

U.S. EPA GREAT LAKES NATIONAL PROGRAM OFFICE
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
2024 Request for Applications for Technical Assistance and Outreach to Farmers on Nutrient Management in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEBTA)

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO)

Funding Opportunity Title: Enhance Technical Assistance and Outreach to Farmers on Nutrient Management in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEBTA)

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA) - Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-R5-GL2024-WLEBTA

Assistance Listing Number: 66.469

Award Range: \$300,000 - \$1,000,000

Key Dates

Applicant webinar	October 9, 2024 See RFA website for details
Deadline for submitting questions via email	November 15, 2024
Closing Date and Deadline for submitting applications. Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (see Section IV for details.)	November 22, 2024
Expected notification to selected applicant.	February 2025 (estimated)
Expected announcement of award.	March 2025 (estimated)

Table of Contents

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 3

I.A. Background on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative..... 4

I.B. Background on Nutrient Management in the WLEB..... 4

I.C. RFA Purpose and Explanation of Approach..... 5

I.D. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage..... 7

I.E. Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Metrics..... 7

I.F. Statutory Authority..... 9

I.G. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation 9

I.H. Encouraging Minority Serving Institutions to Compete..... 9

II. AWARD INFORMATION 10

II.A. Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards..... 10

II.B. Award Type 10

II.C. Expected Project Period..... 11

II.D. Pre-Award Costs..... 11

II.E. Partial Funding Provision 11

II.F. Additional Awards..... 11

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION 11

III.A. Eligible Applicants 12

III.B. Cost Sharing/Match Requirements 12

III.C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria 13

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION 15

IV.A. Requirement to Submit through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures..... 15

IV.B. Submission Instructions..... 15

IV.C. Technical Issues with Submission..... 17

IV.D. Content and Form of Application Submission..... 17

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION 20

V.A. Evaluation Process 20

V.B. Evaluation Criteria..... 20

V.C. Review and Selection Process 24

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION 24

VI.A. Award Notification 24

VI.B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements 24

VI.C. Reporting..... 25

VII. AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION 27

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION..... 27

Appendix I: Budget Narrative Guidance 28

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

This Request for Applications (RFA) solicits applications from eligible entities for grants to be awarded pursuant to the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan](#)¹. This RFA is a competitive grant funding opportunity under Focus Area 3 of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (“GLRI”). The purpose of the RFA is to increase adoption of nutrient management in the western Lake Erie basin watershed (“WLEB”) by increasing technical assistance and outreach to farmers. EPA expects to award approximately \$4 million for 5-10 grants ranging from \$300,000 to \$1,000,000. The number of grants and total amount awarded is contingent upon funding availability, the quality of applications received, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. There is no match requirement.

Eligible applicants can be a single entity or a lead entity with collaboration through subawards to other eligible applicant(s). Successful applicants may also procure services through contracts with for profit firms or individual consultants.

This funding opportunity will only provide grants for projects that are geographically within the WLEB, defined as encompassing the following USGS Hydrologic Unit Codes. Projects do not need to span the entire area; any subset within these watershed boundaries are eligible:

04100001 Ottawa
 04100002 River Raisin
 04100003 St. Joseph
 04100004 St. Marys
 04100005 Upper Maumee
 04100006 Tiffin
 04100007 Auglaize
 04100008 Blanchard
 04100009 Lower Maumee
 04100010 Cedar-Portage

The term “subaward” means an award of financial assistance by any legal agreement made by the Principal Recipient to an eligible subrecipient. Applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA must address the objectives and commitments identified within the GLRI Action Plan III as well as any subsequent GLRI Action Plans that may be in effect during the time of the award. Additionally, the successful applicant must comply with requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500 applicable to “pass-through entities” as well as [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#) and [General Term and Condition \(T&C\) Establishing and Managing Subawards](#).

Note – Prior to naming a contractor (including consultants) or subrecipient in your application as a “partner”, please carefully review *Section IV.D. Contracts and Subawards*, of [EPA’s Solicitation Clauses](#) that are incorporated by reference in this announcement ([See Section I.G.](#)). EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements as well as EPA’s rule on Participation by Underserved

¹ The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Action Plan III covers federal fiscal years 2020-2024. EPA expects to issue GLRI Action Plan IV covering federal fiscal years 2025 to 2029.

Business Enterprises in EPA Programs set forth in 40 CFR Part 33. The Agency does not accept justifications for sole source contracts for services or products available in the commercial marketplace based on a contractor's role in preparing an application.

Other Application Information: For your convenience, an RFA web page has been created at <https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/2024-notice-funding-opportunity-technical-assistance-and-outreach-farmers> , where you will find information relating to the RFA process as well as a link to frequently asked questions (FAQs). We encourage all applicants to sign up for our mailing list and register with us at www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-news-email-list . Further submittal information is described in [Section IV](#).

I.A. Background on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) builds on the prior efforts of federal, state, and local agencies; Indian tribes; businesses; public interest groups; interested citizens; and others to develop a collaborative and comprehensive approach to restoring and protecting the Great Lakes ecosystem. Information about GLRI can be found at www.glri.us.

Consistent with the Assistance Listing Number 66.469, this RFA is expected to result in the award of one or more grants and/or cooperative agreements, as appropriate, to help implement the GLRI. EPA's authority to make awards covers both outreach and implementation projects in furtherance of the GLRI and Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). (The principal goal of GLWQA is the restoration and maintenance of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem.) The statutory authority to carry out certain U.S. responsibilities under GLWQA and for GLRI funding is contained in the Clean Water Act Section 118 (c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322. Any environmental activities ultimately funded through this RFA must advance protection and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem in support of: 1) the most current [GLRI Action Plan](#)¹ and 2) [EPA's Strategic Plan](#).

