

## LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY

**Federal Agency Name:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Region 1

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF)

**Announcement Type:** Request for Applications (RFA)

**Funding Opportunity Number:** EPA-I-R1-LISCIF-22-01

**Assistance Listing Number:** 66.437

### Important Dates

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Deadline for submitting questions via email about the RFA</b>                                                                                                                                                                          | 3 weeks after posting                                                               |
| Information Session                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 4 weeks after posting: See <a href="#">Long Island Sound Study EJWG</a> for details |
| <b>Closing Date and Deadline for submitting applications.</b> Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov ( <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> ) (see <b>Section IV</b> for details.) | 9/12/2022, 11:59 Eastern Standard Time (EDT)                                        |
| <b>Notification</b> to selected applicant.                                                                                                                                                                                                | 60 days after RFA closing date                                                      |
| <b>Announcement</b> of award.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>November 2022</b>                                                                |

**NOTE:** Prior to naming a contractor or subrecipient in your application, please carefully review the “Contracts and Subawards” solicitation clause which can be found in Section IV. D. i. of this RFA.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58, 2021 (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or (BIL), provides more than \$106 million in funds to the EPA Long Island Sound Geographic Program for fiscal years 2022-2026. This RFA is part of EPA’s commitment to implementing BIL in an effective and timely manner.

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### I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

#### I.A. Background for Long Island Sound Study

Since the federal Clean Water Act became law in 1972, investments in water pollution control programs have led to measurable improvements in the water quality of Long Island Sound (the Sound). Obvious sources of pollution were controlled through permit programs. Tidal wetlands were protected, wastewater treatment plants improved, and industrial discharges controlled. However, to fully restore the health of the Sound, a cooperative effort focusing on the overall ecosystem was needed. As a result, EPA, New York, and Connecticut formed the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) in 1985, a bi-state partnership consisting of federal and state agencies, user groups, concerned organizations, and individuals dedicated to restoring and protecting the Sound.

In 1994, the LISS developed a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) to protect and restore Long Island Sound. This plan was revised in 2015 with 20 ambitious ecosystem targets to drive further progress through 2035. The 2015 revision identified three underlying principles to integrate into all LISS efforts: 1) resiliency to climate change, 2) long-term sustainability, and 3) environmental justice. In 2020 LISS formalized the Environmental Justice Work Group (EJWG), which meets quarterly and includes a subgroup focused on outreach and engagement with underserved communities. The EPA Region 1 co-chair, Bessie Wright ([Wright.Bessie@epa.gov](mailto:Wright.Bessie@epa.gov)), is the lead contact for applicants with questions regarding this announcement.

## **I.B. Goals**

Environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the adverse environmental and human health risks or harms resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies. Meaningful involvement means people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health; the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process; and decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

All groups must have access to healthy air and clean water. All communities must benefit from programs to protect and restore Long Island Sound and have equitable access and influence in the decision-making process. To achieve these goals, special efforts that target traditionally underserved communities and outreach and involvement programs that work with community organizations to address their needs must be implemented. An informed, involved community that reflects the full diversity of the region is needed to ensure the stewardship of the Long Island Sound. EJ must be a priority reflected in how partners implement the CCMP. Federal, state, local government, and NGO partners should incorporate EJ as an integral part of ongoing work using a variety of approaches.

This RFA to select an organization to manage the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund (LISCIF) is key to meeting LISS's EJ goals and to achieving the purposes of BIL. LISCIF is a new program being developed by LISS to meet the CCMP's EJ goal by directing funds and technical assistance to communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities. EPA will provide funds to LISCIF annually to be used for awards under this competitive opportunity. EPA expects to provide up to \$5 million to cover three years for the development of the competitive grant program, two rounds of pass-through funds in years two and three of the award, and the technical assistance and support program for underserved communities. Applicant activities and subaward projects funded under this RFA must be carried out within the LISS geographic region (see map in Appendix A) or, in the case outreach and education, include communities that use the Long Island Sound for recreation, sustenance, or economic activities. Applicant activities and subaward projects funded under this RFA must address common challenges and the priorities identified within the LISS boundaries (see LISS CCMP at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net).) 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 \(T&C\) Making and Managing Subawards](#).

EPA is seeking cost-effective applications from eligible applicants to:

1. Develop and administer a competitive subaward program focused on activities that address challenges and opportunities facing communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities within the scope of the LISS CCMP:
  - a. EPA expects roughly \$1.5 million of funding will be available for the competitive grant program each year of the competitive grant program.
  - b. EPA expects funding for each subaward may be up to \$100,000; however, applicants may justify a different subaward range as part of their application narratives. Subawards funded under the

cooperative agreement must be completed prior to the end of the cooperative agreement project period as required by the terms and conditions of EPA's cooperative agreement.

