



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Notice of Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00446

WaterSMART-Applied Science Grants for Fiscal Year 2023



Mission Statements

The U.S. Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Cover Photo – WSR-88D Doppler radar at New Underwood, South Dakota. Courtesy of NASA.

Synopsis

Federal Agency Name:	Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Water Resources and Planning Office
Funding Opportunity Title:	WaterSMART: Applied Science Grants
Announcement Type:	Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Funding Opportunity Number:	R23AS00446
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:	15.557
Dates: (See NOFO Sec. D.4)	Application Due Date: Tuesday, October 17, 2023, 5:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)(Paper Submissions), Tuesday October 17, 2023, 10:00 p.m. MDT (grants.gov submissions)
Eligible Applicants: (See NOFO Sec. C.1)	Category A: States, Indian tribes, irrigation districts, water districts; state, regional, or local authorities whose members include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority; and other organizations with water or power delivery authority. All Category A applicants must be located in the Western United States or United States Territories, including Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Category B: Universities, nonprofit research institutions, nonprofit organizations, and federally-funded research and development centers that are acting in partnership and with the agreement of an entity described in Category A. All Category B applicants must be in the United States or the specific Territories identified above.
Recipient Cost Share: (See NOFO Sec. C.2)	A non-Federal cost-share of 25 or 50 percent depending on the type of project.
Federal Funding Amount: (See NOFO Sec. B.1)	Up to \$400,000 per agreement for a project that can be completed within 2 years.
Estimated Number of Agreements to be Awarded': (See NOFO Sec. B.1)	Approximately 10-15 projects, contingent on appropriations.

Application Checklist

The following table contains a summary of the information that you are required to submit with your application.

✓	Mandatory Application Components:	Required content	Page
	Mandatory Federal forms: - SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance (Office of Management and Budget (OMB)) - SF-424A: Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs (OMB) - SF-424B: Assurances - Non-Construction Programs (OMB)		14
	Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration		21
	Technical Proposal (Use Project Narrative Attachment Form to upload in Grants.gov)		14
	Budget Narrative (Use Budget Narrative Attachment Form to upload in Grants.gov)		17
✓	Recommended Application Components:	Required content	Page
	Environmental and cultural resources compliance		18
	Required permits or approvals		18
	Overlap or duplication of effort statement		18
	Conflict of interest disclosure statement		18
	Uniform audit reporting statement		19
	SF-LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, if applicable) (OMB)		20
	Letters of Support		20
	Letter of partnership (Category B Applicants)		20
	Official Resolution		20
	Letter of Funding Commitment		20

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AOR	Authorized Organizational Representative
ARC	Application Review Committee
ASAP	Automated Standard Application for Payments
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CE	Categorical Exclusion
CEC	Categorical Exclusion Checklist
CFDA	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
Department	U.S. Department of the Interior
DUNS	Data Universal Number System
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIN	Employer Identification Number
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
E.O.	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAIR	Financial Assistance Interior Regulation
FAPIIS	Federal Award Performance Integrity Information System
FGDC	Federal Geospatial Data Committee
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FY	fiscal year
GIS	Geographic Information System
IBC	Interior Business Center
MDT	Mountain Daylight Time
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
OM&R	operations, maintenance, and replacement
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
P.L.	Public Law
Project	applied science project
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
ROD	Record of Decision
SAM	System of Award Management
SECURE	Science and Engineering to Comprehensively Understand and
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
U.S.C.	United States Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

WaterSMART Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow

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Section A. Funding Opportunity Description

A.1. Authority

This NOFO is issued under the authority of Section 9509 and 9504(b) of the Science and Engineering to Comprehensively Understand and Responsibly Enhance (SECURE) Water Act, Subtitle F of Title IX of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law (P.L.) 111-11 (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 10364), as amended.

A.2. Background and Program Requirements

The U.S. Department of the Interior's (Department) WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) Program provides a framework for Federal leadership and assistance to stretch and secure water supplies for future generations in support of the Department's priorities. Through WaterSMART, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) leverages Federal and non-Federal funding to support stakeholder efforts to stretch scarce water supplies and avoid conflicts over water.

The WaterSMART Applied Science Grants provide support for priorities identified in Presidential Executive Order (E.O.) 14008: *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad* and aligned with other priorities, such as those identified in E.O. 13985: *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*. Applied science projects (Project) also support the goals of the Interagency Drought Relief Working Group and the National Drought Resiliency Partnership.

Drought conditions across the Western United States impact a wide range of communities and sectors, including agriculture, cities, Tribes, the environment, recreation, hydropower producers, and others. The West continue to experience drought—historic levels in recent years in both duration and severity—threatening to kill crops, spark wildfires, and harm public health. See the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for most up to date locations impacted by drought.

Through WaterSMART Applied Science Grants, Reclamation provides cost-shared financial assistance to States, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, water districts, or other organizations with water or power delivery authority, universities, nonprofit research institutions, and nonprofit organizations for projects to develop hydrologic information and water management tools and improve modeling and forecasting capabilities.

Increased access to information and improved modeling and forecasting capabilities will help avoid water conflicts and improve our ability to meet a variety of water management objectives, including: support for water supply reliability, management of water deliveries, water marketing activities, drought management activities, conjunctive use of ground and surface water, water rights administration, ability to meet endangered species requirements, watershed health, conservation and efficiency, and other water management objectives.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) supports projects to develop hydrologic information and water management tools and improve modeling and forecasting capabilities to increase water supply reliability as well as improving decision making for nature-based solution. Nature-based solutions are sustainable environmental management and practices that weave natural features or processes into the built environment to promote adaptation and resilience. For further information on the Applied Science Program see www.usbr.gov/watersmart/appliedscience/index.html.

Applied Science Grants are a component of Reclamation's WaterSMART Basin Study Program. For more information on the WaterSMART Basin Study Program, please see www.usbr.gov/watersmart/bsp/index.html.

A.3. Notice of Funding Opportunity Purpose and Objectives

The objective of this NOFO is to invite eligible non-Federal entities to leverage their money and resources by cost sharing with Reclamation on applied science projects (Project) to improve access to and use of hydrologic data, develop and improve water management tools, improve modeling and forecasting capabilities. Results from these projects will be used by water managers to increase water supply reliability, provide flexibility in water operations, improve water management, and support nature-based solutions. Project results must be readily applicable by managers—resulting in tools and information that can be used to support: water supply reliability, water delivery management, water marketing activities, drought management activities, conjunctive use of ground and surface water, water rights administration, ability to meet endangered species requirements, watershed health, conservation and efficiency, support for nature-based solutions and other water management objectives.

Note: Projects that support nature-based solutions have been added to the NOFO objectives in this announcement.

A.4. Other Related Funding Opportunities

For information on the NOFOs listed here, please visit the WaterSMART Program website: www.usbr.gov/watersmart.

- **WaterSMART Drought Resiliency Project Grants.** Reclamation provides funding on a 50/50 cost-share basis for the construction of projects that increase water supply flexibility and improve water management to build long-term resilience to drought and are supported by an existing drought contingency plan.
- **WaterSMART Grants: Water and Energy Efficiency Grants.** Financial assistance is provided on a 50/50 cost-share basis for the construction of projects that conserve and use water more efficiently, increase the production of hydropower, mitigate conflict risk in areas at a high risk of future water conflict, and accomplish other benefits that contribute to water supply reliability in the Western United States.
- **WaterSMART Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects.** Financial assistance is provided on a 50/50 cost share basis for small-scale water management projects (up to \$100,000 in Federal funding for each project) that have been identified through previous planning efforts. Typical project types are the same as those funded through the WaterSMART Grants, listed immediately above. Reclamation has developed a streamlined selection and review process to reflect the small-scale nature of these projects.
- **WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program).** Reclamation provides funding to watershed groups to encourage diverse stakeholders to form local solutions to address their watershed management needs. Reclamation provides funding through Phase I of the program for watershed group development, restoration planning, and watershed management project design.
- **WaterSMART Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects.** Reclamation provides funding on a 65/35 cost share basis for the study, design, and construction of projects that restore or protect aquatic ecosystems. Projects benefit aquatic ecosystems across multiple basins, build habitat and systems resiliency, support threatened and endangered species, and provide broad environmental benefits.
- **WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects.** Financial assistance is provided on a cost share basis (either 50% or 75% Federal cost share) for water conservation, water management, and restoration projects that provide significant benefits to ecological values or watershed health.
- **WaterSMART Planning and Project Design Grants.** Reclamation provides funding for Water Strategy Grants, Drought Contingency Planning, and Project Design Grants. **Water Strategy Grants,** Reclamation provides support for entities to conduct planning activities to improve water management (e.g., water marketing, water conservation, drought resilience, and ecological resilience). **Drought Contingency Planning,** Reclamation supports the development of drought contingency plans with participation from a diverse set of stakeholders. Reclamation also provides funding for **Project Design Grants** to conduct project-specific design for projects to improve water management.

- **Native American Affairs Technical Assistance Program** provides technical assistance to assist Indian Tribes to develop, manage, and protect their water and related resources. Cost sharing is not required and technical assistance requests must satisfy “Program Criteria”. Proposals are solicited via notices of funding opportunity, and successful proposals approved for funding can be found on Reclamation’s website at the address below.

For information on the Native American Affairs Program Technical Assistance Program, visit www.usbr.gov/native/programs/TAPprogram.html.

Section B. Award Information

B.1. Total Funding

Approximately \$4-5 million is available for this NOFO, with per-project limits as described in *Section B.2. Expected Award Amount*. This NOFO will allocate available program funds including fiscal year (FY) 2023 and FY 2024 enacted appropriations for WaterSMART Basin Study Program, and funding available under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), P.L. 117-58 in FY 2023 or FY 2024. This NOFO will also be used to allocate BIL funding for projects that will improve the condition of a natural feature or nature-based feature. Applications submitted under this NOFO may also be considered if other funding becomes available, including funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), P.L. 117-58 in FY 2023 or future years.