I.B. Background on Nutrient Management in the WLEB

Curbing delivery of excess nutrients to Lake Erie, which fuels harmful algal blooms (HABs), is a key commitment under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) with Canada. Accordingly, nutrient reduction and HABs are a funding priority under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

The GLWQA is an agreement between the U.S. and Canada to restore and protect the waters of the Great Lakes. It's a framework for identifying binational priorities and actions to improve water quality. Under the Nutrients Annex (Annex 4) of the GLWQA, the U.S. and Canada committed to take action to address HABs in Lake Erie. After an evaluation of phosphorus loads and lake ecosystem response, it was decided that phosphorus loads to the western basin of the lake would need to be reduced by 40%. Reduction targets were formally adopted by the U.S. and Canada in February 2016. More information is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/glwqa/lake-erie-nutrients>.

HABs threaten drinking water supplies and cause beach closings and other water quality impairments in multiple areas of the Great Lakes. The most pronounced HAB problems occur in western Lake Erie, because of high nutrient loads from tributaries, and because it is very shallow and warm.

The western basin of Lake Erie experiences cyanobacterial harmful algal blooms each summer. The blooms span hundreds of square miles, can form mats and scums, and often contain toxins.

The watershed that drains to the western basin, known as the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB), spans 7 million acres in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. The primary land use is agriculture (80% cropland, primarily corn and soybeans). The WLEB is home to 2 million people spanning 29 counties.

Reducing phosphorus loading from the WLEB is expected to substantially reduce the extent of HABs. However, this will take many years, because of the magnitude of reduction needed; the buildup of legacy phosphorus in fields and streambanks; and the increasing challenge of managing nonpoint source runoff in the face of climate-driven increases in precipitation timing and intensity.

Pursuant to the GLWQA, state and federal agencies developed action plans that outline strategies for phosphorus reduction in Lake Erie. These plans emphasize a systems approach to reduce nutrient loads from agricultural sources. Improving management of manure and fertilizers to minimize nutrient losses is a critical first step.

Here we are defining **nutrient management** as planning for and/or managing the amount, placement, and timing of plant nutrients (both nitrogen and phosphorus) to obtain optimum yields and minimize the risk of surface and groundwater pollution. To ensure effective nutrient management, experts recommend using the "Four Rs" framework:

Right source: Matching fertilizer type to crop needs.

Right amount: Using the correct application rate to match amount of fertilizer type to crop needs.

Right placement: Using the proper method for application to keep nutrients where crops can use them.

Right timing: Applying at the correct time to make nutrients available when crops need them.

The ability to implement these practices, and to what degree, is often specific to individual farming operations and is affected by many competing factors, including costs, risks, and practical considerations. Furthermore, challenges that hinder adoption include lack of knowledge, capacity limitations, lack of market drivers or economic incentives, and societal norms, among others. We acknowledge there are multiple challenges facing farmers to voluntarily change their nutrient management practices. Increasing the amount and availability of direct support and outreach is one way to help overcome those challenges.

With the buildup of legacy phosphorus in fields and streambanks, an important additional practice in conjunction with nutrient management is to consider managing cropland to draw down nutrients that are stored in the soils. Once nutrient management is instituted on a farm, drawdown practices can be an important companion.

I.C. RFA Purpose and Explanation of Approach

The purpose of this RFA is to increase adoption of nutrient management in the WLEB by increasing

technical assistance and outreach to farmers². For example, grant recipients could hire or support field staff, or recruit other trusted advisors to help farmers develop and implement economically sound nutrient management practices to avoid loss of nutrients in surface or subsurface runoff. This can include newly applied nutrients as well as ways to drawdown phosphorus that has built up in the soil over time from past applications. Key objectives include:

- Improve management of manure or commercial fertilizers to reduce nutrient losses from agricultural livestock and/or cropland operations.
- Prevent new applications that exceed crop needs.
- Reduce phosphorus runoff to local waterways.
- Increase capacity to provide technical assistance and outreach to farmers.
- Engage landowners and farm managers who currently are not participating in conservation and nutrient management certification programs.

There are currently many programs available to farmers for soil and water conservation efforts and the amount of federal and state funding available in the WLEB has more than doubled since 2015. Optimal effectiveness of the dollars and execution of these programs is dependent on the ability to maintain and enhance local staff technical assistance capacity. Local field staff must build relationships with farmers in their community which takes time. In many cases, the demand for assistance exceeds the funding available, and staff have limited capacity to invest time in building relationships or trying to reach new farmers. Furthermore, opportunities exist to broaden the reach by leveraging non-government entities that farmers trust, such as fertilizer applicators, conservation agronomists, and certified crop advisors.

EPA works in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to direct GLRI funding to priority watersheds for phosphorus reduction, including the Maumee River watershed. GLRI funds are used by NRCS to provide technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices. EPA complements this work by funding programs at the watershed scale with various entities who can enlist and support farmers in conservation efforts. These programs can support direct implementation of conservation practices, outreach and education, and building programmatic capacity. The intent of this funding opportunity is to complement other programs and not duplicate efforts. We anticipate that building capacity at the local level will lead to greater adoption of nutrient management in the watershed and greater participation in other programs such as the NRCS WLEB Initiative, NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program, H2Ohio, Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program, and the 4R Stewardship Program. We also expect that voluntary adoption outside of these programs will occur. The level of adoption needed to reach nutrient reduction goals is far more than any one program can support, and leveraging resources to make these programs more successful will ultimately lead to achievement of the environmental goals.

For example, the RFA supports projects that do one or more of the following:

- Provide technical assistance to prevent overapplication and loss of fertilizers from farm fields, particularly manure.
- Build capacity of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide engineering services,

² For the purposes of this RFA, farmer is defined as: A person who is in general control of the farming operation on the farm, including the landowner or any eligible producer, operator, lessor, group, or nonpublic legal entity that individually or collectively has the authority to make and implement conservation planning decisions for the land involved.

administrative support, and establish relationships with their community.