- c. The environmental and financial benefits of the competitive grant program should be targeted to communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities within the LIS geographic boundaries (see Appendix A). As such, all applications should be community driven or community led.
  - d. The applicant should describe how they will ensure their competitive subaward program will solicit applications for subawards for eligible projects and activities. Eligible subaward projects and activities include:
    - i. Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction
    - ii. Restoring habitat within the [Important Coastal Habitat Types](#) targeted by LISS
    - iii. Projects that foster diverse, balance and abundant populations of fish, birds and wildlife
    - iv. Public engagement, knowledge and stewardship
    - v. Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability
    - vi. Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects
    - vii. Community-based science projects
    - viii. Data management and integration projects
    - ix. Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and EPA approves, that are consistent with the purposes of this RFA and are authorized by section 119 of the Clean Water Act.
  - e. The applicant should describe how they will ensure that projects and activities included in subawards issued under the competitive subaward program will address and specifically link to Implementation Action(s) (IAs) in the [Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan 2020-2024 Update](#) (see LISS CCMP at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net)).
  - f. The applicant should indicate how they will ensure compliance with Federal requirements for "Subrecipient Monitoring and Management in 2 C.F.R. § 200.331 through 2 C.F.R. § 200.333, EPA's "Establishing and Managing Subawards" General Term and Condition. EPA requirements for reporting environmental and/or programmatic output, outcome, and metrics are for the competitive subaward program and all subawards. This includes identifying how negotiated metrics will be collected from subrecipients and reported to EPA.
2. Develop and implement an outreach and support program focused on involving communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities and providing them technical support as necessary<sup>1</sup> Applicants should discuss how they will be responsive in adjusting their outreach and support program in response to the results of the needs assessment. EPA anticipates that the applicant will:
- a. Provide trainings, workshops, and other educational opportunities/resources that will help organizations plan, design, and implement projects (examples) broadly accessible to underserved communities, such as:
    - i. organizational chart development;
    - ii. bookkeeping;
    - iii. grant administration and reporting;
    - iv. networking;
    - v. facilitation;
    - vi. technical environmental data collection;
    - vii. QAPP development and compliance;
    - viii. GIS mapping;

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<sup>1</sup> . LISS is conducting an EJ needs assessment throughout the geographic area and the results will be provided to the successful applicant to assist them with this activity.

- ix. database creation and maintenance; and
- x. permitting and regulatory compliance.
- b. Ensure compliance with EPA requirements for reporting environmental and/or programmatic outputs, outcomes, and metrics related to the outreach and support program.
- c. Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and EPA approves, that are consistent with the purposes of this RFA and authorized by section 119 of the Clean Water Act.

Applicants should demonstrate their ability and approach for managing an LISCIF by describing how they have experience or expertise working with communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities; how their efforts would result in improved environmental justice integration into LISS implementation; and how they would use these funds. Eligible applicants can be a single entity or a lead entity with collaboration through contracts and/or subawards. For example, a local entity that specializes in EJ could issue a subaward to another entity with a more administrative and financial management background. Trainings, workshops, and other educational opportunities can be completed by the applicant or through procurement contractors or eligible subrecipients (see <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/> for ideas or potential collaboration). All subawards must comply with Appendix B of [EPA's Subaward Policy](#) and contractors must be procured competitively as required by the Procurement Standards in 2 C.F.R. Parts 200 and 1500. Additional guidance on compliance is available in EPA's [Subaward Frequent Questions](#) and [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) (link).

Applicants are encouraged to incorporate adaptive management into their applications.

For purposes of the competition and the evaluation of applications, “underserved communities” per [Executive Order 13985](#) means “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of ‘equity’.”

### **I.C. LISCIF Subaward Competition Elements**

Consistent with achieving the goals described above, and the programmatic and environmental results identified in **Section I.D**, activities to be performed by the grant applicant may include, but are not limited to:

1. Developing and implementing an outreach and engagement program to potential LISCIF applicants that is targeted to communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities within the LISS geographic boundaries;
2. Developing and implementing a methodology to ensure that the financial and environmental benefits of the competitive grant program are targeted to communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities. Applicants can utilize review criteria, subrecipient eligibility, or any other methods that are in compliance with the [EPA Subaward Policy to achieve this goal](#).
3. Conducting a robust and transparent process for soliciting subaward proposals, including working with EPA and LISS Environmental Justice Work Group (EJWG) to prepare, advertise, and manage annual RFPs that address the priorities identified in this RFA; that support the EJ goals defined in LISS's CCMP; respond to input from EPA and LISS EJWG; consider the needs of communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities within the Long Island Sound watershed; and include transparent review criteria and clear, simplified processes for submitting proposals as well as evaluating and selecting subaward proposals;
4. Convening and organizing expert panels to review subaward proposals and advise on selections;

5. Awarding and managing subawards, including ensuring compliance by subrecipients with all regulatory fiscal, administrative, programmatic, and reporting requirements;
6. Assisting subrecipients in meeting all administrative requirements (reporting, accounting);
7. Convening at least one annual meeting for subrecipients and LISS partners to update and learn from one another;
8. Managing subawards to achieve project activities and outcomes and to comply with budgets, timelines, and federal and funding source requirements;
9. Submitting electronic semiannual performance reports. Semi-annual reports, and brief updates as necessary, will summarize environmental as well as EJ outputs and outcomes of projects implemented through the subawards and outreach/support actions under this award. Additionally, develop a method for measuring success for the LISS program over time;
10. Expanding the presence and visibility of LISS and the LISS “brand” throughout the LISS region through clearly identifying the LISCIF as an EPA-funded component of LISS; and
11. Other activities that the applicant believes will achieve the goals of the RFA provided those activities are eligible for funding under CWA § 119.

