funds. Applications exceeding the maximum federal funding request levels for the Priority Areas will be

rejected.

7. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages more than the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.D.2 establishes a 20-page, single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. 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.
8. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this solicitation (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this solicitation. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this solicitation 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 Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.
9. Applications submitted outside of Grants.gov 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.
10. Eligible activities include training and technical assistance only. Infrastructure construction projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting or rehabilitating existing equipment are not eligible for funding under this announcement.
11. If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or 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 for funding.

#### **D. Encouraging Minority Serving Institutions to Compete**

The EPA recognizes that scientific, technical, engineering and mathematical (STEM) competence is essential to the Nation's future well-being in terms of national security and competitive economic advantage. For instance, the health and vitality of the economy is predicated, in part, on the availability of an adequate supply of scientists, technicians, engineers and mathematicians, to develop innovative technologies and solutions. In other words, this country must engage all available minds to address the challenges it faces. Minorities, women, and persons with disabilities historically have been under-represented in the STEM fields. For this reason, the EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants to apply.

## Section IV. Application and Submission Information

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

### A. Form of Application Submission

#### a. Requirement to Submit Through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants must apply electronically through [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 c. *Technical Issues with Submission* below.

#### 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 create an account using [login.gov](#)<sup>2</sup> to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned 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 renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

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

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is

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<sup>2</sup> Login.gov a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit <http://login.gov/help>.

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 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 the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

The electronic submission of your application to this funding opportunity must be made by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial 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](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto: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.

#### 4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than Monday November 25, 2024 11:59 PM ET. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application 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.

#### 5. Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
4. EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form – Narrative Proposal prepared as described in Section IV of the announcement

Optional Documents:

6. Other Attachments Form - Biographic Sketches
7. Other Attachments Form – Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement, if applicable.

#### **c. 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 **EPA-OW-OWM-24-01** in the subject line to [RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov](mailto:RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov) **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:
  - a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
  - b. Description of the issue
  - c. The entire application package in PDF format.

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

Please note that successful submission through Grants.gov or email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

The EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by-case basis. The EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to submit through Grants.gov due to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant [SAM.gov](https://www.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.

## **B. Content of Application Package Submission**

Applicants should read the following section very carefully. A complete application package must include the following documents described below.

### **1. Application Materials**

- a. **Standard Form (SF) 424** – Application for Federal Assistance. Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- b. **SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.** The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of the SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22. In Section B, Budget Categories column (1) should be filled out for federal funds, column (2) should be filled out for any non-federal cost- share/match, and column (5) should be filled out for total project cost (federal funds and any voluntary non-federal cost-share/match).
- c. **EPA Key Contacts Form.** Complete the form. Attach additional forms as needed.
- d. **EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.** Complete the form.

There are no attachments.

- e. **Project Narrative, using Project Narrative Attachment Form. See Section IV.D.2.** (Project Narrative) for details on specific information that must be included. When developing the Project Narrative, applicants should refer to Section I. of the NOFO which provides a project description.
- f. **Biographical Sketches, using Other Attachments Form.** Submit a biographical sketch of each major project manager, support staff member, or other major project participant (see Section IV.D.2.).
- g. **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, using Other Attachments Form (if applicable)**  
The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is not included in the twenty (20) page single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. See [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information about indirect cost rates.

## 2. Project Narrative

**NOTE: The Project Narrative must include sections A – C below. The Project Narrative is limited to no more than twenty (20) typewritten, single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the cover page and executive summary.** Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative. **Additional pages beyond the 20-page limit will not be considered.** Please note that supporting materials, which are limited to biographical sketches and full resumes as described below, are not considered part of the Project Narrative and are not included within the page limit.

The application's Project Narrative must be typewritten and must include the information listed below. If a particular item is not applicable, clearly state this in the Project Narrative.

### A. Cover Page (included in the page limit):

1. Project title;
2. Name of applicant;
3. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number);
4. Total project cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested and the total project cost).
5. The Priority Area addressed in the application. (If an applicant submits an application covering more than one Priority Area, it will be rejected.); and
6. The Geographic Scope of the Project

**B. Executive Summary:** Provide a brief summary of the proposed project (should not exceed one page). This should include a brief description of the proposed project and

the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.