- Increase participation in state and federal conservation programs and/or 4R nutrient stewardship programs.
- Support direct outreach and farmer education by extensions, industry, and farm bureaus. Target outreach to operations that are at high risk of nutrient losses or impacts to waterways.
- Develop innovative technical assistance approaches that reach new farmers, modernize technical assistance delivery, and cultivate the next generation of technical assistance providers.
- Incentivize fertilizer retailers, conservation agronomists, and certified crop advisors to promote minimal fertilizer application, precision technology, and subsurface placement of nutrients.
- Foster community learning, relationship-building, and development of peer-to-peer networks to advance regional knowledge and identify and overcome barriers.

I.D. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage

Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7 requires EPA to link proposed assistance agreements to our Strategic Plan. EPA also requires grant applicants and recipients to adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements. See EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements (www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-03/documents/epa_order_5700_7a1.pdf).

The activities to be funded under this solicitation support the [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#). Awards made under this solicitation will specifically support Goal 5 “Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities,” Objective 5.2 – Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.

I.E. Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Metrics

The applicant should consider the following questions when developing outcomes, outputs, and performance metrics:

- What are the measurable short-term and long-term environmental results the funded projects will achieve?
- How will you measure progress in achieving environmental objectives?
- How will you know whether your efforts are succeeding or need improvement?

For this RFA:

The term “**outcome**” means the result, effect or consequence that will be achieved by carrying out an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within a grant funding period. **For example:**

- Adoption of nutrient management is widely expanded in the watershed;
- Farmers’ awareness and implementation of field nutrient drawdown practices is increased;
- Nutrient loads from agricultural runoff in the WLEB is reduced;
- Improved water quality in watersheds and ultimately, Lake Erie;
- Increased communication, development of partnerships and peer networks, and trust building with local organizations, community leaders, and agricultural landowners and managers.

The term “**output**” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable over the term of the grant funding period. **For example:**

- Developing a Quality Management Plan or other quality documentation;
- Preparing and submitting award progress reports; and/or
- Outreach and event materials.

Measures of Progress and Metrics

Include numeric targets for performance metrics whenever possible. **The project must report, at a minimum, the number of acres receiving technical assistance on nutrient management, per GLRI Action Plan III measure of progress 3.1.2. A secondary measure for the project would be 3.1.1.** Indicate method used to calculate the numeric value. If unable to estimate numerical result, please indicate in your application how the project will support the measure.

The Applicable Measure of Progress from GLRI Action Plan III are:

3.1.1. *Estimated pounds of phosphorus reductions from conservation practice implementation throughout Great Lake watersheds.*

3.1.2. *Acres receiving technical or financial assistance on nutrient management in priority watersheds.*

In addition, one or more of following metrics are **encouraged to be considered** for applications to this RFA:

Number of jobs created: The number of individuals hired to directly work on the project (non-volunteers). Jobs should be directly engaged in grant activities, supported by grant funding, or leveraged funding, and shouldn't have existed prior to the grant.

Number of outreach events: The number of field days and/or training events held.

Number of farmers reached: The number of farmers who attended the event(s). This should not include government or industry representatives.

Acres with improved nutrient management: The number of cropland acres with nutrient management practices applied by participating farmers.

Total acres managed by participating farmers: The total number of cropland acres managed by participating farmers. This metric would be greater than or equal to the “acres with improved nutrient management” metric.

Number of farmers implementing new/modified practices: The number of farmers implementing new or modifying their existing nutrient management practices – with or without federal, state, local financial assistance. This should be equal to or greater than the “Number of farmers receiving government agency cost share or financial assistance” metric.

Number of participants receiving government agency cost share or financial assistance: The number of participants enrolled in a federal, state, or local government cost share or financial assistance program as a result of this project. Specify how you will track enrollment. This should be equal to or less than the “Number of farmers implementing new/modified practices” metric.

Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance leveraged: The dollar value of federal, state, or local government agency cost share or financial assistance directly leveraged by the project participants.

Acres covered by government agency technical or financial assistance: The number of acres project participants enrolled in a federal, state, or local government agency cost share or financial assistance program.

Number of nutrient management plans implemented: The number of nutrient management plans implemented by participating farmers.

Acres with new nutrient management plans: The number of acres with new nutrient management plans that are now eligible for implementation funding under USDA NRCS conservation programs or other federal, state, and local conservation programs.

I.F. Statutory Authority

GLRI’s statutory authority to award cooperative agreements is contained in the Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322. EPA has authority to award grants and cooperative agreements for planning, research, monitoring, outreach, and implementation projects in furtherance of the GLRI and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

I.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 ([Section VII](#)) to obtain the provisions.

I.H. Encouraging Minority Serving Institutions to Compete

EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available minds to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by including members of communities which may have not previously participated in such dialogues to participate in EPA programs. EPA also 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.

For this reason, 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 [Tribal College or University](#)
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 [Predominantly Black Institutions](#).

II. AWARD INFORMATION

II.A. Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards

EPA expects to award approximately \$4 million for 5-10 grants ranging from \$300,000 to \$1,000,000.

The actual award amounts and number of grants and/or cooperative agreements awarded may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious applications received, Agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards.

II.B. Award Type

EPA intends to award approximately 5-10 grants under this solicitation. However, EPA reserves the right to award projects as cooperative agreements if we feel EPA's substantial involvement will be needed. Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between EPA and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work supported. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for these cooperative agreements may include:

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 C.F.R. § 200.317 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.318, review of proposed procurements;
4. Approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award applicant);
5. Reviewing and commenting on content of subaward solicitations; and
6. Reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the applicant).

EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient. EPA staff will not direct, recommend or suggest that pass-through entities make subawards to particular entities. EPA personnel may, if requested by the successful applicant, serve as a technical advisor on the review of projects to the extent permitted by Section 10(b) of the [EPA Subaward Policy](#). EPA staff may also approve the substantive terms of subawards to ensure compliance with legal or policy requirements.

II.C. Expected Project Period

For this RFA, it is EPA's expectation that the award, including all subawards, will have a total period of performance of up to four years (e.g., March 2025 – March 2029). The expected start date for the award resulting from this RFA is **March 1, 2025**.