B.2. Expected Award Amount

Maximum Award: \$400,000

Minimum Award: \$0

Up to \$400,000 in Federal funds per agreement provided through this NOFO (See cost share details in Section C.2).

B.3. Expected Award Funding and Anticipated Dates

The completion date will be established at the time of award and will be for two years from the date of award.

Anticipated Award Date: 04/01/2024

Anticipated Project Completion Date: 09/30/2026

B.4. Number of Awards

Approximately 10-15 awards, depending on the amount requested by each applicant and the amount of funding available.

B.5. Type of Award

Awards will be made through grants or cooperative agreements as applicable to each project. If a cooperative agreement is awarded, the recipient should expect Reclamation to have substantial involvement in the project. Substantial involvement by Reclamation may include:

- Collaboration and participation with the successful applicant in the management of the project and close oversight of the successful applicant's activities to ensure that the program objectives are being achieved.
- Oversight may include review, input, and approval at key interim stages of the project

Note: The development and administration of an award under this NOFO is not considered substantial involvement.

B.6. Technical Assistance

By request, Reclamation can provide technical assistance **after** award of the project. If you plan to receive Reclamation's assistance, you must account for these costs in your budget. Technical assistance should be discussed with Reclamation staff prior to applying. To discuss available assistance and these costs, contact the Program Coordinator identified in *Section G. Agency Contacts*.

Section C. Eligibility Information

C.1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants eligible to receive an award under this NOFO include:

Category A:

- States, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, and water districts;
- State, regional, or local authorities, which include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority as members; and
- Other organizations with water or power delivery authority.

To be eligible, Category A applicants must also be located in one of the following United States or specific Territories: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands, or Puerto Rico.

Category B:

Universities, nonprofit research institutions, federally funded research and development centers, and non-profit entities (including 501[c][3] organizations) that are acting in partnership with and with the agreement of an entity described in Category A.

Category B applicants should include with their application a letter from the Category A partner, stating that the Category A partner:

1. Is acting in partnership with the applicant;
2. Agrees to the submittal and content of the application; and
3. Intends to participate in the project in some way, for example, by providing input, feedback, or other support for the project.

Note: Partners do not necessarily need to contribute cost share funding.

All Category B applicants must be in the United States or the specific Territories identified above.

Those **not eligible** include the following entities:

- Federal Governmental Entities
- Individuals
- Commercial/industrial organizations
- Private entities
- 501(c)(6) Organizations

C.2. Cost Sharing Requirement

Applicants must be capable of cost sharing 25 percent or 50 percent of the total project costs, depending on the project type. The total project cost is defined as the total allowable costs incurred under a Federal award and all required cost share and voluntary committed cost share contributions, including third-party contributions.

Applied Science Grants with primarily ecological benefits that also meet the requirements listed in this section are eligible for up to 75 percent Federal cost-share contribution. To qualify for this cost-share, the application must demonstrate that the project is for the purpose of a) increasing water supply reliability for ecological values (e.g. improving the timing or quantity of water available or improving water quality or temperature); b) is being developed as part of a collaborative planning process that included consideration of ecological values (note: If there is not a project-specific plan, the applicant may refer to an existing local, state or regional plan with a nexus to the project to satisfy this requirement). This does not exclude projects that benefit ecological values AND agricultural, municipal, tribal, or recreational water uses.

For projects that do not meet the requirements necessary to qualify for 75 percent Federal cost-share contribution, applicants must be capable of cost sharing 50 percent or more of the total project costs. Applicants will be notified prior to selection if their project is being considered for award but does not qualify for the 75 percent Federal cost-share contribution. Such applicants will be given an opportunity to commit to a 50 percent non-Federal cost-share contribution or withdraw their application. The application review committee (see Section E.2.2. Application Review Committee) will determine whether each application qualifies for 75 percent Federal cost-share contribution based on responses to the evaluation criteria (see Section E.1. Evaluation Criteria).

Cost share may be made through cash, costs contributed by the applicant, or third-party in-kind contributions. Third-party in-kind contributions include the value of non-cash contributions of property or services that benefit the federally assisted project and are contributed by non-Federal third parties, without charge. Cost-share funding from sources outside the applicant's organization (e.g., loans or state grants) should be secured and available to the applicant prior to award. Please see *Section D.2.2.11. Letters of Commitment* and *Section D.2.2.12. Official Resolution* for more information regarding the documentation required to verify commitments to meet cost-sharing requirements.

Other sources of Federal funding may not be counted towards the required cost share. The exception to this requirement is where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs, such as awards to tribal organizations under P.L. 93-638, as amended. *If it is determined that the Federal funding cannot be applied towards the non-Federal cost share, the work associated with the funding may be removed from the proposed project.*

C.2.1. Cost Share Regulations

All cost share contributions must meet the applicable administrative and cost principles criteria established in 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §200. All CFRs are available at the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, www.ecfr.gov.

C.2.2. Third-Party In-Kind Contributions

Third-party in-kind contributions may be in the form of equipment, supplies, and other expendable property, as well as the value of services directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to the proposed Project. Applicants may not include as part of their cost-share for projects funded under this NOFO the cost or value of third-party in-kind contributions that have been or will be relied on to satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for another Federal financial assistance agreement, a Federal procurement contract, or any other award of Federal funds. Applicants should refer to 2 CFR §200.434 *Contributions and Donations* for regulations regarding the valuation of third-party in-kind contributions, available at www.ecfr.gov.

C.3. Other

C.3.1. Multiple Applications

Multiple applications for funding may be submitted for consideration under this funding opportunity, provided that the project scopes are not duplicative. Category B applicants may receive a maximum of up to 3 awards provided that the Category A partner entity for each project is different. In general, if you are seeking funding for multiple project components, and the components are interrelated or closely related, you should combine these in one application. However, if the projects are only loosely related, you should submit them as separate applications.

C.3.2. Excluded Parties

Reclamation conducts a review of the [SAM.gov Exclusions database](https://www.sam.gov) for all applicant entities and their key project personnel prior to award and ineligibility condition apply to this Federal program. If entities or key project personnel are identified in the [SAM.gov Exclusions database](https://www.sam.gov)

as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or otherwise excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits, Reclamation cannot award funds to them.

C.4. Eligible Projects

Reclamation will provide funding for applied science projects to develop or improve hydrologic information, water management tools, modeling and forecasting capabilities, and improve nature-based solution decisions. Results from these Projects will be used by water managers to increase water supply reliability, provide flexibility in water operations, and improve water management.

C.4.1. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, Projects must:

- be designed for use by water managers located in the following States or Territories: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin or Puerto Rico
- be based on known and available (or “mature”) technologies and may not include the development of new or novel methods or technologies; and
- support one or more of the following water management objectives:
 - water supply reliability,
 - improved management of water deliveries,
 - water marketing activities,
 - drought management activities,
 - conjunctive use of ground and surface water,
 - water rights administration,
 - ability to meet endangered species requirements,
 - watershed health,
 - Restore a natural feature or use a nature-based feature to reduce water supply and demand imbalances or the risk of drought or flood, conservation and efficiency, or

- other improvements to water supply reliability.

C.4.2. Eligible Project Types

Projects must support the types of water management objectives described in the bullets immediately above and may include but are not limited to:

1. **Modeling:** Eligible projects can develop or enhance existing modeling capabilities and include model validation and analysis of model produced data. Modeling tool projects should be for the improvement of water supply reliability and be developed for use by water managers to help meet constraints or requirements (e.g., endangered species, administrative, climate change scenarios, or water delivery requirements). Projects may include improvements to the spatial and temporal resolution of a model, improvements to model calibration, enhancements to make a model more interactive and agile so that it can be used to answer specific questions as they arise, or other enhancements to modeling tools. Projects could include improvements to hydrologic models, reservoir operations models, or other types of water management models. Projects may also include costs to obtain training on how to use new tools and software.
2. **Forecasting:** Eligible projects can develop, improve, or adapt forecasting tools and technologies to enhance management of water supplies and reservoir operations. Projects can include developing or adapting forecasting tools to meet the needs of water managers. Forecasting projects can be used to optimize operations and improve water management, manage risks, and inform water allocation strategies, or even water marketing. Applicants are encouraged to explore whether there are existing data sets and forecast products that may be leveraged. Projects may also include costs to obtain training on how to use new tools and software. *Note: Applicants must demonstrate how the forecast or data will be used to enhance management of water supplies and reservoir operations, for example, by using the tool in connection with an operations model.*
3. **Data:** Eligible projects improve access to and use of water resources data or to develop new types of data to inform water management decisions. Eligible projects may include improvements to data acquisition, data analysis, and data delivery. Data acquisition projects may include incorporating or developing new or previously unavailable data, such as remote sensing imagery, hydrologic data acquired using unmanned aerial systems, or paleo reconstructions of naturalized flows, for example. Projects may include developing hydrologic databases or decision support tools that resource managers can use to query or analyze data for to improve water management. Projects may also include improved data delivery, such as making data available to a broader audience, or improvements to make data systems compatible with existing systems (e.g., Federal or State databases). Projects may also include costs to obtain training on how to use new tools and software.
4. **Nature-based solutions Decision Tools:** Eligible project can develop, improve, or adapt tools to improve nature-based solution decision making. These solutions can use natural

features and processes to combat climate change, improve water quality, restore, and protect wetlands, stabilizes shorelines, and reduce flood risk. Nature-based solutions can be applied at a watershed or landscape-scale or at a site specific-scale. Projects may include decision support tools to assist in the application of a nature-based solution that supports a range of environment improvements, including but not limited to biodiversity, water quality, and flood mitigation. Projects may also include costs to obtain training on how to use new tools and software.