**C. Workplan:** The workplan must address the following:

1. **Technical Assistance and Training Approach:** Identify one of the four Priority Areas for the application and describe in detail the proposed approach for providing training and technical assistance to rural, small, and/or Tribal municipalities, publicly owned treatment works and/or communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment systems in the targeted geographic area. Please refer to Section I.C.2. and the selected Priority Area description for additional detail. The workplan should include a description of any linkages to IJA-supported financing or funding and whether climate risk assessment and planning is included in the planned technical assistance and training.
2. **Geographic Area and Targeted Municipalities and Systems:** Clearly describe the specific geographic area of the proposed work. Describe the factors to be used to identify municipalities and/or systems that are in the greatest need of receiving information and the approach to reaching out to these communities. If known, describe the rural, small and/or Tribal municipalities and/or treatment systems being targeted for training and technical assistance. Include a discussion of the applicant's cultural competency in working with the entities in greatest need of receiving assistance (e.g., disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, disadvantaged or historically underserved, permit violations, future permit limits, etc.) Please refer to Section I.C.3. and the selected Priority Area description for additional detail.
3. **Consultation and Coordination with State, Territorial and Tribal Governments:** Describe the process for consulting with the appropriate authorities in each state, Tribe, or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities. Include a process for reporting back to those authorities, to the EPA Project Officer and to the appropriate EPA regional coordinators regarding the assistance provided and documented results. Please refer to Section I.C.4. and the selected Priority Area description for additional detail.
4. **Partnerships:** Applicants may partner with another (other) eligible organization(s) to submit an application. Please carefully review Section IV.E. for information regarding applications that include partners as subawardees. Applicant may identify partners according to Section I.C.5.; applicants are not required to identify partners. Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this NOFO; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient (the "pass-through entity"). Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with the [EPA's Subaward Policy](#). The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to the EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332, subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding. For-profit

organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a “partner” or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.

5. **Environmental Results and Measuring Progress:**
  - a. **Stated Objective/Link to the EPA Strategic Plan** - List the objective of the project and the linkage to the FY 2022-2026 [Strategic Plan](#) Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure.
  - b. **Results of Activities (Outputs)** - Describe the anticipated products/results which are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project and describe an approach for tracking and reporting your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s); (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.D. of this announcement).
  - c. **Projected Environmental Improvement (Outcomes)** - List the anticipated environmental improvements that will be accomplished because of the project. These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment or public health which are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s); (examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.D. of this announcement).
6. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period (up to three years). The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks, number of training and technical assistance activities projected to be completed per quarter, and a timeframe for completion of tasks and an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.
7. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF-424A such as “other” and “contractual.”

Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs and total costs. All subawardee funding should be in the “other” cost category. Describe itemized costs in enough detail for the EPA to determine the allowability of costs for each project component/task, as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all

costs. Please see the EPA's [Budget Development Guidance](#) for additional information on preparing budget narratives, including a sample budget (Appendix 2), and the [Indirect Cost Guidance](#). [Please also reference the EPA's training modules on how to develop a budget.](#)

8. **Programmatic Capability/Experience:**

- a. Training and Technical Assistance Experience - Applicants should describe in detail the experience they have with providing the specific Training and Technical Assistance activities required based on the Priority Area to which the applicant is applying.
- b. Organizational Experience - Provide a brief description of your organization and experience related to the Project Components in Section C., your organization's infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed approach, and specific examples related to Project Components in Section C.
- c. Staff Expertise/Qualifications - Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their:
  - i. Experience/expertise/qualifications
  - ii. Cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to serve communities in the geographic areas to be served
  - iii. Knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state, Tribal and local regulations and policies relevant to the training and technical assistance as described in the Project Components in Section C.
  - iv. Include an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (based on 2080 hours per year/FTE). If you choose to identify any partner organizations who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants) please refer to Section IV.E before doing so as the EPA will not consider their qualifications unless you select them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions.
  - v. A biographical sketch must be submitted for each major project manager, support staff member or other major project participant. Biographical sketches are not counted in the page limit. Full resumes may be included as an appendix in the "Other Attachment" Section to the application narrative and are not counted in the page limit.

9. **Past Performance:** Briefly describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably the EPA agreements). Please describe:

- Whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
- Your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those

- agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports.
- How you documented and/or reported on whether you were making progress towards achieving the expected results (i.e., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If you were not making progress, please indicate whether, and how, you documented why not.

**Note:** In evaluating an applicant’s past performance, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from the EPA files and/or from current and prior federal agency grantors/cooperative agreements (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, please indicate this in the application, and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V. (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). Failure to provide any programmatic past performance or reporting information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, may result in a zero score for these factors (see also Section V.).

**10. Quality Assurance/Quality Control:** Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) (not included in the page limit)

If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.A. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) of this announcement for additional information) in the “Other Attachment” Section.

**Note:** The applicant should also provide in the Project Narrative any additional information, to the extent not already addressed above, that addresses the selection criteria in Section V.

**Submission Dates and Times:** The closing date and time for receipt of application submissions is 11:59pm Eastern Time (ET) on Monday November 25, 2024 to be considered for funding. Application packages must be submitted electronically to the EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than 11:59pm Eastern Time (ET) on Monday November 25, 2024 to be considered for funding. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

## Section V. Application Review Information

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

### A. Evaluation Criteria

All eligible applications, based on the Section III threshold eligibility review, will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and weights below (100 total point scale).