II.D. Pre-Award Costs

As provided in 2 C.F.R. § 1500.9, applicants may incur pre-award costs 90 calendar days prior to award provided they include such costs in their application and the costs meet the definition of pre-award costs in 2 C.F.R. § 200.458. This definition of pre-award costs are those costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the award where such costs are necessary to comply with the proposed delivery schedule or period of performance and are in conformance with the appropriate statute and cost principals. Costs incurred prior to EPA advising the successful applicant of their initial selection do not comply with this requirement. The approval of pre-award costs should be reflected in the budget period on the assistance agreement and if applicable, under a term and condition of the assistance agreement. Pre-Award costs incurred more than 90 calendar days prior to award require the approval of the EPA Award Official. Applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk (i.e., EPA is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if for any reason the applicant does not receive an award or if the award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs).

II.E. Partial Funding Provision

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund an application, 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. Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

II.F. Additional Awards

EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions. Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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

III.A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants can be a single entity or a lead entity with collaboration through subawards to other eligible applicant(s). Successful applicants may also procure services through contracts with for profit firms or individual consultants.

Applicant Eligibility: In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.469, qualified non-federal entities eligible to apply for grants include non-federal governmental entities: State agencies; any agency or instrumentality of local government; interstate agencies; and federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations. Institutions of Higher Education and non-profit organizations are also eligible to apply. Non-profit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible applicants as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611. 'For profit' organizations, federal agencies, foreign entities, and individuals are not eligible applicants.

Non-profit Definition: 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. 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.

III.B. Cost Sharing/Match Requirements

There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement as a condition of eligibility under this RFA. Although cost-sharing/matching is not required as a condition of eligibility under this competition, under Section V of this announcement EPA will take leveraging into account when evaluating proposals using the criteria in [Section V](#).

Leveraging is generally when an applicant proposes to provide its own additional funds/resources or those from third party sources to support or complement the project they are awarded under the competition which are above and beyond the EPA grant funds awarded. Any leveraged funds/resources, and their source, must be identified in the proposal. Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

Voluntary cost share is a form of leveraging. Voluntary cost sharing is when an applicant voluntarily proposes to legally commit to provide costs or contributions to support the project when a cost share is not required. Applicants who propose to use a voluntary cost share must include the costs or

contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424 and SF-424A forms. If an applicant proposes a voluntary cost share, the following apply:

1. A voluntary cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations (2 CFR 200.306).
2. A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
3. The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.
4. The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved project budget. If the proposed voluntary cost share does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR 200.

Other leveraged funding/resources that are not identified as a voluntary cost share. This form of leveraging may be met by funding from another federal grant, from an applicant's own resources, or resources from other third-party sources. This form of leveraging should not be included in the budget and the costs need not be eligible and allowable project costs under the EPA assistance agreement. While this form of leveraging should not be included in the budget, the project narrative should include a statement indicating that the applicant is expected to produce the proposed leveraging consistent with the terms of the announcement and the applicant's proposal. If applicants propose to provide this form of leveraging, EPA expects them to make the effort to secure the leveraged resources described in their proposals. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR Parts 200 or 1500.

III.C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in [Sections III.A.](#), [B.](#), and [C.](#) to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination. Only applications from eligible entities (see [Section III.A.](#)) that meet the following threshold eligibility criteria will be evaluated under these threshold criteria:

- i. Applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA must be eligible for funding.
- ii. Applications must be implemented within the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB), defined as encompassing the following USGS Hydrologic Unit Codes. Projects do not need to span the entire area; any subset within these watershed boundaries are eligible:

- 04100001 Ottawa
- 04100002 River Raisin
- 04100003 St. Joseph
- 04100004 St. Marys
- 04100005 Upper Maumee
- 04100006 Tiffin
- 04100007 Auglaize
- 04100008 Blanchard

04100009 Lower Maumee

04100010 Cedar-Portage

- iii. Applications must describe how their program will either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or restore the Great Lakes or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health.
- iv. Applications must describe how applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA will address and link to the relevant objectives and Measures of Progress identified within the current [GLRI Action Plan](#), including plans to adjust the linkages in the event of a new GLRI Action Plan being administered during the term of the award.³
- v. 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. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
- vi. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](#) as stated in [Section IV](#) of this announcement (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 announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this announcement to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.
- vii. Applications submitted outside [Grants.gov](#) and/or after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with Grants.gov or relevant [SAM.gov](#) system issues. 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 late submission.
- viii. Applications seeking funding below or above the specified amount of EPA funding will be rejected.
- ix. Applications focused only on monitoring and research will not be considered.

Ineligible activities: If an application is submitted which 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. Ineligible activities include:

- i. Research activities, meaning any systematic investigation principally for the purpose of expanding general knowledge or developing a new solution to a problem.
- ii. Activities that EPA cannot fund under the above-described statutory authority;

³ The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Action Plan III covers federal fiscal years 2020-2024. EPA expects to issue GLRI Action Plan IV covering federal fiscal years 2025 to 2029.

- iii. Applicant activities and subaward activities occurring outside the WLEB.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

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

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 IV.C. Technical Issues with Submission](#) below.

IV.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](#) 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 for additional details on the difference.

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 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](https://www.grants.gov). Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the [Grants.gov Applicant Registration](#) instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov. Please review the [Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles](#) and [Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

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

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

3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](https://www.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 for 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 for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov

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

4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov no later than **November 22, 2024, 11:59 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.

IV.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 and time (**November 22, 2024, 11:59 PM ET**):

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3. Send an email with the **{Funding Opportunity Number}** in the subject line to GLRI-RFA@epa.gov **before** the application deadline date and time and include the following:
 - a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s);
 - b. Description of the issue; and
 - c. The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, EPA may not be able to consider applications submitted outside of Grants.gov. Any application submitted after the application 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.