C.5. Required Project Components

Applicants whose projects are selected for funding under this NOFO may be asked to participate in at least one Reclamation-sponsored webinar to discuss application of deliverables to management questions. In most cases, the webinar will be scheduled when the final report is ready to be submitted for Reclamation review. The presentation should inform Reclamation about project accomplishments, the final results of the identified tasks, and any lessons learned. This presentation may be open to the public as a webinar and may be recorded and made available on the WaterSMART website.

C.6. Ineligible Projects

Projects that are not eligible for funding under this NOFO include, but are not limited to:

- projects to research and/or develop new and novel methods or technologies
- planning studies, such as feasibility studies, appraisal investigations, water marketing strategies, and drought contingency plans;
- projects to develop or demonstrate tools and technologies supporting water reuse, water recycling, and desalination projects (e.g., projects that are eligible under the Desalination and Water Purification Research funding opportunity);
- projects considered normal operations, maintenance, and replacement (OM&R);
- construction projects to improve water management; and
- projects funded under other Federal grants.

Section D. Application and Submission Information

D.1. Address to Request Application Package

This document contains all the information, forms, and electronic addresses required to submit an application. If you are unable to access this information electronically, you can request paper copies of any of the documents referenced in this NOFO by emailing the Grants Officer noted in Section G – Federal Agency Contacts. Content and Form of Application Submission

All applications must conform to the requirements described in this section.

D.1.1. Application Format and Length

The technical proposal and evaluation criteria section (defined below) shall be limited to a maximum of **20** consecutively numbered pages. If this section exceeds **20** pages, only the first **20** pages will be evaluated. The font shall be at least 12 points in size and easily readable. Page size shall be 8½ by 11 inches, including charts, maps, and drawings. Margins should be standard 1-inch margins. Oversized pages will not be accepted.

Applications will be prescreened for compliance to the page number limitations. Excess pages will be removed and not considered in the evaluation of the proposed project.

D.1.2. Application Content

The application should include the items identified as Mandatory Application Components in the Application Checklist located on page ii to be considered complete. To facilitate fair and timely reviews by the Application Review Committee (ARC), it is highly recommended that application packages be structured in the order identified in the Application Checklist.

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this funding opportunity. A complete application must include all the items identified as Mandatory Application Components in the Application Checklist. Any application which fails to include these items will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

Following awards of funding, Reclamation may post successful applications on the Reclamation website, www.usbr.gov/watersmart after conducting any redactions determined necessary by Reclamation, in consultation with the successful applicant. See Section F.2.6. Freedom of Information Act.

D.1.2.1. Mandatory Federal Forms

The application must include the following standard Federal forms. Questions regarding forms should be referred to the Grants Management Point of Contact under *Section G. Agency Contacts*.

Mandatory Federal Forms Note: Applications submitted by consultants must contain an SF-424 and SF-424B that is manually signed by an authorized representative of the entity applying. These forms are available at www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html.

D.2.2.1.1 SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance

A fully completed SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance form signed by a person legally authorized to commit the applicant to performance of the project must be submitted with the application. Applications that fail to include a SF-424 by the submission deadline will be considered ineligible and will not pass initial screening.

If you request more than \$100,000 in Federal funding, you must certify that all statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying are true. The Authorized Official's signature on the appropriate SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance form represents the entity's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A.

Failure to submit a signed SF-424 with a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number will result in the elimination of the application from further consideration.

D.2.2.1.2 SF-424A Budget Information Form.

A fully completed SF-424A Budget Information – Non-construction Programs must be submitted with the application.

Failure to submit an SF-424A will result in the elimination of the application from further consideration.

D.2.2.1.3 SF-424B Assurances Form.

A SF-424B – Assurances – Non-construction Programs signed by a person legally authorized to commit the applicant to performance of the project must be submitted with the application.

Failure to submit a signed SF-424B will result in the elimination of the application from further consideration.

D.2.2.2 Technical Proposal

Submission of a technical proposal (limited to 20 pages) is mandatory and must be received by the application deadline.

While an application will not be removed from consideration if the technical proposal does not address each of the following, it is highly recommended that applicants address each component listed below to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

D.2.2.2.1 Title Page

Provide a brief, informative, and descriptive title for the proposed work that indicates the nature of the project. Include the applicant's name and address and the project manager's name and address, email address, and telephone number.

D.2.2.2.2 Table of Contents

List all major sections of the proposal in the table of contents.

D.2.2.2.3 Executive Summary

The executive summary should include:

- The date, applicant name, city, county, and state.
- A one paragraph project summary that specifies the work proposed, including how funds will be used to accomplish specific project activities and briefly identifies how the proposed project contributes to accomplishing the goals of this NOFO.

***Example:** Oklahoma State University, with the support of the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District, the Kansas-Bostwick Irrigation District No. 2, and the Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation District, will incorporate remotely sensed soil moisture data with proven statistical techniques to create seasonal forecasts for rainfall dominated regions of the Great Plains. The project will use remote-sensed soil moisture data, North American Land Data Assimilation System, and NASA's Soil Moisture Active-Passive Satellite. The seasonal forecast tools will inform surface water managers, support improved irrigation water supply management, and enhance the ability of reservoir operators to anticipate and respond to extreme events such as droughts and floods.*

- The length of time and estimated completion date for the proposed project.
- Whether or not the proposed project is located on a Federal facility.

D.2.2.2.4 Technical Project Description

The technical project description should describe the work, including specific activities that will be accomplished. As part of this discussion, please address the following:

Applicant Category: Please indicate whether you are a Category A applicant or a Category B applicant and provide a short narrative summary describing how you meet the eligibility requirements of that applicant category.

If you are a Category B applicant, briefly explain how you are acting in partnership with a Category A partner and provide a short narrative summary describing how your partnering entity meets the definition of a Category A entity. In addition, if you are a Category B applicant, you must include a letter from the Category A partner confirming that they are partnering with you and agree to the submittal and content of the application (see Section C.1 "Eligible Applicants"). Category A partner letters must be submitted with the application for Category B applicants to be eligible.

- **Detailed Project Description:** Provide a more comprehensive description of the technical aspects of your project, including the work to be accomplished and the approach to complete the work. This description should provide detailed information about the project, including your methodology and approach, and any models, data, and tools you are using, and the work to be conducted to complete the project. This section provides an opportunity for the applicant to provide a clear description of the technical nature of the project and the work to be performed and to address any aspect of the project that reviewers may need additional information to understand.
- **Goals:** Discuss the preliminary goals and objectives of the Project.

Please do not include your project schedule and milestones here; that information is requested in response to the Project Implementation criterion as described in *Section E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C*. In addition, please avoid discussion of the benefits of the project, which are also requested in response to evaluation criteria as described in *Section E.1.1 Evaluation Criterion A*. This section is solely intended to provide an understanding of the technical aspects of the project and the work to be performed. Please note, if the work for which you are requesting funding is a phase of a larger project, please only describe the work that is reflected in the budget and exclude description of other activities or components of the overall project.

D.2.2.2.5 Project Location

Provide specific information regarding the proposed applied science project's geographic area of focus (for example, the proposed project may focus on a particular watershed or basin, county, State, Territory, or another region. Include a map showing the geographic location of the project area in one of the following formats:

1. Shapefile (.shp)
2. KMZ/KML (.kmz or .kml) aka Google Earth File
3. PDF map (.pdf)

D.2.2.6 Data Management Practices

Any spatially explicit data or tools developed in the performance of an award made under this NOFO must be developed in industry standard formats that are compatible with Geographic Information System (GIS) platforms.

D.2.2.7 Evaluation Criteria

See *Section E.1. Evaluation Criteria* for additional details, including a detailed description of each criterion and subcriterion and points associated with each.

The evaluation criteria portion of your application should thoroughly address each criterion and subcriterion in the order presented to assist in the complete and accurate evaluation of your proposal.

It is suggested that applicants copy and paste the evaluation criteria and subcriteria in Section E.1. Evaluation Criteria into their applications to ensure that all necessary information is adequately addressed.

D.2.2.8 Project Budget

The total project cost is the sum of all allowable items of costs, including all required cost sharing and voluntary committed cost sharing, including third-party contributions, that are necessary to complete the project. Please include the following chart (Table 1) to summarize all funding sources. Denote in-kind contributions with an asterisk (*).

Table 1.—Summary of Non-Federal and Federal Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
Non-Federal Entities	
1.	\$
2.	\$
3.	\$
Non-Federal Subtotal	\$
REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING	\$

Submission of a budget narrative is mandatory. The budget narrative provides detailed information on the items included in the budget Object Class Categories on the SF-424A. The budget narrative must clearly identify *all* items of cost (**total estimated project cost**), *including those that will be contributed as non-Federal cost share by the applicant (required and voluntary), third-party in-kind contributions, and those that will be covered using the funding requested from Reclamation*, and any requested pre-award costs. The types of information to describe in the narrative may include, but are not limited to, those identified in the Budget Narrative Guidance attached to this NOFO (Attachment A). Applicants may elect to use the Budget Detail and Narrative spreadsheet (Attachment B to this NOFO) for their budget narrative. Costs, including the valuation of third-party in-kind contributions, must comply with the applicable cost principles contained in 2 CFR Part 200, available at the electronic CFR (www.ecfr.gov).

Please note: The Budget Narrative Attachment Form in Grants.gov is to be used to upload the budget proposal.

Failure to submit a budget narrative with the proposal will result in the elimination of the application from further consideration.