#### **I.D. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs**

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](http://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 support Goal 5 “Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities,” Objective 5.2 – Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds; Goal 2 “Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights,” Objective 2.2 – Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA’s Programs, Policies, and Activities; and Goal 1 “Tackle the Climate Crisis,” Objective 1.2 – Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts of the [Strategic Plan](#).

#### **Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Metrics**

The LISCIF is intended to provide EPA funding for increasing the number of involvement/representation projects as well as local, on-the-ground projects that best support implementation of the LISS goals and priorities laid out in its CCMP directly and substantially benefitting communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities. In addition to establishing a regional vision and goals, the CCMP also articulates desired outcomes, priority actions, and a framework for target-setting over five-year periods that together provide a pathway for LISS and its many diverse partners to work towards a thriving and resilient region. EPA recognizes that conditions in the region will change over time, in part in response to LISS partners’ efforts, and EPA expects the LISCIF to take an adaptive management approach that both creates and responds to experience and data.

For this RFA:

1. 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 this**

***RFA, “Desired Outcomes” describe the conditions that EPA aims to achieve for the LISS region that are found in the LISS CCMP. Efforts to achieve these outcomes will steer the actions necessary to meet overarching LISS specific five-year targets. These outcomes include:***

- a. All communities benefit from programs to protect and restore Long Island Sound and have equitable access and influence in the decision-making process;
  - b. Contaminant and nutrient loads from land-based sources in the watershed of Long Island Sound are reduced;
  - c. Negative impacts of contaminants and nutrients in the waters and sediments of Long Island Sound and tributaries/embayments are reduced;
  - d. System resiliency and function are maintained by protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitats;
  - e. System resiliency and function are maintained by diverse, balanced, and abundant populations of fishes, birds, and other wildlife;
  - f. The public is educated and involved in restoration and protection of habitats and living resources;
  - g. Knowledge of habitats and living resources is advanced through monitoring, assessment, and research;
  - h. Residents have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to protect the Sound. If not, they are educated in order to be able to participate fully and equally;
  - i. Future generations have the knowledge and skills to become leaders and stewards for the Sound;
  - j. Policy makers, resource managers, and other stakeholders have the informational resources to undertake collaborative efforts to restore and protect the Sound;
  - k. New and existing development is sustainable and resilient;
  - l. Public access and sustainable economic activities along the waterfront are enhanced, balanced, and resilient;
  - m. The scientific understanding of the Sound to support management is increased through strengthened research, monitoring, assessment, mapping, and modelling;
  - n. Actions are implemented through coordinated strategies by all levels of government and diverse stakeholders; and
  - o. Implementation is adapted and improved through the application of new information and knowledge.
2. 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 this RFA, “Outputs (Actions)” are detailed activities that LISS and our partners will undertake to meet overarching five-year quantitative targets, work towards accomplishing desired outcomes, and ultimately achieve the 2015 regional vision and goals.*** Outputs for this RFA should reflect that expected activities in Sections 1.B. and 1.C. of this announcement. Examples include trainings/workshops/other activities completed as part of the outreach and support program, the RFP developed to solicit applications to the competitive sub-award program, and technical/administrative assistance provided to subrecipients.
- a. The term “Performance Metrics” means measures that offer insights into long-term progress, will be the mechanism to track progress on successful process and outcome strategies, and will provide the basis for lessons to inform future applicants. ***For this RFA “Performance Measures are “specific and quantitative metrics for results that LISS will strive to achieve over the next five years, and that will be developed based on each LISS goal for each five-year period.***

The applicant should consider the following questions when developing outcome and output measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

1. What are the measurable short-term and long-term environmental justice and environmental results the funded projects will achieve?
2. How will you measure progress in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes)?
3. How will you know whether existing efforts are succeeding or need improvement?

### **I.E. Statutory Authority**

Authorization for LISS funding is contained in Section 119 (d) of the Clean Water Act, (as amended by America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, Public Law 115-270), which gives EPA the authority to award grants and cooperative agreements to carry out the LISS, including planning, research, monitoring, outreach, and implementation projects within the LISS geographic area. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58 (IIJA) provides more than \$106 million in funds to the EPA Long Island Sound Geographic Program for fiscal years 2022-2026.

### **I.F. 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.

## **II. AWARD INFORMATION**

### **II.A. Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards**

EPA expects to make one award for up to \$5 million to an applicant to conduct the Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund competitive grant program over a five-year period, subject to the availability of appropriated funding and Agency priorities. EPA plans to fund a single entity under one incrementally funded cooperative agreement to coordinate and manage the LISCIF on behalf of EPA, contingent upon funding availability, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. While EPA expects future funding to become available, applicants should be aware that if future appropriations do not become available or significant changes are made to EPA's funding authority, EPA may be required to modify or cancel awards made under this announcement and determine whether and how to proceed. EPA expressly reserves the right to make no award.

Incremental awards add funds to an existing award that has been approved for a higher amount than has been obligated thus far. Funds may only be added to the existing approved budget in the existing approved object class categories. Incremental funding is not guaranteed rather it is contingent on a range of factors – i.e., funding availability in subsequent years, the applicant's performance history and programmatic priorities defined by the Region. The applicant must provide budget plans that detail the award activities to be performed during each project period.