Points	Evaluation Criteria
(50 points)	<p>1) Priority Area Training and Technical Assistance Approach</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing their chosen Priority Area (Section I.D.) and other Project Components described in Section I.C. In conducting this evaluation, applicants will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. their overall approach to addressing the Priority Area training and technical assistance requirements, including the training and technical assistance techniques and resources proposed to address the specific needs of the target audience identified in the application. (15 points)</li> <li>ii. its capacity to provide training and technical assistance in the geographic scope defined in the proposal, and rationale for that geographic scope, within which it will provide training and technical assistance. (10 points)</li> <li>iii. their approach to identifying and reaching out to municipalities and/or systems that are in the greatest need of receiving assistance (e.g., disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, disadvantaged or historically underserved, permit violations, future permit limits, etc.) as well as in protecting public health and the environment when providing training and technical assistance. (15 points)</li> <li>iv. an effective process for consultation with the appropriate financing and/or regulatory authority in each state, Tribe, or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities, and for keeping these authorities informed regarding the implementation and outcome of training and technical assistance activities. (5 points)</li> <li>v. that they will work in partnership with other technical assistance providers or organizations in performing the project to implement the proposed project effectively and efficiently and that will result in a greater positive environmental impact from the applicant’s project. This includes evaluating the applicant’s plans for obtaining collaboration and support from these organization in performing the project to expand program effectiveness and impact, the type of collaboration proposed, and what role it will play in the overall project. Applicants that do not plan on collaborating with other groups in project performance will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform</li> </ul>

	and complete the project without such collaboration. (5 points)
(15 points)	<p>2) Environmental Results and Measuring Progress</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to EPA’s Strategic Plan described in Section I.D. of this announcement. (10 points)</li> <li>ii. A sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section I.D. of this announcement). (5 points)</li> </ul>
(10 points)	<p>3) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, number of training and technical assistance activities projected to be completed per quarter, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (5 points)</li> <li>ii. The reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are cost effective, reasonable, and allowable. (5 points)</li> </ul>
(15 points)	<p>4) Programmatic Capability/Experience</p> <p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant’s ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Experience with providing the specific Training and Technical Assistance activities required based on the Priority Area to which the applicant is applying. (5 points)</li> <li>ii. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project. (5 points)</li> <li>iii. Staff expertise/qualifications, cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to serve communities in the geographic area to be served, staff knowledge, and resources</li> </ul>

	<p>or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state and local regulations and policies relevant to the training or technical assistance. (5 points)</p>
<p>(10 points)</p>	<p>5) Past Performance</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.D.2.C.9. of this solicitation. (5 points)</li> <li>ii. History of meeting reporting requirements in a timely manner under assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.D.2.C.9. of this solicitation submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements including the extent and quality to which the applicant adequately documented and/or reported on progress towards achieving the expected outcomes and outputs (e.g., results) under assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.D.2.C.9. of this solicitation and, if such progress was not made, whether the documentation and/or reports satisfactorily explained why not. (5 points)</li> </ul> <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under (i) and (ii) above, the EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including the Agency files and/or prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the application and they will receive a neutral score (half of the points) for the factor (i.e., 2.5 points for item (i), and 2.5 points for item (ii)).</p> <p>Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a</p>

	statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, may result in a zero score for the factor (i.e., 0 points for item (i) and 0 points for item (ii)).
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**B. Review and Selection Process**

All applications will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

Panels comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications by each Priority Area based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. Four separate ranking lists, one per Priority Area, will be developed based on the panel evaluations. The ranking list for each Priority Area will be provided to the Selection Official(s) who make(s) the final funding decisions. In making the final funding decisions for each Priority Area, the Selection Official(s) will consider the application score/ranking and may also consider geographic distribution of funds and programmatic priorities such as ensuring that small systems receive training and technical assistance that facilitates compliance with important federal and state regulations.

As described in Section II.A. of this NOFO, the EPA will reserve a portion of available funds to make at least five awards to eligible applicants that have not received a Training and Technical Assistance for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems for Clean Water Act Prevention, Reduction, and Elimination of Pollution CWA 104(b)(8) award. While the EPA anticipates selecting at least five new recipients for these funds under Priority Areas 1-4, it reserves the right not to do so and to reconsider the number of awards. In addition, the EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and number of awards under the new recipient set-aside or change the ratio of assistance agreements it awards among the set-aside. While the EPA intends to make awards in as many Priority Areas as possible, the Agency reserves the right to make more than one award in a Priority Area and the right to make no awards in a Priority Area.

## **Section VI. Award Administration Information**

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

### **A. Award Notices**

Following the EPA's evaluation of the applications, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified regarding their status. The notification will be made to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance. The notification of recommendation for award is not an authorization to begin performance, nor is it a guarantee that the award will be made. The official notification of an award will be made by the Regional Grants Management Office.