D.2.2.9 Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance (as applicable to the project)

Please answer the questions from *Section H.1. Environmental and Cultural Resource Considerations* in this section.

D.2.2.10 Required Permits or Approvals

Applicants must state in the application whether any permits or approvals are required and explain the plan for obtaining such permits or approvals.

Note that improvements to Federal facilities that are implemented through any project awarded funding through this NOFO must comply with additional requirements. The Federal government will continue to hold title to the Federal facility and any improvement that is integral to the existing operations of that facility. Please see P.L. 111-11, §9504(a)(3)(B). Reclamation may also require additional reviews and approvals prior to award to ensure that any necessary easements, land use authorizations, or special permits can be approved consistent with the requirements of 43 CFR §429, and with the requirement that the development will not impact or impair project operations or efficiency.

D.2.2.11 Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

Applicants must provide a statement that addresses if there is any overlap between the proposed project and any other active or anticipated proposals or projects in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel. If any overlap exists, applicants must provide a description of the overlap in their application for review.

Applicants must also state if the proposal submitted for consideration under this program is or is not in any way duplicative of any proposal or project that has been or will be submitted for funding consideration to any other potential funding source—whether it be Federal or non-Federal. If such a circumstance exists, applicants must detail when the other duplicative proposal(s) were submitted, to whom (Agency name and Financial Assistance program), and when funding decisions are expected to be announced. If at any time a proposal is awarded funds that would be duplicative of the funding requested from Reclamation, applicants must notify the NOFO point of contact or the Program Coordinator immediately.

D.2.2.12 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

Per 2 CFR §1402.112, “Financial Assistance Interior Regulation” applicants should state in the application if any actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of submission. Submission of a conflict-of-interest disclosure or certification statement is mandatory prior to issue of an award.

D.2.2.12.1 Applicability

This section intends to ensure that non-Federal entities and their employees take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to Federal financial assistance agreements.

In the procurement of supplies, equipment, construction, and services by recipients and by sub recipients, the conflict-of-interest provisions in 2 CFR§200.318 apply.

D.2.2.12.2 Notification

Non-Federal entities, including applicants for financial assistance awards, must disclose in writing any conflict of interest to the DOI awarding agency or pass-through entity in accordance with 2 CFR §200.112.

Recipients must establish internal controls that include, at a minimum, procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate or eliminate identified conflicts of interest. The successful applicant is responsible for notifying the Financial Assistance Officer in writing of any conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of the award, including those that have been reported by sub recipients.

D.2.2.12.3 Restrictions on Lobbying

Non-Federal entities are strictly prohibited from using funds under a grant or cooperative agreement for lobbying activities and must provide the required certifications and disclosures pursuant to 43 CFR §18 and 31 USC §1352.

D.2.2.12.4 Review Procedures

The Financial Assistance Officer will examine each conflict-of-interest disclosure on the basis of its particular facts and the nature of the proposed grant or cooperative agreement and will determine whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, develop an appropriate means for resolving it. Enforcement. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the government may be cause for termination of the award. Failure to make required disclosures may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR §200.339, Remedies for noncompliance, including suspension or debarment (see also 2 CFR §180).

D.2.2.13 Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

All U.S. states, local governments, federally recognized Indian Tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in the applicant's fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System](#). U.S. state, local government, federally recognized Indian Tribal governments, and non-profit applicants must state if your organization was or was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year. If your organization was required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year, provide the Employer Identification Number (EIN) associated with that report and state if it is available through the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse](#) website.

D.2.2.14 SF-LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if Applicable)

If applicable, a fully completed and signed SF-LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form is required if the applicant has made or agreed to make payment to any lobbying entity for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with a covered Federal action. *This form cannot be submitted by a contractor or other entity on behalf of an applicant.*

D.2.2.15 Letters of Support

You should include any letters from interested stakeholders supporting the proposed project. To ensure your proposal is accurately reviewed, please attach all letters of support as an appendix. Letters of support received after the application deadline for this NOFO will not be considered in evaluating your proposed project.

D.2.2.16 Letter of Partnership (Category B Applicants)

Category B applicants should submit a Letter of Partnership from the Category A partner, stating that they are acting in partnership with the applicant and agree to the submittal and content of the application (see Section C.1. Eligible Applicants). However, if the project is selected, a Letter of Partnership must be received prior to award.

D.2.2.17 Official Resolution

If selected, the applicant must provide prior to award an official resolution adopted by your organization's board of directors or governing body, or, for state government entities, an official authorized to commit the applicant to the financial and legal obligations associated with receipt of a financial assistance award under this NOFO, verifying:

- The identity of the official with legal authority to enter into an agreement
- The board of directors, governing body, or appropriate official who has reviewed and supports the application submitted
- That your organization will work with Reclamation to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement

An official resolution meeting the requirements set forth above is mandatory before an award of funding will be made.

D.2.2.18 Letters of Funding Commitment

If a project is selected for award under this funding opportunity and cost share funding is anticipated to be provided by a source other than the applicant, the third-party cost share must be supported with letters of commitment prior to award. Letters of commitment should identify the following elements:

- The amount of funding commitment
- The date the funds will be available to the applicant
- Any time constraints on the availability of funds
- Any other contingencies associated with the funding commitment

Cost-share funding from sources outside the applicant's organization (e.g., loans or State grants) should be secured and available to the applicant prior to award.

Reclamation will not execute a financial assistance agreement until non-Federal funding has been secured or Reclamation determines that there is enough evidence and likelihood that non-Federal funds will be available to the applicant after executing the agreement.

D.2. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110 (b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110 (d) is required to:

- Be registered in SAM before submitting an application. Instructions for registering are available at sam.gov/content/home
- Provide a valid UEI in its application
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or plan under consideration by a Federal award agency

Meeting the requirements set forth above is mandatory.

D.2.1.1. Register with the System for Award Management

Each applicant must be registered in SAM before submitting its application. Register on the SAM.gov website. The “Help” tab on the website contains User Guides and other information to assist you with registration. The Grants.gov “Register with SAM” page also provides detailed instructions. You can also contact the supporting Federal Service Desk for help registering in SAM. Once registered in SAM.gov, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM.gov registration at least once every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly encouraged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure their information is up to date and reflects changes that may have been made to the entity’s Internal Revenue Service information.

See the “Submission Requirements” section of this document below for more information on SAM.gov registration.

There is no cost to register with SAM.gov. There are third-party vendors who will charge a fee in exchange for registering entities with SAM.gov; **please be aware you can register and request help for free.**

NOTE: An organization’s SAM.gov registration process may take several weeks to complete, so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date.

Applicants that do not have an active SAM registration will not be able to submit an electronic application in Grants.gov.

D.2.1.2. Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier

You are required to register in SAM.gov and obtain a [Unique Entity Identifier](#) (UEI) prior to submitting a Federal award application. A UEI will be assigned to entities upon registering in SAM.gov.

Please see Section D.4.2.2, “Applications Submitted by Mail, Express Delivery or Courier Services,” if you are unable to submit an application electronically.

D.3. Submission Date and Time

The submission deadline for applications submitted electronically in Grants.gov is:

October 17, 2023, at 10:00 p.m. MDT.

The submission deadline for applications submitted by mail, overnight delivery, or courier is

October 17, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. MDT.

Proposals received after the application deadline will not be considered unless it can be determined that the delay was caused by Reclamation or there were technical issues with the [Grants.gov](#) application system. *Note that difficulties related to an applicant’s Grants.gov profile (e.g., incorrect organizational representative), uploading documents to Grants.gov, or an applicant’s SAM.gov registration are not considered technical issues with the Grants.gov system.*

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their application through Grants.gov, they may provide a paper copy of their full application by mail or courier.

D.3.1. Application Delivery Instructions

Applications may be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) or a paper application may be submitted to the following addresses. **We strongly encourage you to use grants.gov to submit your proposal if possible.** Under no circumstances will applications received through any other method (such as e-mail or fax) be considered eligible for award.

By mail, express/overnight delivery or courier services:

Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia-Pacific Regional Office
1150 N. Curtis Road
Boise, Idaho 83706
Attn: Nathan Moeller (CPN-7309)

If you are submitting a paper application, please notify Nathan Moeller at nmoeller@usbr.gov for approval no later than 2:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time on October 17, 2023.

D.3.2. Instructions for Submitting the Project Application

Each applicant must submit an application in accordance with the instructions contained in this section.

D.3.2.1. Applications Submitted Electronically

Electronic applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. Applicant resource documents and a full set of instructions for registering with Grants.gov and completing and submitting applications online are available at: www.grants.gov/applicants/apply-for-grants.html.

Application submission requires prior registration through Grants.gov, which may take 7 to 21 days. See the registration instructions available at www.grants.gov/applicants/apply-for-grants.html. **In addition, please note that the Grants.gov system only accepts applications submitted by individuals that are registered and active in SAM as both a user and an Authorized Organizational Representative.**

Applicants have experienced significant delays when attempting to submit applications through Grants.gov. Applicants are encouraged to submit applications several days prior to the application deadline. If you are a properly registered Grants.gov applicant and encounter problems with the Grants.gov application submission process, you must contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to obtain a case number. This case number will provide evidence of your attempt to submit an application prior to the submission deadline. If you are unable to submit your application through Grants.gov, you may provide a paper copy of the full application by mail or courier, as described in Section D.4.2.2 below.

Late applications will not be considered unless it is determined that the delay was caused by Reclamation mishandling or technical issues with the Grants.gov application system. Please note that difficulties related to an applicant's Grants.gov profile (e.g., incorrect organizational representative), uploading documents to Grants.gov, or an applicant's SAM registration are not considered technical issues with the Grants.gov system. To document a delay due to a technical issue in Grants.gov, you must furnish a Grants.gov helpdesk ticket number to nmoeller@usbr.gov that validates the delay.