EPA expects the applicant of this award to participate in appropriate LISS committee and subcommittee meetings, including providing updates and periodic reports as needed to them and to EPA.

### **II.B. Award Type**

EPA intends to award one cooperative agreement 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 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:

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); and

5. review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the applicant).

EPA personnel do not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the successful applicant or to direct, recommend or direct that the pass-through entity make a subaward to a particular organization. EPA personnel may, if requested by the successful applicant, participate in selection panels 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 will have a total period of performance of up to five years (October 2022 – September 2027) with funding provided on an annual basis for up to three years. No commitment of funding will be made beyond the first year. The expected start date for the award resulting from this RFA is **11/30/2022**.

### **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 principles. 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).

## **III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

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

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

In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.437, eligible applicants under this RFA are state, local, and tribal governments; institutions of higher education; nonprofit institutions and organizations; and interstate agencies.

Consistent with the definition of nonprofit organization at 2 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 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 non-profit organization(s) as defined by 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

For-profit organizations and private businesses, federal agencies, and individuals are not eligible to apply; additionally, 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 to apply.

### **III.B. Cost Sharing/Match Requirements**

BIL authorizes EPA to waive cost-sharing requirements in CWA § 119(d)(3) for LISS grants and cooperative agreements and EPA Regions 1 has waived those requirements. No matching funds are required under this competition.

Although cost sharing/matching is not required as a condition of eligibility under this competition, under Section V of this announcement EPA will evaluate applications based on a leveraging criterion (see Section V of the announcement).

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 (See Section IV of the announcement). 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. 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 C.F.R. § 200.306).
2. A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
3. The applicant 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 applicant 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 C.F.R. Part 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 grant workplan 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 C.F.R. Part 200.

### **III.C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria**

Only applications from eligible entities (see **Section III.A** above) that meet the following threshold eligibility criteria will be evaluated. Under these threshold criteria:

1. Applicant activities and subaward projects funded under this RFA must be eligible for funding under CWA § 119 and carried out within the LISS geographic region (see map in Appendix A) OR, in the case outreach and education, include communities that use the Long Island Sound for recreation, sustenance, or economic activities.

2. Applicant activities and subaward projects funded under this RFA must include the priorities identified within the LISS boundaries (see CCMP at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net/](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net/) and map in **Appendix A**).
3. Applications must describe how they will ensure that projects and activities included in subawards issued under the competitive subaward program will address and specifically link to Implementation Action(s) (IAs) in the [Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan 2020-2024 Update](#) (see LISS CCMP at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net/](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net/)).
4. 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 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

#### **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 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](#)<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

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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>.

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 Question](#) 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 critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

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

## 2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

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

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

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

## 3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click 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 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 no later than **9/12/2022 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:

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 EPA-I-R1-LISCIF-22-01 in the subject line to [wright.bessie@epa.gov](mailto:wright.bessie@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, 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
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form: Use this to submit your Project Narrative, prepared as described in Section IV
6. Budget Detail (Budget Narrative Attachment Form): Guidance on preparing proper budget information can be found Appendix 2 on pages 36-39 of 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 budget detail should reflect the relevant aspects of your budget narrative. 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 Section IV.
7. 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 15-page single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. See [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information about indirect cost rates.

## **Support Materials (optional attachments, using Other Attachments Form)**

1. Resumes or curriculum vitae of staff that will be working on the LISCIF.
2. Documents of non-profit status if appropriate.
3. Letters of Commitment from proposed sources of non-federal leveraging to the application.

**Content of Narrative Application:** The Project Narrative must include a cover page and items a – i below and address the corresponding evaluation criteria in Section V.A. The Project Narrative must address each individual ranking criterion in Section V.B. Additional pages beyond the 15-page limit will not be considered. Forms SF-424, SF-424A, 5700-54, 4700-4, the budget detail, negotiated indirect cost agreement, and supporting materials are not included within the page limit.

## **Cover Page**

1. Title
2. Name of entity Applying for Funding
3. Key Personnel and Contact Information
4. Abstract/Summary (400 words or less)

## **a. Program Approach and Organizational Capability:**

Demonstrate how you would undertake a subaward grants program to encompass the LISCIF Subaward Competition elements described in **Section I.C.** including how you would increase participation in communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities, which are the focus areas for this program. Demonstrate how your team is capable of managing the program (e.g., expertise and/or access to expertise, administrative/fiscal capacity and efficiency; communication and facilitation skills, access to technology, etc.), including ensuring compliance with the Subrecipient Monitoring and Management requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and EPA's Establishing and Managing Subawards General Term and Condition. Demonstrate how you would work with EPA's LISS management team to be available for reporting and participating in committee meetings.

Demonstrate how you plan to work with the existing LISS (see About Us at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net)) to contribute to achieving the goals and priorities in the LISS CCMP for all communities to benefit from programs to protect and restore Long Island Sound and have equal access to the decision-making process.

**b. EJ Experience and Expertise:**

Demonstrate your entity's familiarity with and understanding of challenges and opportunities facing the LISS regional communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities, and including how existing efforts are succeeding or need improvement and the specific approaches you would take to address them through the LISCIF.

Describe your experience, familiarity, and ability to work with and engage the participation of underserved communities and community-based organizations, including identifying and achieving buy-in of key community and opinion leaders in underserved communities, and in educating such communities as necessary to ensure they are able to effectively and equally participate in environmental issues.