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

IV.D. Content and Form of Application Submission

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; and
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form: Use this to submit your Narrative Proposal, prepared as described in [Section IV.D.](#)

Supporting Materials (optional attachments, using Other Attachments Form)

1. Resumes or curriculum vitae of staff;
2. Documents of non-profit status, if appropriate;
3. Letters of Commitment from proposed coalition members or other partners;
4. Letters of Commitment from proposed sources of non-federal funding or other leveraging to the application. Cost share and leveraging of non-federal funds is not a requirement of this Funding Opportunity; however, EPA will take leveraging into account when evaluating proposals using the criteria in [Section V](#). If applicants choose to propose cost share or leveraging, they should provide letters of commitment substantiating those commitments;
5. Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable (Other Attachments Form): You may submit a copy of your organization's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or Indirect Cost Rate proposal using the Other Attachments Form as part of the application package if your proposed project budget includes indirect costs. The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is not included in the 20-page single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. See [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information.

Content of Narrative Proposal

Narrative Proposals (including the Summary Information Page, Project Narrative, Budget Narrative, Maps, Charts and Figures, and Meeting/Conference/Workshop Information) must be no more than 20 single-spaced pages in length and include the items below in the requested order. Additional pages beyond the 20-page limit will not be considered. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures must be included in the Narrative Proposal and are part of the page limit. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures that are submitted as a separate attachment will not be reviewed. **Note:** Forms SF-424, SF- 424A, 5700-54, 4700-4, negotiated indirect cost agreement, and supporting materials are **not** included within the page limit.

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

1. **Summary Information Page** (should not exceed one page). Please provide the following information on a single page:
 - a. **Funding Opportunity Number:** Identify the funding opportunity number;
 - b. **Project Title:** Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience;
 - c. **Applicant Information:** Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, and email address. Do not include private information;
 - d. **Proposed Funding Request:** The total dollar amount requested from EPA. (Make sure it is within the limits specified in [Section II.A](#), or your application will be rejected);

- e. **Project Duration:** Provide beginning and ending dates using anticipated award lifetime guidance in [Section II.C.](#);
 - f. **Brief Project Description.** Summarize the purpose of proposed program in 200 words or less in a clear and succinct manner using plain language. Describe the activities to be performed, as well as the anticipated deliverables and expected outcomes, and intended beneficiaries. Also include environmental key terms which could be used as search terms. Do not use acronyms. Should the application be selected, and a grant awarded, this description may be posted to the EPA Web. EPA reserves the right to make unilateral changes to conform to posting requirements and
 - g. **Project Location:** Specify a single, representative project location within the WLEB, consisting of an 8- or 12-digit HUC code ([Find HUC code](#)), and latitude and longitude specifying decimal degrees, even if the work will be done at multiple locations or by applicants who are located outside the WLEB or Great Lakes basin. Please include the reason for the location you identify if that is not self-evident. Please also include project-specific location information: cities, states, zip codes, and congressional districts. You can list up to five (5) of each.
2. **Project Narrative:** The Project Narrative for the proposed project must explicitly describe how the project meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III of this RFA (including the threshold eligibility criteria in [Section III.C](#)). The Project Narrative must also address items A-F below, which correspond to evaluation criteria in [Section V.B](#). The Project Narrative should be organized in the order and with the headings and information requested below. Details and associated point values for each section of the Project Narrative are described in Section V.B.
- A. **Problem Statement**
 - B. **Implementation Strategy**
 - C. **Environmental and Programmatic Results**
 - D. **Qualifications**
 - E. **Past Performance**
 - F. **Budget Narrative**

Guidance on preparing proper budget information can be found in Appendix I of this RFA, and in EPA’s Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02>. Your proposed budget should reflect the relevant aspects of your implementation strategy. Also note that if you name subrecipients and/or contractor(s) in your application to assist with the proposed project, you should pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found in [EPA’s Solicitation Clauses](#).

Applications submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from grants.gov within 2 business days after submitting the application through grants.gov, please contact EPA at GLRI-RFA@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

IV.E. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

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

1. whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements; and
2. your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
3. your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

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

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

V.A. Evaluation Process

After EPA reviews applications for threshold eligibility as described in [Section III](#), eligible applications will be reviewed by a team of federal agency staff with a working knowledge of the technical and programmatic aspects needed to rigorously evaluate the applications. All reviewers will sign a conflict-of-interest statement indicating there is no real, or perceived, conflict of interest.

V.B. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated and scored by reviewers using the criteria listed below. Each application may receive up to **100** points. Your application materials should fully address these criteria.

Criterion	Description of Evaluation Criteria	Points
Problem Statement	<p>Applications will be evaluated on their description of the problem and their rationale for the project, including the extent and quality to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The applicant illustrates an understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities facing farmers in the WLEB; b. The applicant provides insight into how existing efforts to address nutrient losses from farmland are succeeding; need improvement; or can be improved; c. The applicant explains how the project will address the stated challenges and areas of improvement, and why they expect the project will be successful. 	5
Implementation Strategy	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they describe their implementation strategy, specifically:</p> <p>General Approach (10 points): Applicants will be evaluated on the explanation of their proposed approach for the project, including the roles and responsibilities of project partners and schedule with milestones for implementation.</p> <p>Engagement Strategy (15 points): Applicants will be evaluated on their plans to engage and work with farmers or their trusted advisors, including the extent to which they demonstrate that they have enlisted the appropriate partners to effectively and efficiently implement the proposed project. Applicants that do not plan on collaborating with other groups will be evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such collaboration.</p>	25
Environmental and Programmatic Results	<p>Applicants will be evaluated on the outputs, outcomes, and anticipated long term benefits of the project including those identified in Section I. Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The applicant demonstrates the ability to support multiple types of metrics and related deliverables, including environmental, programmatic, and/or cultural indicators that will lead to achievement of nutrient reduction such as: number of farmers adopting or changing practices; number of new farmers reached; number of farmers engaged or educated on nutrient management; or additional indicators (see suggestions in Section I.E.) b. The applicant explains how project success will be evaluated and includes targets for metrics where possible. 	20