D.3.2.2. Applications Submitted by Mail, Express Delivery or Courier Services

Please follow these instructions to submit your application by mail, express delivery, or courier services.

- We request that applicants submitting their application by mail or courier include a brief explanation in their application regarding why they had to submit by mail rather than electronically using grants.gov.
- Applicants should submit one copy of all application documents for hardcopy submissions. Only use a binder clip for documents submitted. Do not staple or otherwise bind application documents.
- Hard copy applications may be submitted by mail, express delivery, or courier services to the addresses identified in this NOFO.
- Materials arriving separately will not be included in the application package and may result in the application being rejected or not funded. This does not apply to letters of support, funding commitment letters, or official resolutions. Faxed and e-mailed copies of application documents will not be accepted.

D.3.2.3. Acknowledgement of Application Receipt

Applicants will receive an e-mail acknowledging receipt of the application from Grants.gov. In addition, you will receive an email acknowledgement when your application is successfully downloaded from Grants.gov. Applicants can confirm receipt of hardcopy through the tracking tools for their packages.

D.4. Intergovernmental Review

An intergovernmental review is not required for applications submissions from a U.S. state or local government prior to submission. Applicants must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to comply with the state's process under Executive Order 12372.

A list of states that have elected to participate in the intergovernmental review process are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>. Applicants in these states must contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under Executive Order 12372. The names and addresses of the SPOCs are also listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>.

D.5. Funding Restrictions

D.5.1. Pre-Award Costs

Pre-award costs are those incurred prior to the effective date of a Federal award where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award.

Eligible pre-award costs associated with the proposed project must be incurred after the posting date of this funding opportunity and are limited to costs related to the planning and design of the project including, but not limited to engineering and design, modeling, environmental and cultural studies, and permitting. If the proposed project is selected, the pre-award costs will be reviewed to determine if they are consistent with program objectives and are allowable in accordance with the authorizing legislation. Proposed pre-award costs must also be compliant with all applicable administrative and cost principles criteria established in 2 CFR Part 200 and all other requirements of this funding opportunity.

Note: Any incurrence of costs in the performance of the project prior to the issuance of a financial assistance award is at the applicant's own risk. No legal liability on the part of Reclamation for any payment may arise until funds are made available, in writing, by a Reclamation Grants Officer.

D.5.2. Project Cost Restrictions

Proposal costs. The costs for preparing and submitting an application in response to this funding opportunity, including developing data necessary to support the proposal, are not eligible project costs and must not be included in the project budget.

D.5.3. Environmental and Regulatory Compliance Costs

Depending on the potential impacts of the project, Reclamation may be able to complete its compliance activities without additional cost to the successful applicant. Where environmental or cultural resources compliance requires significant participation by Reclamation, Reclamation will add a line item for costs incurred by Reclamation to the budget during development of the financial assistance agreement and cost shared accordingly (i.e., withheld from the Federal award amount). Any costs to the successful applicant associated with compliance will be identified during the process of developing a final project budget for inclusion in the financial assistance agreement.

D.5.4. Indirect Costs

You may include indirect costs that will be incurred during the development or construction of a Project, which will not otherwise be recovered, as part of your Project budget. Show the proposed rate, cost base, and proposed amount for allowable indirect costs based on the applicable cost principles for your organization. It is not acceptable to simply incorporate indirect rates within other direct cost line items.

A non-Federal entity (other than States, local and Indian Tribal Governments) that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost agreement may include a *de minimis* rate of up to 10 percent of modified total direct costs. For further information on modified total direct costs, refer to 2 CFR§200.68.

If you do not have a federally approved indirect cost rate agreement and are proposing a rate greater than the *de minimis* 10 percent rate, include the computational basis for the indirect expense pool and corresponding allocation base for each rate. Information on “Preparing and Submitting Indirect Cost Proposals” is available from the Department’s Interior Business Center, Office of Indirect Cost Services, at <https://ibc.doi.gov/ICS/icrna>.

If the proposed project is selected for award, the successful applicant will be required to submit an indirect cost rate proposal with their cognizant agency within 3 months of award. The Federal awarding agency that provides the largest amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency for indirect costs, unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If the Department of the Interior (DOI) is your organization’s cognizant agency, the Interior Business Center (IBC) will negotiate your indirect cost rate. Contact the IBC by phone 916-930-3803 or email at ICS@ibc.doi.gov. Visit their website ibc.doi.gov/ICS/icrna, for information regarding email submission forms.

Organizations must have an active Federal award before they can submit an indirect cost rate proposal to their cognizant agency. Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award. Recipients may not shift unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

Section E. Application Review Information

E.1. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria portion of your application should be addressed in the technical proposal section. Applications should thoroughly address each criterion and any sub-criterion in the order presented below to assist in complete and accurate evaluation of your proposal.

Applications will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria listed in Table 2 and described in the subsections. If the work described in your application is a phase of a larger project, only discuss the benefits that will result directly from the work discussed in the technical project description and that is reflected in the budget, not the larger project. *Note: Projects may be prioritized to ensure balance among project types and to ensure that the projects funded address the NOFO goals.*

Table 2.—Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria: Scoring Summary		Points:
A. Water Management Challenge		30
B. Project Benefits		30
C. Project Implementation		20
D. Dissemination of Results		10
E. Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities		10
	Total	100

The following evaluation criteria will be used by the ARC to rank proposals submitted under this NOFO. ***It is suggested that applicants copy and paste the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria immediately below into their applications to ensure that all necessary information is adequately addressed.***

Note: Projects may be prioritized to ensure balance among the program task areas and to ensure that the projects address the goals and objectives of this NOFO.

E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A—Water Management Challenge(s) (30 points)

Up to **30 points** may be awarded based on the water management challenge. Applicants that demonstrate a water management challenge and the immediacy of the need will receive the most points under this criterion. Please respond and provide support for your responses to each of the following sub-criteria.

1. Describe the water management challenge(s). Describe in detail the **water management challenge** is occurring within your project area. Describe the severity of the challenge to be addressed with supporting details. For example, will your project address water supply shortfalls or uncertainties, the need to meet competing demands for water and the lack of reliable water supplies for municipal, agricultural, tribal, environmental or recreational water uses, complications arising from drought, conflicts over water, or other water management issues?
2. Describe the **concerns or outcomes** if this water management challenge is not addressed?
3. Explain **how** your project will address the water management issues identified in your response to the preceding bullets and provide support for your response. For example, will your project improve water management by supporting:
 - a. water supply reliability for municipal, agricultural, tribal, environmental or recreational water uses,
 - b. management of water deliveries,
 - c. water marketing activities,
 - d. drought management activities,
 - e. conjunctive use of ground and surface water,
 - f. water rights administration,
 - g. ability to meet endangered species requirements,
 - h. watershed health,
 - i. Restore a natural features or use a nature-based feature to reduce water supply and demand imbalances, the risk of drought or flood, or to increase water supply reliability for ecological values,
 - j. conservation and efficiency, or
 - k. other improvements to water supply reliability?

In your response, be sure to explain *how* your project will improve any of the above.

E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B—Project Benefits (30 points)

Up to **30 points** may be awarded based on the extent to which the project will result in a tool or information that will benefit stakeholders and the extent to which the tool and information will be used beyond project conclusion. Applicants that demonstrate clear benefit(s) for the project, including documentation and support for those benefits, and can explain how the project tool, information, or results will be readily applied will receive the most points under this criterion.

1. Describe how the **need for the project** was identified. Was the proposed project identified using a collaborative process with input from multiple and diverse stakeholders?
2. Describe **how** the tool, method, or information will be applied and **when** will it be applied.
 - Will the tool or information be used immediately or will additional work need to be done before the tool will be used?
3. Describe, in detail, the extent of benefits that can be expected to occur upon implementation of the project, and provide support for your responses.
 - Who will use the tool or data developed under this proposal and **how** will they benefit from the project? Support could include but is not limited to letters from stakeholders expressing support for the project and explaining how they will benefit.
 - How will the project improve *water management decisions*?
 - Describe if the results of your project will be *applicable elsewhere*. What additional work would need to be done to make the project results transferable to others?
 - To what extent will the project address the water management challenges described in E.1.1.?
4. Explain how your project complements other similar efforts in the area where the project is located. Will your project complement or add value to other, similar efforts in the area, rather than duplicate or complicate those efforts? Are there other similar efforts in the area that have used a similar methodology successfully which can be complimented? Applicants should make a reasonable effort to explore and briefly describe related ongoing projects. Consider efforts by any Federal, state, local agency, or non-governmental organizations.

E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C—Project Implementation (20 points)

Up to **20 points** may be awarded based upon the extent to which the applicant is capable of proceeding with the project upon entering into a financial assistance agreement. Applicants that describe a detailed work plan (e.g., estimated schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work and identifies major tasks, milestones, and dates) and a budget that is appropriate for the work proposed and has a reasonable level of detail will receive the most points under this criterion. Your responses should reflect an understanding of the tasks required to complete the project within the required 2-year timeframe. **Please respond and provide support for your responses to each of the following sub-criteria.**

Describe your project implementation plan:

1. Briefly describe and provide support for the approach and methodology that will be used to meet the objectives of the project. You do not need to repeat the full technical project description included in *Section D.2.2.4* under the Technical Project Description. However, you should provide support for your chosen methodology, including use of any specific models, data, or tools.
2. Describe the work plan for implementing the proposed scope of work. Such plans may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. an estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work,
 - b. milestones for each major task,
 - c. start and end dates for each task and milestones, and
 - d. costs for each task
3. Provide a summary description of the *products* that are anticipated to result from the project. These may include data, metadata, digital or electronic products, reports, and publications. *Note: using a table to list anticipated products is suggested.*
4. Who will be involved in the project as project partners? What will each partner or stakeholder's role in the project be? How will project partners and stakeholder be engaged in the project and at what stages? If you are a Category B applicant, be sure to explain how your Category A partners will be engaged in the project.
5. Identify staff with appropriate credentials and experience and describe their qualifications. Describe the process and criteria that will be used to select appropriate staff members for any positions that have not yet been filled. Describe any plans to request additional technical assistance from Reclamation or via a contract. Please answer the following:

- a. Have the project team members accomplished projects similar in scope to the proposed project in the past either as a lead or team member?
- b. Is the project team capable of proceeding with tasks within the proposed project immediately upon entering into a financial assistance agreement? If not, please explain the reason for any anticipated delay.