Demonstrate how the competitive grant program and outreach/support program (project) will address the disproportionate and adverse (see below) human health, environmental, climate-related and other cumulative impacts, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the underserved communities described in Section I of the solicitation and within the scope of the LISS CCMP. As part of this evaluation, applications will be evaluated based on: how the project benefit the underserved communities including those that have experienced a lack of resources or other impediments to addressing the impacts identified above that affect their community and; the extent to which the project addresses engagement with these communities, especially local residents in these communities who will be affected by the project, to ensure their meaningful participation in LISS.

Disproportionate and adverse environmental, human health, climate-related and other cumulative impacts related to the scope of the LISS CCMP, as well the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, may result when greater pollution burdens and/or consequences, and the impact of them, are more likely to affect or have affected the underserved communities described in this solicitation. The impacts may result from various factors including but not limited to being a function of historical trends and policy decisions. Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards; unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status; cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes; and degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation.

**c. Past Performance in Program Capability and Environmental Results**

Submit a list of 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:

- i. whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;
- ii. 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;

- iii. 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; and
- iv. whether any of these agreements included subawards subject to the Subrecipient Monitoring and Management requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and will 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.

**d. Cost-effectiveness and Cost Benefit Analyses**

Demonstrate how your application will be cost-effective, include details such as:

1. organizational costs, indirect costs, and overhead
2. process for determining that subawards are cost-effective by comparing the costs with the anticipated benefits
3. organizational resources brought to the effort
4. prudent cost-allocation over the life of the award and consistency with proposed budget detail
5. ability to perform tasks within the operational range of budgets provided by this RFA

**e. Leveraging:**

Demonstrate how you will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support the proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. These funds/resources include but are not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award.

**f. Tracking and Measuring Environmental and Programmatic Results:**

Demonstrate your plan to measure and track, programmatic, EJ and environmental results, as well as your outreach strategy for ensuring communication of project results among the subrecipients, LISS partner organizations, and the broader LISS region.

Applicants should consider the following questions when developing outcome and output measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

1. What are the measurable short-term and long-term EJ and environmental results the funded projects will achieve?
2. How will you measure progress in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes)?
3. How will you know whether existing efforts are succeeding or need improvement?

**g. Transferability of Results**

Demonstrate how you will support and communicate lessons learned from the proposed activities, including how you will provide results, information materials, and analyses to EPA and key LISS partners in a timely manner. Demonstrate how you will work with subrecipients to report and present on their activities both during, and after, the life of the award.

What will be your strategy to promote, grow, and sustain the LISCIF program? Strategies may include:

- facilitating and mentoring participants in sustained partnering and implementation efforts
- communicating and transferring the successes and lessons learned of the subaward projects through vigorous outreach via traditional and new channels
- expanding the presence and visibility of LISS and the LISS “brand” throughout the LISS region through clearly promoting the LISCIF as an EPA-funded component of LISS
- other innovative solutions and approaches

#### **h. Timely Expenditure of Funds**

Demonstrate your approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner within the project period.

#### **i. Contracts and Subawards**

A. Can funding be used for the applicant to make subawards, acquire contract services, or fund partnerships?

EPA awards funds to one eligible applicant as the recipient even if other eligible applicants are named as partners or co-applicants or members of a coalition or consortium. The recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds.

Funding may be used to provide subawards of financial assistance, which includes using subawards to fund partnerships, provided the recipient complies with applicable requirements for subawards including those contained in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and [EPA's Subaward Policy](#). EPA has also posted Additional Resources on Subawards for applicants to consult.

Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the procurement provisions of the regulations at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Applicants are not required to identify subrecipients and/or contractors (including consultants) in their application. However, if they do, the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application EPA selects for funding does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements as appropriate. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the application solely based on the firm's role in preparing the application. For additional guidance applicants should review EPA's [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).

Successful applicants cannot use subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products from for-profit organizations to carry out its assistance agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subrecipient must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance found at 2 C.F.R. § 200.331, the definitions of Subaward and Subrecipient at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, and [Appendix A to EPA's Subaward Policy](#). EPA will not be a party to these transactions. Applicants acquiring commercial goods or services must comply with the competitive procurement requirements in 2 C.F.R. § 200.319 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.320 and cannot use a subaward as the funding mechanism.

- B. How will an applicant's proposed subrecipients and contractors be considered during the evaluation process described in Section V of the announcement?

Section V of the announcement describes the evaluation criteria and evaluation process that will be used by EPA to make selections under this announcement. During this evaluation, except for those criteria that relate to the applicant's own qualifications, past performance, and reporting history, the review panel will consider, as appropriate and relevant, the qualifications, expertise, and experience of:

- (i) an applicant's named subrecipients identified in the application, if the applicant demonstrates in the application that if it receives an award that the subaward will be properly awarded consistent with the applicable regulations in 2 C.F.R. Part 200. For example, applicants must not use subawards to obtain commercial services or products from for profit firms or individual consultants.
- (ii) an applicant's named contractor(s), including consultants, identified in the application if the applicant demonstrates in its application that the contractor(s) was selected in compliance with the competitive procurement requirements in 2 C.F.R. § 200.319 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.320. For example, an applicant must demonstrate that it selected the contractor(s) competitively or that a proper non-competitive sole-source award consistent with the regulations will be made to the contractor(s), that efforts were made to provide small and disadvantaged businesses with opportunities to compete as provided in 40 C.F.R. § 33.301, and that some form of cost or price analysis was conducted. EPA may not accept sole source justifications for contracts for services or products that are otherwise readily available in the commercial marketplace.

EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subrecipients and/or named contractor(s) during the application evaluation process unless the applicant complies with these requirements. For additional guidance applicants should review EPA's [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).

**Your Project Narrative must also address all evaluation criteria listed in Section V of this announcement.**

Applications submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact **Bessie Wright** at **617-918-1679**. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

**IV.D. Intergovernmental Review** Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. EPA implemented the Executive Order in 40 C.F.R. Part 29. EPA may require applicants selected for funding to provide a copy of their application to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) for review as provided at 40 C.F.R. § 29.7 and 40 C.F.R. § 29.8. Please refer to EPA Financial Assistance Programs Subject to [Executive Order 12372 and Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act and Section 401 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act](#) and review the activities for Assistance Listing for Assistance Listing 66.437 for a description for LISS activities subject to Intergovernmental Review. If intergovernmental review is required, and neither EPA nor the pass-through entity complied with 40 C.F.R. Part 29 prior to award because the location of subaward projects had not been determined, the pass-through entity must comply with intergovernmental review requirements after award. No state Single Point of Contact (SPOC) has selected Assistance Listing 66.437 for state process review. As provided in 40 C.F.R. § 29.9(d), the pass-through entity must offer directly affected State, area-wide, regional and local officials an opportunity to comment on the subrecipient's proposed project if the activity is subject to intergovernmental review.

EPA may require successful applicants to provide a copy of their application for review to directly affected state, area-wide, regional and local government entities as provided at in 40 C.F.R. § 29.7 and 40 C.F.R. § 29.8. These reviews are not required before submitting an application. Only applicants that EPA selects for funding under this announcement are subject to the Intergovernmental Review requirement.

If your application is deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review, you will be notified in writing within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

## 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 EPA professionals with a working knowledge of the technical and programmatic aspects needed to rigorously evaluate LISCIF applications. All reviewers will sign a conflict-of-interest statement indicating there is no real, or perceived, conflict of interest. EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subrecipients and/or named contractor(s) during the application evaluation process.

### V.B. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated and scored by reviewers using the criteria listed below. Each application may receive up to **130** points. Your submittals should fully address these criteria.

| Criterion                                         | Description of Evaluation Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Points |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| a. Program Approach and Organizational Capability | <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate understanding of the LISS management framework and program priorities, and how the applicant's efforts would support LISS goals as described in Section I.B. <b>(5 points)</b></li> <li>2. Demonstrate ability and approach for managing an LISCIF subawards program and skill, experience, and resources to: <b>(15 points)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. execute a successful subawards program by managing a competitive process to solicit, evaluate, and select subaward projects that address LISS goals and program objectives to support underserved communities, integrate EJ into LISS project implementation and implement the LISS CCMP, including diversity of project types, distribution across the LISS region, and representation of the needs of underserved communities;</li> <li>b. manage subrecipients to achieve the objectives of the LISCIF as described in Section I.C and ensure compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and the General Terms and Conditions of EPA cooperative agreements;</li> <li>c. demonstrate expertise and organizational ability to successfully execute needed oversight for administrative, travel, fiscal, and reporting tasks, as well as provide technical and outreach support to subrecipients;</li> <li>d. ensure subrecipients comply with all quality assurance, financial, and reporting requirements; and</li> <li>e. provide or secure relevant staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and/or other experts experienced and qualified to successfully achieve LISS goals as described in Section I.C.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | 30     |

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|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                | <p>3. Demonstrate familiarity and ability to work with institutional, environmental, and socio-economic conditions of the LISS region, including knowledge of EJ and underserved communities and how to engage and work with them, as well as differing management regimes between Connecticut and New York. <b>(10 points)</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |    |
| b. EJ Experience and Expertise | <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate understanding of challenges and opportunities facing the LISS regional communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities, including how existing efforts are succeeding or need improvement, the specific approaches proposed to address them through LISCIF and how the applicant's efforts would support LISS goals as described in Section I.B. <b>(7 points)</b></li> <li>2. Describe applicants experience, familiarity, and ability to work with and engage the participation of communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities and community-based organizations, including identifying and achieving buy-in of key community and opinion leaders in communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including affected underserved communities, and in educating such communities as necessary to ensure they are able to effectively and equally participate in environmental issues. <b>(8 points)</b></li> <li>3. Demonstrate how the competitive grant program and outreach/support program (project) will address the disproportionate and adverse (see below) human health, environmental, climate-related and other cumulative impacts, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the community, including affected underserved communities described in Section I of the solicitation and within the scope of the LISS CCMP. As part of this evaluation, applications will be evaluated based on: how the project benefit the affected community, including the affected underserved communities and including those that have experienced a lack of resources or other impediments to addressing the impacts identified above that affect their community; and the extent to which the project addresses engagement with these communities, especially local residents in these communities who will be affected by the project, to ensure their meaningful participation in LISS.</li> </ol> <p>Disproportionate and adverse environmental, human health, climate-related and other cumulative impacts related to the scope of the LISS CCMP, as well the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, may result when greater pollution burdens and/or harms/risks, and the impact of them, are more likely to affect or have affected the community, including underserved communities described in this solicitation. The impacts may result from various factors including but not limited to being a function of historical trends and policy decisions.</p> | 25 |