	<p>c. The applicant plans to disseminate project results to interested stakeholders and promote, grow, and sustain the farmer engagement in the long term. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating and transferring the successes and lessons learned of the project through vigorous outreach via traditional and new channels. • Facilitating and mentoring participants in sustained partnering and implementation efforts after the project ends. 	
Qualifications	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates that they are best suited to lead the project and can effectively execute it because they (or their cooperators) have:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The ability to secure and/or providing relevant staff expertise, qualifications, staff knowledge, and/or other experts experienced and qualified to successfully achieve project goals. b. The administrative capacity to provide oversight for administrative, travel, fiscal, and reporting tasks, as well as technical, outreach, and management action support to Project Subrecipients. Applicants will ensure Project Subrecipient compliance with all federal reporting and project oversight requirements, e.g., quality assurance and financial reporting. 	20
Past Performance	<p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The applicant’s past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.D. of the solicitation (3 points). 2. The applicant’s history of meeting the reporting requirements under each assistance agreement identified in response to Section IV.D of the solicitation, including (3 points): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements; • The extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements; and • if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported or not, and why progress was not made. 3. Organizational experience in successfully planning for and executing management actions, <i>i.e.</i>, milestones chart and progress monitoring, as well as management action plans for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed program (3 points). 4. Specific applicant staff expertise, qualifications, and knowledge; <i>or</i> detailed plans for applicant staff to obtain the required expertise, qualifications, and knowledge to successfully achieve the goals of 	15

	<p>the proposed program (3 points).</p> <p>5. Experience in managing subawards subject to 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Applicants may include experience managing subawards for non-federal grants to provide additional evidence of subaward management (3 points).</p> <p><i>Note: In evaluating applicants under Items 1 and 2 of this criterion, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and will also consider relevant information from other sources, including Agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant).</i></p> <p><i>If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information for federal grants, please provide information about any award management for relevant previous grants.</i></p> <p><i>If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance, this must be indicated in the application which will receive a neutral score for these subfactors; a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points. If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors, or if EPA identifies previous grants to your organization, EPA will perform the review based on information in its grant records.</i></p>	
Budget Narrative	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the clarity of the provided budget narrative (5 points), the overall cost effectiveness of the project (5 points), and the applicant’s plans for ensuring timely expenditure of awarded funds (5 points).</p> <p>The proposed budget narrative should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide a detailed, consistent breakdown of all proposed costs and their application within the Narrative Proposal; b. Establish the reasonableness, necessity, and allowability of all proposed costs; c. Demonstrate that the application is cost-effective, through the consideration of factors such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates of organizational costs, indirect costs, and overhead; • Ability to perform tasks within the proposed budget; • Funds leveraged; and d. Clearly outline the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be disbursed and/or expended in a timely and efficient manner within the project period, such as (but not limited to): specific software, management actions, and/or applicant staff expertise. 	15

V.C. Review and Selection Process

Applications will first be evaluated against the Threshold Eligibility Criteria listed in [Section III.C](#). Only those applications which meet all the threshold criteria will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by a review panel composed of federal agency staff.

Final funding decisions will be made by the selection official.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

VI.A. Award Notification

EPA anticipates successful applicants will be notified by telephone, electronic, or postal mail. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or to the project contact listed in the application. This notification informs you that your application has been selected and is being recommended for award. It is **not** an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the EPA Region 5 Grants Office. Only a grants management officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. Selection does not guarantee an award will be made, because issues discovered during the award process may affect EPA's ability to make the award to an applicant. In addition, a successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants management officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

VI.B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Successful applicants will be required to adhere to federal grants requirements, particularly those found in applicable Cost Principles ([2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E](#)), Administrative Requirements ([2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500](#)), and Audit Requirements ([2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F](#)). This includes government wide requirements pertaining to accounting standards, lobbying, minority, or woman owned business enterprises, publication, meetings, construction, and disposition of property. Additional EPA regulations are codified in [Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#). A listing and description of general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at [EPA Policies and Guidance for Grants](#).

Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans

Quality system documentation (i.e., quality assurance project plans or quality management plans) is required for grants involving the use or collection of environmental data. EPA must have this documentation within 90 days of award, and it must be approved before grantees commence activities associated with the use or collection of environmental data. Applicants should budget time and resources for developing quality system documentation. Applicants that do not do so may have to fund the quality system documentation and any necessary project changes out of their own funds. A

significant percentage of EPA's previously awarded GLRI grants required quality system documentation. Please review specific guidance on GLNPO's quality management and [quality assurance](#).

Build America, Buy America

Applicants should be aware that if their applications include using Federal funds for a project, including projects carried out by subrecipients, that includes the purchase of goods, products, and materials on any form of construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States for identified EPA financial assistance funding programs, they must comply with the following Term and Condition if they are selected for award. Applicants should direct questions about this requirement to the program Point of Contact listed in Section VII for the Notice of Funding Opportunity Notice.

- a. The recipient is subject to the Buy America Sourcing requirements under the Build America, Buy America provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (P.L. 117-58, §§70911-70917) for the types of infrastructure projects under the EPA Program and activities specified in the chart, "Environmental Protection Agency's Identification of Federal Financial Assistance Infrastructure Programs Subject to the Build America Buy America Provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act." None of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project of infrastructure unless all iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project are produced in the United States. The Buy America preference requirement applies to an entire infrastructure project, even if it is funded by both Federal and non-Federal funds. The recipient must implement these requirements in its procurements, and these requirements must flow down to all subawards and contracts at any tier entered by recipients or subrecipients. For legal definitions and sourcing requirements, the recipient must consult EPA's Build America, Buy America website and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Memorandum M-22-11, Initial Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy America Preference in Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Infrastructure.
- b. When supported by rationale provided in IIJA §70914, the recipient may submit a waiver to EPA on its own behalf or on behalf of subrecipients. Recipients should request guidance on the submission instructions of an EPA waiver request from the EPA Point of Contact listed in Section VII of the funding opportunity announcement. A list of approved EPA waivers (general applicability and project specific) is available on the EPA Build America, Buy America website.
- c. For questions regarding the applicability of the Build America, Buy America Act requirements to this announcement or if there is an approved waiver in place, please contact the EPA Point of Contact listed in [Section VII](#) of the funding opportunity announcement.