E.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D—Dissemination of Results (10 Points)

Up to **10 points** may be awarded for proposals that can articulate how the results will be disseminated, transferred, and communicated directly with partners and resource managers within the Western United States. **Please respond and provide support for your responses to each of the following sub-criteria.** *Note: All applicants whose projects are selected for funding will be expected to participate in at least one Reclamation-sponsored webinar to disseminate deliverable(s) and discuss ways to apply deliverables to management questions. Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on other efforts, beyond the required webinar, that they will take to disseminate the results of their project.*

Explain how project results will be disseminated, including:

Describe how the tools, frameworks, or analyses developed under the proposed scope of work will be disseminated, communicated, or made available to water resources managers who may be interested in the results.

- If the applicant is the primary beneficiary of the project, explain how the project results will be communicated internally, and to interested stakeholders and interested water resources managers in the area, if appropriate.
- If the applicant is not the primary beneficiary of the project (e.g., universities or research institutes), describe how project results will be communicated to project partners and interested water resources managers in the area.
- Describe how the project results will be shared with other water managers in the West that could use the information to support water management objectives.

E.1.5. Evaluation Criterion E—Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities (10 points)

Up to **10 points** may be awarded based on the extent that the project demonstrates support for the Biden-Harris Administration's priorities, including E.O. 14008: *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad* and E.O. 13985: *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, and the President's memorandum, *Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to Nation Relationships*.

Please address only those priorities that are applicable to your project. It is not necessary to address priorities that are not applicable to your project. A project will not necessarily receive more points simply because multiple priorities are addressed. Points will be allocated based on the degree to which the project supports one or more of the priorities listed, and whether the connection to the priority(ies) is well supported in the application.

- **Climate Change:** E.O. 14008 emphasizes the need to prioritize and take robust actions to reduce climate pollution; increase resilience to the impacts of climate change; protect public health; and conserve our lands, waters, oceans, and biodiversity.
 - If applicable, describe how the project addresses climate change and increases resiliency. For example, does the project help communities respond to or recover from drought or reduce flood risk?
 - How will the project build long-term resilience to drought? How many years will the project continue to provide benefits? Please estimate the extent to which the project will build resilience to drought and provide support for your estimate.
 - Will the proposed project reduce greenhouse gas emissions by sequestering carbon in soils, grasses, trees, and other vegetation? Does the proposed project seek to reduce or mitigate climate pollutions such as air or water pollution? Does the proposed project contribute to climate change resiliency in other ways not described above?
- **Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities:** E.O. 14008 and E.O. 13985 affirm the advancement of environmental justice and equity for all through the development and funding of programs to invest in disadvantaged or underserved communities.
 - Please use the Council on Environmental Quality's interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, available online at Explore the map - Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool ([geoplatform.gov](https://www.epa.gov/geoplatform)) to identify any disadvantaged communities that will benefit from your project.
 - If applicable, describe how the project benefits those disadvantaged or underserved communities identified using the tool. For example, does the project increase reliability of water supplies, improve water quality, provide economic growth opportunities, improve, or expand public access to natural areas or recreation, or provide other benefits in a disadvantaged or underserved community?
- **Tribal Benefits:** The Department of the Interior is committed to strengthening tribal sovereignty and the fulfillment of Federal Tribal trust responsibilities. The President's memorandum, *Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to Nation Relationships*, asserts the importance of honoring the Federal government's commitments to Tribal Nations.

- If applicable, describe how the project directly serves and/or benefits a Tribe, supports Tribally led conservation and restoration priorities, and/or if the project incorporates or benefits Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and practices.
- Does the proposed project support Reclamation's Tribal trust responsibilities or a Reclamation activity with a Tribe?

E.2. Review and Selection Process

Reclamation reserves the right to remove applications that do not meet the objectives of this NOFO. Awards will be made for projects most advantageous to the Federal Government. Award selection may be made to maintain balance among the eligible projects listed in this NOFO. The evaluation process will be comprised of the steps described in the following subsections.

E.2.1. First Level and Threshold Screening

Reclamation will conduct an initial review and threshold screening of each application submitted in response to this NOFO to determine whether the Applicant is eligible, and the application is complete and submitted on time. If Reclamation determines the Applicant is ineligible or non-responsive, Reclamation will notify the Applicant.

All application packages will be screened to ensure that:

- The application meets the completeness, eligibility and timeliness requirements stated in this NOFO.
- The applicant meets the unique entity identifier and SAM registration requirements stated in this NOFO.
- The application meets the content requirements of the NOFO package, including submission of a technical proposal and budget narrative.
- The application contains executed mandatory forms SF-424, Application for Financial Assistance and SF-424B, Assurances Form, and a completed SF-424A, Budget Information Form.

A complete application must include all requirements described in the above bullets. Any application which fails to include these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding. Reclamation reserves the right to remove an application from funding consideration during the initial screening if it is not submitted on time; does not include a SF-424; does not include a technical proposal or does not include a budget narrative. In that event, Reclamation will send notification of elimination to the applicant. If an application is missing other information, Reclamation may reach back to request that information within a specified timeframe.

E.2.2. Application Review Committee

The technical merit of the application will be reviewed by an Application Review Committee (ARC), made up of experts in relevant disciplines selected from across Reclamation. Evaluation criteria will comprise the total evaluation weight as stated in the *Section E.1. Technical Proposal: Evaluation Criteria*.

Applications will be scored against the evaluation criteria and the ARC will also review the application to ensure that the project is eligible and meets the objective of this NOFO.

During ARC review, Reclamation may contact applicants to request clarifications to the information provided, if necessary.

E.2.3. Red-Flag Review

Following the results of the ARC review, Reclamation offices will review the top-ranking applications and will identify any reasons why a proposed project would not be feasible or otherwise advisable, including environmental or cultural resources compliance issues, permitting issues, legal issues, or financial position. Additionally, the Red-Flag Review will address several of the determinations listed in Section A.4. Program Requirements.

Positive or negative past performance by the applicant and any partners in previous working relationships with Reclamation may be considered, including whether the applicant is making significant progress toward the completion of outstanding financial assistance agreements and whether the applicant is in compliance with all reporting requirements associated with previously funded projects.

In addition, during this review, Reclamation will address any specific concerns or questions raised by members of the ARC, conduct a preliminary budget review, and evaluate the applicant's ability to meet cost share as required.

E.2.4. Managerial Review

Reclamation management will prioritize projects to ensure the total amount of all awards does not exceed available funding levels. Management will also ensure that all projects meet the scope, priorities, requirements, and objectives of this NOFO. Management may also prioritize projects to ensure that multiple project types are represented. After completion of the Managerial Review, Reclamation will notify applicants whose proposals have been selected for award consideration.

E.2.5. Pre-Award Clearances and Approvals

The following pre-award clearances and approvals must be obtained before an award of funding is made. If the results of all pre-award reviews and clearances are satisfactory, an award of funding will be made once the agreement is finalized (approximately one to three months from the date of initial selection). If the results of pre-award reviews and clearances are unsatisfactory, consideration of funding for the project may be withdrawn.

E.2.5.1. Environmental Review

Reclamation will forward the proposal to the appropriate Reclamation Regional or Area Office for completion of environmental compliance, if applicable. To the extent possible, environmental compliance will be completed before a financial assistance agreement is signed by the parties. However, in most cases, the award can be completed with the release of funds contingent on completion of environmental compliance and receipt of a written Notice to Proceed from the Reclamation Grants Officer. The financial assistance agreement will describe how compliance will be carried out. Ground-disturbing activities (e.g., installation of a stream gage, biological or water quality monitoring) may not occur until environmental compliance is complete and a notice to proceed is issued by the awarding Reclamation Grants Officer.

E.2.5.2. Budget Analysis and Business Evaluation

A Reclamation Grants Officer will also conduct a detailed budget analysis and complete a business evaluation and responsibility determination. During this evaluation, the Reclamation Grants Officer will consider several factors that are important, but not quantified, such as:

- Allowability, allocability, and reasonableness of proposed costs
- Financial strength and stability of the applicant
- Past performance, including satisfactory compliance with all terms and conditions of previous awards, such as environmental compliance issues, reporting requirements, proper procurement of supplies and services, and audit compliance
- Adequacy of personnel practices, procurement procedures, and accounting policies and procedures, as established by applicable OMB circulars

E.3. Federal Award Performance Integrity Information System

Prior to making an award with a Federal total estimated amount greater than \$150,000, Reclamation is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the Responsibility/Qualification Reports in SAM.gov.

Applicants, at their option, may review information in the Responsibility/Qualification Reports and comment on any information about themselves that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and that is currently in the Responsibility/Qualification Reports. Reclamation will

consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the Responsibility/Qualification report in SAM.gov in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants

E.4. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Reclamation expects to contact potential award recipients and unsuccessful applicants in December 2023, subject to the timing and amount of final appropriations. Financial assistance agreements will be awarded to applicants that successfully pass all pre-award reviews and clearances. Award recipients will be contacted individually to discuss the time frame for the completion of their agreement.