Applicants are cautioned that only an Award Official 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 the EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA Award Official, 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 the the EPA, before the cooperative agreement can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a cooperative agreement can take up to 90 days or longer.

The EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final award amount and workplan narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy including the Assistance Agreement Competition Policy, EPA Order 5700.5A1. An approvable final workplan narrative is required to include:

1. Components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component;
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment;
4. Estimated number of training and technical assistance activities projected to be completed per quarter;
5. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule; and
6. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and the EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.

### **B. Combining Awards into One Award**

If an applicant submits applications for multiple Priority Areas under this competition, and is selected for multiple Priority Areas, the EPA may award a single assistance agreement that combines separate applications for different Priority Areas.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by regulations at 2 CFR 200 and 1500, as applicable. A description of the Agency's substantial involvement in the cooperative agreement will be included in the final assistance agreement.

#### **D. Reporting**

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved.

Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted quarterly and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 120 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, the EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the work plan consistent with 2 CFR 200 and 1500, and 40 CFR Part 45, as appropriate.

#### **Section VII. Agency Contacts**

**Note to Applicants:** In accordance with the EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, the EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement.

Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified below as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be resolved prior to submitting a proposal. In addition, if necessary, the EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination.

Questions about this NOFO must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified below by **Monday November 4, 2024**. Written responses and answers to FAQs will be posted on the [EPA's Training and Technical Assistance \(TA\) Program for Rural, Small, and Tribal Wastewater Systems website](#). The EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the [FAQs webpage](#) prior to submitting a question.

Agency Contact: Grace Persico

Phone: 202-993-0174

E-mail: [RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov](mailto:RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov)

## Section VIII. Other Information

### A. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)

Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) requirements are applicable to these assistance agreements (see [2 CFR 1500.12](#)). QA/QC requirements apply to the collection of environmental data. Environmental data are any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology. Environmental data include information collected directly from measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process. The EPA can assist applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the applicant is encouraged to work with the EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. Contact the Agency Contact (See Section VII, above, for Agency Contact information) for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff person.

Successful applicants must ensure all water quality data generated in accordance with an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), either directly or by subaward, are transmitted into the agency's Water Quality Exchange (WQX) data system (formerly known as STORET) annually or by project completion. More information about WQX and WQXweb, including tutorials, can be found at the [EPA's Water Quality Data website](#).

### B. Data Sharing

All recipients of these assistance agreements may be required to share any data generated through this funding agreement as a defined deliverable in the final workplan.

## Appendix – Definitions

For purposes of this announcement:

- The term “municipality” is defined in [Section 502\(4\)](#) of the Clean Water Act and means “a city, town, borough, county, parish, district, association, or other public body created by or pursuant to State law and having jurisdiction over disposal of sewage, industrial wastes, or other wastes, or an Indian Tribe or an authorized Indian Tribal organization, or a designated and approved management agency under [33 U.S.C. § 1288](#).”
- Rural and small wastewater treatment systems are defined as systems that treat up to 1 million gallons per day (MGD) of wastewater or serve a population of less than 10,000 persons and may also serve operations such as, but not limited to hospitals, schools, and restaurants. Most wastewater systems in the nation serve populations less than 10,000.

- Tribal systems are defined as systems that serve populations of federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and Tribes on former reservations in Oklahoma (as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs).
- “[S]mall publicly owned treatment works” are defined as wastewater systems or treatment facilities that are owned by a public entity (such as a municipality) or not-for-profit entity (such as regional sewer districts), and/or serve Tribal communities (except for systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities).
- “Decentralized systems” are defined as: septic or onsite or clustered systems used to collect, treat, and disperse or reclaim wastewater from a small community, Tribe, or service area that are publicly or privately-owned and/or serve Tribal communities (except for systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities). For further details regarding decentralized systems refer to the decentralized chapter of the EPA [Overview of Clean Water State Revolving Fund Eligibilities](#).
- Cultural competence means effectively demonstrating the skills and experience to operate in the different cultural contexts found in the identified geographic area and means having the capacity to function effectively as an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by the municipalities and systems targeted to receive technical assistance and training. Cultural competence includes demonstrating linguistic competence that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.
- Technical capacity refers to the physical infrastructure of the wastewater system, including, but not limited to the adequacy of the system’s infrastructure and the ability of system personnel to adequately operate and maintain the system and to apply necessary technical knowledge.
- Financial capacity refers to the financial resources of the wastewater system, including, but not limited to, revenue sufficiency, user rate-setting, rate collection, creditworthiness, fiscal controls, operational budgeting, and planning.
- Managerial capacity refers to the management structure and practices of the wastewater system, including, but not limited to, ownership accountability, staffing and organization, and effective linkages and communication with customers and regulatory agencies.