VI.C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.329, the award recipient will agree to submit performance reports that include brief information on each of the following areas: 1) A comparison of actual accomplishments to the outputs/outcomes established in the assistance agreement workplan for the period; 2) The reasons why established outputs/outcomes were not met; and 3) Additional pertinent information, including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high-unit costs.

Additionally, the recipient agrees to inform EPA as soon as problems, delays, or adverse conditions which will materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement workplan are known.

1. **Semi-annual progress reports:** Starting with the first full reporting period after the issuance of the award, the recipient shall submit semi-annual progress reports (electronically) to the EPA Project Officer by **April 15 but no later than April 30** and by **October 15 but no later than October 30** of each year, through the life of the assistance agreement. Reporting periods shall be the 6-month periods from October 1 to March 31 and April 1 to September 30. Progress reports shall document progress in writing and in pictures, for the project during the immediately preceding reporting period and must contain sufficient information in order to ascertain that the workplan is being carried out as specified in the assistance agreement. Progress reports shall describe all the following that apply:

a. Work accomplished for the period; quantifying results achieved. Specify any incremental and cumulative results achieved during the reporting period for all applicable GLRI Action Plan measures and with any direction provided by your EPA Project Officer and the GLRI Action Plan Measures Reporting Plan as periodically updated by the EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding>, particularly:

- b. Object Class Category changes;
- c. Corrective actions;
- d. Projected new work;
- e. Percent completion of scheduled work;
- f. Percent of budgeted amounts spent;
- g. Any change in principal investigator;
- h. Any change needed in project period;
- i. Date and amount of latest drawdown request; and
- j. Delays or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement workplan.

The EPA Project Officer must be able to determine that all mission support products, services, information or data generation and use, including technology development and verification, is performed in accordance with EPA policies and the assistance agreement. To develop your progress report, you may use the outline at <http://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding>.

2. **Final Report:** The Final Report shall incorporate project outputs and summarize the nature and extent of the project, methodologies employed, significant events and experiences, a compilation of the data collected, and results achieved. Results shall include the cumulative results achieved during the project period for all applicable GLRI Action Plan measures described in element 1 of the Semiannual Progress Report condition above. The final report shall also include analysis of the data, conclusions, and recommendations. The final report shall incorporate photo documentation of the project and environmental progress under the project at appropriate phases, and appropriate illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, and maps to express the data and findings. In order for the report writing costs to be eligible under the award, they must be incurred before the project end date. Electronic and paper versions of the **Final Report shall be submitted no later than 120 days after the end of the project period**. All work products shall carry attribution to the U.S. EPA Great

Lakes Restoration Initiative for funding assistance and should also acknowledge significant contributions by others. If applicable, the Final Report shall include:

- a. A database (Excel or similar format) of field and laboratory data including but not limited to latitude-longitude, date, time, field observations, parameter data, laboratory analysis, QA duplicates/replicates; and
- b. Model files including input-output data, model code, model output, and peripheral and post-processing utilities.

3. Subaward Performance Reporting

The recipient must report on its subaward monitoring activities under [2 CFR 200.332\(d\)](#). Examples of items that must be reported if the pass-through entity has the information available are:

- a. Summaries of results of reviews of financial and programmatic reports;
- b. Summaries of findings from site visits and/or desk reviews to ensure effective subrecipient performance;
- c. Environmental results the subrecipient achieved;
- d. Summaries of audit findings and related pass-through entity management decisions; and
- e. Actions the pass-through entity has taken to correct deficiencies such as those specified at [2 CFR 200.332\(e\)](#), [2 CFR 200.208](#) and the [2 CFR 200.339](#) Remedies for Noncompliance.

VII. AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

For any administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact EPA via email at GLRI-RFA@epa.gov. All questions must be received in writing via email with the reference line referring to this RFA (RE: WLEB Technical Assistance) by **November 15, 2024**. All questions and answers will be posted at this link (<https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/2024-notice-funding-opportunity-technical-assistance-and-outreach-farmers>). Details about informational webinar(s) for this RFA will also be posted on the [RFA website](#). We encourage all applicants to sign up for our mailing list and register with us at: <https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-news-email-list>.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

In developing the application, the applicant may find the following documents and webpages helpful:

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Program website: <https://www.glri.us/>
- GLRI Action Plan III: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/documents/glri-action-plan-3-201910-30pp.pdf>
- EPA FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan
- EPA Lake Erie Lakewide Action and Management: <https://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/lake-erie-lamps-and-associated-reports>
- U.S. Action Plan for Lake Erie: <https://www.epa.gov/glwqa/us-action-plan-lake-erie>
- EPA Lake Erie Nutrients website: <https://www.epa.gov/glwqa/lake-erie-nutrients>

Appendix I: Budget Narrative Guidance

This section of the workplan is a detailed description of the budget found in the SF-424A and must provide adequate explanation of how EPA funds will be used. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs.

If the project budget includes any voluntary cost-share, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed description of how the applicant will obtain the cost-share and how the cost-share funding will be used. If EPA accepts an offer for a voluntary cost-share, applicants must meet their sharing commitment as a legal condition of receiving EPA funding. If the proposed cost-share is to be provided by a third-party, a letter of commitment is required. Any form of cost-share included in the project budget must also be included on the SF 424 and SF 424A. Please see [Section III.B.](#) of this RFA for more detailed information on cost-share.