Section F. Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive by electronic mail, a notice of selection signed by a Reclamation Grants Officer. This notice is **not** an authorization to begin performance.

F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

See the “[DOI Standard Terms and Conditions](#)” for the administrative and national policy requirements applicable to Department awards.

F.2.1. Automated Standard Application for Payments Registration

All applicants must also be registered with and willing to process all payments through the Department of Treasury Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system. All recipients with active financial assistance agreements with Reclamation must be enrolled in ASAP under the appropriate Agency Location Code(s) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number prior to the award of funds. If a recipient has multiple UEI numbers, they must separately enroll within ASAP for each unique UEI Number and/or Agency. All of the information on the enrollment process for recipients, including the enrollment initiation form, will be sent to you by ASAP staff if selected for award.

Note that if your entity is currently enrolled in the ASAP system with an agency other than Reclamation, you must enroll specifically with Reclamation in order to process payments.

F.2.2. Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

All projects being considered for award funding will require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before any ground-disturbing activity may begin. Compliance with all applicable State, Federal, and local environmental, cultural, and paleontological resource protection laws and regulations is also required, including, but not limited to, the Clean Water Act (CWA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), consultation with potentially affected Tribes, and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office.

Note: Reclamation will be the lead Federal agency for NEPA compliance and will be responsible for evaluating technical information and ensuring that natural resources, cultural, and socioeconomic concerns are appropriately addressed.

As the lead agency, Reclamation is solely responsible for determining the appropriate level of NEPA compliance. Further, Reclamation is also responsible for ensuring that findings under NEPA, and consultations, as appropriate, will support Reclamation's decision on whether to fund a project. **Environmental and cultural resources compliance costs are considered project costs and should be included in the project budget.**

Under no circumstances may an applicant begin any ground-disturbing activities (e.g., grading, clearing, and other preliminary activities) on a project before environmental and cultural resources compliance is complete, and Reclamation explicitly authorizes work to proceed. This pertains to all components of the proposed project, including those that are part of the applicant's non-Federal cost share. Reclamation will provide a successful applicant with information once such compliance is complete. An applicant that proceeds before environmental and cultural resources compliance is complete may risk forfeiting Reclamation funding under this NOFO.

F.2.3. Approvals and Permits

Recipients shall adhere to Federal, State, territorial, Tribal, and local laws, regulations, and codes, as applicable, and shall obtain all required approvals and permits. Recipients shall also coordinate and obtain approvals from site owners and operators.

F.2.4. Geospatial Data and Data Tools

All geospatial data collected for or produced through the use of the Department of the Interior financial assistance funds are required to meet all relevant standards established by the Federal Geospatial Data Committee (FGDC) as authorized by Geospatial Data Act of 2018, P.L. 115-254, Subtitle F – Geospatial Data, §751-759C, codified at 43 U.S.C. §2801–2811. the Department requires fully compliant metadata on all Geographic Information Systems (GIS) files developed for financial assistance projects. If a funded financial assistance project involves acquiring or collecting geospatial data, the successful applicant is required to search GeoPlatform.gov to determine that no existing Federal, State, local or private data meet the Government's needs and are available at no cost before acquiring or collecting additional geospatial data.

Any spatially explicit data or tools developed in the performance of an award made under this NOFO must be developed in industry standard formats that are compatible with geographic information system (GIS) platforms.

F.2.5. Intangible Property (2 CFR §200.315)

Title to intangible property acquired under a Federal award vests upon acquisition in the non-Federal entity (see §200.59 Intangible Property [of this CFR]). The non-Federal entity must use that property for the originally authorized purpose and must not encumber the property without approval of the Federal awarding agency. When no longer needed for the originally authorized purpose, disposition of the intangible property must occur in accordance with the provisions in §200.313(e) Equipment (of this CFR).

The non-Federal entity may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed, or for which ownership was acquired, under a Federal award. However, per 2 CFR 200.315 (b) the Federal awarding agency reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes, and to authorize others to do so.

The non-Federal entity is subject to applicable regulations governing patents and inventions, including government wide regulations issued by the Department of Commerce at 37 CFR §401, “Rights to Inventions Made by Nonprofit Organizations and Small Business Firms Under Government Awards, Contracts and Cooperative Agreements.”

F.2.6. Real Property, 2 CFR §200.311

Real property, equipment, and intangible property, that are acquired or improved with a Federal award must be held in trust by the non-Federal entity as trustee for the beneficiaries of the project or program under which the property was acquired or improved (2 CFR §200.316 *Property trust relationship*). Title to real property acquired or improved under a Federal award will vest upon acquisition in the non-Federal entity. Except as otherwise provided by Federal statutes or by the Federal awarding agency, real property will be used for the originally authorized purpose as long as needed for that purpose, during which time the non-Federal entity must not dispose of or encumber its title or other interests. When real property is no longer needed for the originally authorized purpose, the non-Federal entity must obtain disposition instructions from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity. As required by 2 CFR §200.329 *Reporting on real property*, recipients will be required to submit reports on the status of real property acquired or improved under a financial assistance agreement issued under this NOFO.

F.2.7. Cost Share/Match Waiver for Insular Areas

In accordance with provisions of Public Law 95-134, Title V, § 501 (1977)(codified at 48 U.S.C. 1469a), as amended by Public Law 96-205, Title V, § 601, DOI has determined that any requirement for local matching funds to be provided by government entities of an insular areas, are waived. Per the terms of 48 U.S.C. 1469a), as amended, the insular areas include the United States territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

F.3. Reporting Requirements and Distribution

If the applicant is awarded an agreement as a result of this NOFO, the applicant will be required to submit the following reports during the term of the agreement. Recipients will also be required to have a system in place to comply with these reporting requirements (see 2 CFR §170.210 for additional information).

F.3.1. Financial Reports

Recipients will be required to submit a fully completed form SF-425 Federal Financial Report on at least a semi-annual basis and with the final performance report. The SF-425 must be signed by a person legally authorized to obligate the recipient.

F.3.2. Interim Performance Reports

The specific terms and conditions pertaining to the reporting requirements will be included in the financial assistance agreement.

Interim performance reports submitted on at least a semi-annual basis, that include the following information:

- A comparison of actual accomplishments to the milestones established by the financial assistance agreement for the period
- The reasons why established milestones were not met, if applicable
- The status of milestones from the previous reporting period that were not met, if applicable
- Whether the project is on schedule and within the original cost estimate
- Any additional pertinent information or issues related to the status of the project

F.3.3. Final Performance Report

Recipients will be required to submit a final performance report encompassing the entire period of performance. The final performance report must include, but is not limited to, the following information:

- Whether the project objectives and goals were met
- Discussion of the benefits achieved by the project, including information and/or calculations supporting the benefits
- How the project demonstrates collaboration, if applicable

- Photographs documenting the project are also appreciated

Note: Reclamation may print photos with appropriate credit to the applicant. Also, final reports are public documents and may be made available on Reclamation’s website or as requested.

F.3.4. Real Property Reports

Recipients and subrecipients are required to submit status reports on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest. The required frequency of these reports will depend on the anticipated length of the Federal interest period. The Bureau will include recipient-specific real property reporting requirements, including the required standard form or data elements, reporting frequency, and report due dates, in the Notice of Award when applicable.

F.4. Disclosures

F.4.1. Conflict of Interest Disclosures

Recipients must notify the program immediately in writing of any conflict of interest that arise during the life of their Federal award, including those reported to them by any subrecipient under the award. Recipients must notify the program in writing if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal funding program or who otherwise may have been involved in the review and selection of the award. The term employee means any individual engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award.

F.4.2. Other Mandatory Disclosures

The Non-Federal entity or applicant for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Non-Federal entities that receive a Federal award including the terms and conditions outlined in 2 CFR 200, *Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters* are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to SAM.gov. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR §200.338 *Remedies for noncompliance*, including suspension or debarment.

F.5. Data Availability (2 CFR §1402.315)

All data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, valuation products or other scientific assessments in any medium or form, including

textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual, resulting from a financial assistance agreement is available for use by the Department of the Interior, including being available in a manner that is sufficient for independent verification.

The Federal Government has the right to:

1. Obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, or other scientific assessments, produced under a Federal award; and
2. Authorize others to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, or other scientific assessments, for Federal purposes, including to allow for meaningful third-party evaluation.

F.6. Freedom of Information Act

Please note that any application submitted for funding under this NOFO may be subjected to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request (5 U.S.C. §552, as amended by P.L. No. 110-175), and as a result, may be made publicly available.

In response to a FOIA request for research data relating to published research findings produced under a Federal award that were used by the Federal government in developing an agency action that has the force and effect of law, the Federal awarding agency must request, and the non-Federal entity must provide, within a reasonable time, the research data so that they can be made available to the public through the procedures established under the FOIA. If the Federal awarding agency obtains the research data solely in response to a FOIA request, the Federal awarding agency may charge the requester a reasonable fee equaling the full incremental cost of obtaining the research data. This fee should reflect costs incurred by the Federal agency and the non-Federal entity. This fee is in addition to any fees the Federal awarding agency may assess under the FOIA (5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(A)).

Published research findings mean when:

- Research findings are published in a peer-reviewed scientific or technical journal; or
- A Federal agency publicly and officially cites the research findings in support of an agency action that has the force and effect of law. “Used by the Federal government in developing an agency action that has the force and effect of law” is defined as when an agency publicly and officially cites the research findings in support of an agency action that has the force and effect of law.