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                                                     | <p>Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: <b>(8 points)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards;</li> <li>- greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards (due to causes such as age, chronic medical conditions, lack of health care access, or limited access to quality nutrition);</li> <li>- unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status (for example, subsistence fishing or farming);</li> <li>- cumulative effects from multiple stressors;</li> <li>- reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes (due to causes such as lack of or ineffective language access programs, lack of programs to make processes accessible to persons with disabilities, inability to access traditional communication channels, or limited capacity to access technical and legal resources); and</li> <li>- degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |    |
| c. Past Performance in Program Capability and Environmental Results | <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C. of the solicitation. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>2. history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C. of the solicitation including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>3. organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>4. staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>5. Experience in managing subawards subject to 2 C.F.R. Part 200. <b>(3 points)</b></li> </ol> <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). If applicants do not have any relevant or available past performance, this must be indicated in the proposal 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 there is no response for these items, applicants will receive a score of zero for these subfactors.</i></p> | 15 |

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|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| d. Cost-effectiveness                                            | <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they establish the application is cost-effective, including consideration of factors such as: <b>(4 points each)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. organizational costs, indirect costs, and overhead;</li> <li>2. subaward costs versus anticipated results of projects;</li> <li>3. prudent cost-allocation over the life of the award and consistency with proposed budget detail; and</li> <li>4. ability to perform tasks within the operational range of budgets provided by LISS.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 20 |
| e. Leveraging                                                    | <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent they demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support the proposed project activities. Additional funds/resources include but are not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>2. the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how they will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged funds/resources will play to support the proposed project activities. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>3. how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. <b>(9 points)</b></li> </ol>     | 15 |
| f. Tracking and Measuring Environmental and Programmatic Results | <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. how they will ensure compliance with rules for reporting environmental and/or programmatic output, outcome, and metrics for the recipient and subrecipients. <b>(10 points)</b></li> <li>2. how negotiated metrics will be collected from subrecipients and reported to EPA. <b>(10 points)</b></li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 20 |
| g. Transferability of Results                                    | <p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include an adequate plan to gather and develop information to support and communicate lessons learned from the proposed activities, including: <b>(10 points)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. documenting and distributing results, including information materials and analyses, in a timely manner to EPA and to key partners in the LISS region and other appropriate audiences;</li> <li>b. ensuring subrecipients are available to present or report on their subaward activities as needed; and</li> <li>c. being available to present results both during and after the life of the award.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Propose a strategy to promote, grow, and sustain the LISCIF program by: <b>(10 points)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. facilitating and mentoring participants in sustained partnering and implementation efforts, as well as in innovative solutions and approaches;</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | 20 |

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |    |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
|                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. communicating and transferring the successes and lessons learned of the subaward projects through vigorous outreach via traditional and new channels; and</li> <li>c. expanding the presence and visibility of LISS and the LISS “brand” throughout the LISS region through clearly identifying the LISCIF as an EPA-funded component of LISS.</li> </ul> |    |
| h. Timely Expenditure of Funds | Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner within the project period.                                                                                                                                                                             | 10 |

### V.C. Review and Selection Process

Once eligible applications have been reviewed and ranked by the panel of reviewers using the criteria stated in **Section V.B**, the review team will forward their rankings and evaluation to the EPA Region 1 Water Division’s selection official for final selections.

## 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 by **10/11/2022**. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or 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 the EPA Region 1 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 since 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 (e.g., work plan), 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

Applicants selected for federal funding may need to adjust their forms prior to award. EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final cooperative agreement amount and work plan content prior to award consistent with agency policies.

#### Indirect Costs

Indirect costs (IDCs) may be budgeted and charged by recipients of Federal assistance agreements in accordance with [2 C.F.R. Part 200](#). EPA’s [Indirect Cost Policy for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) (IDC Policy) implements the Federal regulations, and the following applies to all EPA assistance agreements, unless there are [statutory or regulatory limits on IDCs](#).

In order for an assistance agreement recipient to use EPA funding for indirect costs, the IDC category of the recipient’s assistance agreement award budget must include an amount for IDCs and at least one of the following must apply:

- With the exception of “exempt” agencies and Institutions of Higher Education as noted below, all recipients must have one of the following current (not expired) IDC rates, including IDC rates that have been extended by the cognizant agency:
  - Provisional;
  - Final;
  - Fixed rate with carry-forward;
  - Predetermined;
  - 10% de minimis rate authorized by 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f); and
  - EPA-approved use of one of the following:
    - 10% de minimis as detailed in section 6.3 of the IDC Policy; or
    - Expired fixed rate with carry-forward as detailed in section 6.4.a. of the IDC Policy.
- “Exempt” state or local governmental departments or agencies are agencies that receive up to and including \$35,000,000 in Federal funding per the department or agency’s fiscal year, and must have an IDC rate application developed in accordance with [2 C.F.R. 200 Appendix VII](#), with documentation maintained and available for audit.
- Institutions of Higher Education must use the IDC rate in place at the time of award for the life of the assistance agreement (unless the rate was provisional at time of award, in which case the rate will change once it becomes final). As provided by [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Appendix III\(C\)\(7\)](#), the term “life of the assistance agreement”, means each competitive segment of the project. Additional information is available in the regulation.