Applicants should use the following instructions, budget object class descriptions, and example table to complete the Budget Narrative section of the workplan. Additional information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-05/documents/applicant-budget-development-guidance.pdf>. Note: Use only whole dollar amounts.

- A. **Personnel - List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period.** This category includes only direct costs for the salaries of those individuals who will perform work directly for the project (generally, paid employees of the applicant organization). If the applicant organization is including staff time (in-kind services) as a cost-share, this should be included as Personnel costs. Personnel costs do not include: (1) costs for services of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the “Other” category; or (3) effort that is not directly in support of the proposed project, which may be covered by the organization’s negotiated indirect cost rate. The budget narrative must identify the personnel category type by Full Time Equivalent (FTE), including percentage of FTE for part-time employees, number of personnel proposed for each category, and the estimated funding amounts.
- B. **Fringe Benefits - Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included.** Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefit plans.
- C. **Travel - Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips in-State and out-of-State and international (include specific international locations), number of travelers, and other costs for each type of travel.** Travel may be integral to the purpose of the proposed project (e.g., inspections) or related to proposed project activities (e.g., attendance at meetings). Travel costs do not include: (1) costs for travel of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) travel costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the “Other” category.
- D. **Equipment - Identify each item to be purchased which has an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year.** Equipment also includes accessories necessary to make the equipment operational. Equipment does not include: (1) equipment planned to be

leased/rented, including lease/purchase agreement; or (2) equipment service or maintenance contracts. These types of proposed costs should be included in the “Other” category. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 should be categorized as supplies, pursuant to 2 CFR Part 200 and or 2 CFR Part 1500. The budget narrative must include an itemized listing of all equipment proposed under the project.

- E. **Supplies** - “Supplies” means all tangible personal property other than “equipment”. The budget narrative should identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). Non-tangible goods and services associated with supplies, such as printing service, photocopy services, and rental costs should be included in the “Other” category.
- F. **Contractual** - Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose and estimated cost. Contractual/consultant services are those services to be carried out by an individual or organization, other than the applicant, in the form of a procurement relationship. Leased or rented goods (equipment or supplies) should be included in the “Other” category. The applicant should list the proposed contract activities along with a brief description of the scope of work or services to be provided, proposed duration, and proposed procurement method (competitive or noncompetitive), if known.
- G. **Other** - List each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of its cost. This category should include only those types of direct costs that do not fit in any of the other budget categories. Examples of costs that may be in this category are: insurance; rental/lease of equipment or supplies; equipment service or maintenance contracts; printing or photocopying; rebates; and subaward costs. Subawards (e.g., subgrants) are a distinct type of cost in this category. The term “subaward” means an award of financial assistance (money or property) by any legal agreement made by the recipient to an eligible subrecipient. This term does not include procurement purchases, technical assistance in the form of services instead of money, or other assistance in the form of revenue sharing, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, or direct appropriations. Subcontracts are not subawards and belong in the contractual category. Applicants must provide the aggregate amount they propose to issue as subaward work and a description of the types of activities to be supported.
- H. **Indirect Charges** - If indirect charges are budgeted, indicate the approved rate and base. Indirect costs are those incurred by the grantee for a common or joint purpose that benefit more than one cost objective or project and are not readily assignable to specific cost objectives or projects as a direct cost. In order for indirect costs to be allowable, the applicant must have a federal or state negotiated indirect cost rate (e.g., fixed, predetermined, final or provisional), or must have submitted a proposal to the cognizant federal or state agency. Examples of Indirect Cost Rate calculations are shown below:
- a. Personnel (Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs)
 - b. Personnel and Fringe (Indirect Rate x Personnel & Fringe = Indirect Costs)
 - c. Total Direct Costs (Indirect Rate x Total direct costs = Indirect Costs)
 - d. Direct Costs minus distorting or other factors such as contracts and equipment
 - e. (Indirect Rate x (total direct cost – distorting factors) = Indirect Costs)

Example Budget Table

	EPA Funding	Cost-Share
Personnel		
(1) Project Manager @ \$40/hr x 10 hrs/week x 52 wks		\$20,800
(5) Project Staff @ \$30/hr x 40 hrs/week x 40 wks	\$244,000	
TOTAL PERSONNEL	\$244,000	\$20,800
Fringe Benefits		
20% of Salary and Wages - Retirement, Health Benefits, FICA, SUI	\$48,800 (20% of \$244,000)	\$4,160 (20% of 20,800)
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	\$48,800	\$4,160
Travel		
<i>In State travel for Project Manager and staff: (Specify the mileage, per diem, and other costs for each type of travel)</i>	\$3,300	
TOTAL TRAVEL	\$3,300	
Equipment		
<i>Trash Skimming Boat</i>	\$610,000	
TOTAL EQUIPMENT	\$610,000	
Supplies		
<i>Office and related supplies to support training</i>	\$400	
<i>Office computer and printer</i>	\$2,500	
TOTAL SUPPLIES	\$2,900	
Contractual		
<i>ABC Support Services Contract: (Specify duration and work to be performed or services provided and type of contract)</i>	\$20,000	
TOTAL CONTRACTUAL	\$20,000	
Other		
<i>Project Vehicle (leased)</i>	\$12,000	
TOTAL OTHER	\$12,000	
Indirect Charges		
<i>Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate = 10% (Indirect Rate x Personnel) = Indirect Costs; as negotiated)</i>	\$26,480	
TOTAL INDIRECT	\$26,480	
TOTAL EPA REQUESTED FUNDING	\$967,480	\$24,960
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$992,440	

** Any voluntary cost-share funds, while not required under this RFA, must also be included on the SF-424A as detailed in Section IV of this RFA. Federal funds are not allowed to be used for cost-share; please identify the source of the cost-share in your budget narrative.

Expeditious Spending and Sufficient Progress in the use of GLRI Funds: Include an explanation of how, if the applicant is awarded a grant, they will ensure that the funding will be used expeditiously.