Research data means the recorded factual material commonly accepted in the scientific community as necessary to validate research findings, but not any of the following: preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer reviews, or communications

with colleagues. This “recorded” material excludes physical objects (e.g., laboratory samples). Research data also does not include:

- Trade secrets, commercial information, materials necessary to be held confidential by a researcher until they are published, or similar information which is protected under law; and
- Personnel and medical information and similar information the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, such as information that could be used to identify a particular person in a research study.

Section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

An informational webinar will be scheduled this summer and information will be made available to applicants on our website and via social media. The webinar will provide general information about the Applied Science Grants NOFO, and individuals will have the opportunity to ask questions.

An additional webinar will be held for successful applicants in spring 2024 following their notice of selection to review next steps and pre-Financial Assistance Agreement procedures.

G.1. Reclamation Financial Assistance Contact

Questions regarding application and submission information and award administration may be submitted to the Grants Officer:

Name: Nathan Moeller
Email: nmoeller@usbr.gov
Phone: 208-378-5211

G.2. Reclamation Program Coordinator Contact

Questions regarding applicant and project eligibility and application review may be submitted to the appropriate point of contact below

By mail: Bureau of Reclamation
Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan
Mail Code: 86-63000
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225-0007

By e-mail: aomorgan@usbr.gov

By phone: 303-445-2906

Section H. Other Information

The following is a brief overview of NEPA, NHPA, and ESA. This information is only relevant to proposals that include measurement, monitoring, and field work. While these statutes are not the only environmental laws that may apply, they are the Federal laws that most frequently do apply. Compliance with all applicable environmental laws will be initiated by Reclamation concurrently, immediately following the initial recommendation to award a financial assistance agreement under this NOFO. The descriptions below are intended to provide you with information about the environmental compliance issues that may apply to your projects.

H.1. Environmental and Cultural Resource Considerations

To allow Reclamation to assess the probable environmental and cultural resources impacts and costs associated with each application, all applicants should consider the following list of questions focusing on the NEPA, ESA, and NHPA requirements. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. If any question is not applicable to the project, please explain why. The application should include the answers to:

- Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)? Please briefly describe all earth-disturbing work and any work that will affect the air, water, or animal habitat in the project area. Please also explain the impacts of such work on the surrounding environment and any steps that could be taken to minimize the impacts.
- Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project?
- Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as “Waters of the United States”? If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have.
- When was the water delivery system constructed?
- Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? If so, state when those features were constructed and describe the nature and timing of any extensive alterations or modifications to those features completed previously.

- Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? A cultural resources specialist at your local Reclamation office or the State Historic Preservation Office can assist in answering this question.
- Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?
- Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?
- Will the proposed project limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands?
- Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area?

H.1.1. National Environmental Policy Act

NEPA requires Federal agencies such as Reclamation to evaluate, during the decision-making process, the potential environmental effects of a proposed action and any reasonable mitigation measures. Before Reclamation can make a decision to fund an award under this NOFO, Reclamation must comply with NEPA. Compliance with NEPA can be accomplished in several ways, depending upon the degree and significance of environmental impacts associated with the proposal.

Some projects may fit within a recognized **Categorical Exclusion (CE)** to NEPA (i.e., one of the established categories of activities that generally do not have significant impacts on the environment). If a project fits within a CE, no further NEPA compliance measures are necessary. Use of a CE can involve simple identification of an applicable **Department CE** or documentation of a **Reclamation CE** using a **Categorical Exclusion Checklist (CEC)**. If a CE is being considered, Reclamation will determine the applicability of the CE and whether extraordinary circumstances (i.e., reasons that the CE cannot be applied) exist. That process can take anywhere from 1 day to about 30 days, depending upon the specific situation.

If the project does not fit within a CE, compliance with NEPA might require preparation of an **Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact (EA/FONSI)**. Generally, where no CE applies but there are not believed to be any significant impacts associated with the proposed action, an EA will be required. The EA is used to determine whether any potentially significant effects exist (which would trigger the further step of an **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**, below). If no potentially significant effects are identified, the EA process ends with the preparation of a FONSI. The EA/FONSI process is more detailed than the CE/CEC process and can take weeks or even months to complete. Consultation with other agencies and public notification are part of the EA process.

The most detailed form of NEPA compliance, where a proposed project has potentially significant environmental effects, is completion of an **EIS** and **Record of Decision**. An EIS requires months or years to complete, and the process includes considerable public involvement, including mandatory public reviews of draft documents. It is not anticipated that projects proposed under this program will require completion of an EIS.

During the NEPA process, potential impacts of a project are evaluated in context and in terms of intensity (e.g., will the proposed action affect the only native prairie in the county? Will the proposed action reduce water supplied to a wetland by 1 percent? Or 95 percent?). The best source of information concerning the potentially significant issues in a project area is the local Reclamation staff that has experience in evaluating effects in context and by intensity.

Reclamation has the sole discretion to determine what level of environmental NEPA compliance is required. If another Federal agency is involved, Reclamation will coordinate to determine the appropriate level of compliance. You are encouraged to contact your regional or area Reclamation office. See www.usbr.gov/main/offices.html with questions regarding NEPA compliance issues. You may also contact the Program Coordinator for further information (see *Section G. Agency Contacts*).

H.1.2. National Historic Preservation Act

To comply with Section 106 of the NHPA, Reclamation must consider whether a proposed project has the **potential to cause effects to historic properties**, before it can complete an award under this NOFO. Historic properties are cultural resources (historic or prehistoric districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects) that qualify for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In some cases, water delivery infrastructure that is over 50 years old can be considered a historic property that is subject to review.

If a proposal is selected for initial award, the successful applicant will work with Reclamation to complete the Section 106 process. Compliance can be accomplished in several ways, depending on how complex the issues are, including:

- If Reclamation determines that the proposed project does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, then Reclamation will document its findings and the Section 106 process will be concluded. This can take anywhere from a couple of days to one month.
- If Reclamation determines that the proposed project could have effects on historic properties, a multi-step process, involving consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer and other entities, will follow. Depending on the nature of the project and impacts to cultural resources, consultation can be complex and time consuming. The process includes:
 - A determination as to whether additional information is necessary.
 - Evaluation of the significance of identified cultural resources.

- Assessment of the effect of the project on historic properties
- A determination as to whether the project would have an adverse effect and evaluation of alternatives or modifications to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the effects.
- A Memorandum of Agreement is then used to record and implement any necessary measures. At a minimum, completion of the multi-step Section 106 process takes about two months.
- Among the types of historic properties that might be affected by projects proposed under this NOFO are **historic irrigation systems** and **archaeological sites**. An irrigation system or a component of an irrigation system (e.g., a canal or headgate) is more likely to qualify as historic if it is more than 50 years old, if it is the oldest (or an early) system/component in the surrounding area, and if the system/component has not been significantly altered or modernized. In general, proposed projects that involve ground disturbance, or the alteration of existing older structures, are more likely to have the potential to affect cultural resources. However, the level of cultural resources compliance required, and the associated cost, depends on a case-by-case review of the circumstances presented by each proposal.

You should contact your State Historic Preservation Office and your local Reclamation office's cultural resources specialist to determine what, if any, cultural resources surveys have been conducted in the project area. See www.usbr.gov/cultural/crmstaff.html for a list of Reclamation cultural resource specialists. If an applicant has previously received Federal financial assistance, it is possible that a cultural resources survey has already been completed.

H.2. Endangered Species Act

Pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA, each Federal agency is required to consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service to ensure any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to **jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or destroy or adversely modify any designated critical habitat**.

Before Reclamation can approve funding for the implementation of a proposed project, it is required to comply with Section 7 of the ESA. The steps necessary for ESA compliance vary, depending on the presence of endangered or threatened species and the effects of the proposed project. A rough overview of the possible course of ESA compliance is:

- If Reclamation can determine that there are no endangered or threatened species or designated critical habitat in the project area, then the ESA review is complete and no further compliance measures are required. This process can take anywhere from one day to one month.

- If Reclamation determines that endangered or threatened species may be affected by the project, then a **Biological Assessment** must be prepared by Reclamation. The Biological Assessment is used to help determine whether a proposed action may affect a listed species or its designated critical habitat. The Biological Assessment may result in a determination that a proposed action is **not likely to adversely affect** any endangered or threatened species. If the USFWS/NOAA Fisheries Service concurs in writing, then no further consultation is required and the ESA compliance is complete. Depending on the scope and complexity of the proposed action, preparation of a Biological Assessment can range from days to weeks or even months. The USFWS/NOAA Fisheries Service generally respond to requests for concurrence within 30 days.
- If it is determined that the project **is likely to adversely affect listed species**, further consultation (**formal consultation**) with USFWS or NOAA Fisheries Service is required to comply with the ESA. The process includes the creation of a **Biological Opinion** by the USFWS/NOAA Fisheries Service, including a determination of whether the project would **jeopardize** listed species and, if so, whether any **reasonable and prudent** alternatives to the proposed project are necessary to avoid jeopardy. Nondiscretionary **reasonable and prudent measures** and **terms and conditions** to minimize the impact of incidental take may also be included. Under the timeframes established in the ESA regulations, the Biological Opinion is issued within 135 days from the date that formal consultation was initiated, unless an extension of time is agreed upon.

The time, cost, and extent of the work necessary to comply with the ESA depends upon whether endangered or threatened species are present in the project area and, if so, whether the project might have effects on those species significant enough to require formal consultation.

ESA compliance is often conducted parallel to the NEPA compliance process and, as in the case of a CEC, documented simultaneously. The best source of information concerning the compliance with the ESA in a particular project area is the local Reclamation environmental staff that can be helpful in determining the presence of listed species and possible effects that would require consultation with the USFWS or NOAA Fisheries Service. Contact your regional or area Reclamation office, www.usbr.gov/main/offices.html with questions regarding ESA compliance issues.