IDCs incurred during any period of the assistance agreement that are not covered by the provisions above are not allowable costs, and must not be drawn down by the recipient. Recipients may budget for IDCs pending approval of their IDC rate by the cognizant Federal agency or an exception granted by EPA under section 6.3 or 6.4 of the IDC Policy. However, recipients may not draw down IDCs until their rate is approved or EPA grants an exception.

The IDC Policy does not govern indirect rates for subrecipients or recipient procurement contractors under EPA assistance agreements. Pass-through entities are required to comply with [2 C.F.R. § 200.331\(a\)\(4\)](#) when establishing indirect cost rates for subawards. See the [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information.

#### Incurred Costs

Funding eligibility ends on the date specified in the award. The time expended and costs incurred in either the development of the proposal or the final assistance application, or in any subsequent discussions or negotiations prior to the award, are neither reimbursable nor recognizable as part of the recipient’s cost share.

#### Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans

In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 1500.12., projects that include the generation or use of environmental data are required to submit a QAPP. The recipient must develop and implement quality assurance and quality control procedures, specifications and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives. The QAPP is the document that provides comprehensive details about the quality assurance/quality control requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure that project objectives are met. The QAPP should be prepared in accordance with *EPA QA/R-5: EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans*. The QAPP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 60 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation. Requirements for QAPPs can be found at [www.epa.gov/quality](http://www.epa.gov/quality) and [www.epa.gov/quality/region-1-quality-systems-documents](http://www.epa.gov/quality/region-1-quality-systems-documents).

### **VI.C. Reporting**

Performance Reports:

**As a condition of this award**, the recipient will be required to submit semiannual performance reports that will be due each April 30th and October 30th to the Project Officer for the duration of the award. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.328, performance reporting by the recipient will include:

1. a comparison of actual accomplishments with the anticipated outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan;
2. reasons why anticipated outputs/outcomes were not met;
3. other pertinent information, including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs;
4. will submit annual Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reporting information to EPA as specified in the annual National Estuary Program funding guidance by the date stipulated in the annual funding guidance.
5. Monitor the performance of their subrecipients under 2 C.F.R. § 200.332 and ensure that they comply with all applicable regulations, statutes, and terms and conditions which flow down in the subaward. Examples of items that must be reported if the pass-through entity has the information available are:
  - i. Summaries of results of reviews of financial and programmatic reports.
  - ii. Summaries of findings from site visits and/or desk reviews to ensure effective subrecipient performance.
  - iii. Environmental results the subrecipient achieved.
  - iv. Summaries of audit findings and related pass-through entity management decisions.
  - v. Actions the pass-through entity has taken to correct deficiencies such as those specified at 2 C.F.R. § 200.332(e), 2 C.F.R. § 200.325 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.339, Remedies for Noncompliance.
  - vi. Any questions about subrecipient eligibility or other issues pertaining to subawards should be addressed to the recipient's EPA Project Officer. Additional information regarding subawards, as well as guidance for distinguishing between vendor and subrecipient relationships, may be found in the [EPA Subaward Policy](#).

In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.329, the recipient will be required to notify EPA of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan.

**Final Performance Report:** The recipient will be required to submit an electronic of the Final Performance Report to EPA. The Final Project Report will be due within 120 days after the end of the budget/project period. The report will include any agreed-upon work-product(s) resulting from the project and the following:

1. an abstract or overview of the project including completed workplan activities;
2. a comparison of actual accomplishments with the anticipated outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan;
3. reasons why anticipated outputs/outcomes were not met;
4. other pertinent information, including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs;
5. the methods to be used to effectively disseminate project information and/or continue the benefits of this project (although the project itself may not be continuing); and
6. materials generated in connection with project activities (e.g., workshop announcements, newspaper/newsletter announcements, articles or releases, press packets, pamphlets, etc.

## **VII. AGENCY CONTACTS**

For administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact LISS via email at [wright.bessie@epa.gov](mailto:wright.bessie@epa.gov). All questions must be received in writing via email with the reference line referring to this RFA (RE: RFA EPA-I-R1-LISCIF-22-01) by **8/15/2022**. All questions and answers will be posted on [Long Island Sound Study EJWG](#). In addition, information about the informational webinars will also be posted on this same website.

## VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

In developing the proposal, the applicant may find the following documents helpful:

- Long Island Sound Study Program website [www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net).
- LISS CCMP Plan [www.longislandsoundstudy.net/2015/09/2015-comprehensive-conservation-and-management-plan](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net/2015/09/2015-comprehensive-conservation-and-management-plan).
- EPA FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan [www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan](http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan).

## APPENDIX A. LISS Map

The LISS geographic region refers to the watershed area within New York and Connecticut for the purpose of this project. There is potential to expand the project to the extent of the full Long Island Sound watershed in future awards.



An interactive version of this map can be found at

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=34b1379679e74defb79152b817d47de2&extent=-74.3633,40.5722,-71.1278,42.1389>.