U.S. EPA GREAT LAKES NATIONAL PROGRAM OFFICE
Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program
2020 Request for Applications

Federal Agency Name:	**Environmental Protection Agency**
Funding Opportunity Title:	**Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program**
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Funding Opportunity Number:	**EPA-R5-GL2020-CWMP**
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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This Request for Applications (RFA) solicits applications from eligible entities for a cooperative agreement to be awarded pursuant to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Action Plan III. Applications are requested for a project to conduct field sampling and analysis activities to support an annual assessment of status and trends of riverine, lacustrine, and barrier protected coastal wetlands across all five Great Lakes in support of the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program (GLCWMP) from 2021-2015.

Funding/Awards: Under this competition, approximately $10 million may be awarded for one cooperative agreement over a five-year period, consisting of incremental funding of about $2 million per year. Proposed projects **must** be limited to the specified project duration of five years. All incrementally funded awards will be subject to the availability of funding, future appropriations, satisfactory performance of work, and other applicable considerations.

GLRI's statutory authority to award cooperative agreements is contained in the Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322. EPA has authority to award grants and cooperative agreements for planning, research, monitoring, outreach and implementation projects in furtherance of the GLRI and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Governmental entities, including state agencies, interstate agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, institutions of higher learning (i.e., colleges and universities), and non-profit organizations (as defined at 2 CFR Part 200) are eligible to apply for funding under this RFA. Individuals, foreign organizations and governments, nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying, and "for-profit" organizations are not eligible.

Important Dates

- October 26, 2020– Applications must be received by EPA via Grants.gov (the preferred method), mail, overnight delivery, hand delivery, or courier service by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET). See Section IV for further submission information.
- November 2020 (tentative) – EPA will notify finalist.
- December 20, 2020 (tentative) – EPA will make official award.

COVID-19 Update: EPA is providing flexibilities to applicants experiencing challenges related to COVID-19. Please see the **Flexibilities Available to Organizations Impacted by COVID-19** clause in Section IV of EPA's Solicitation Clauses.

Other Application Information: For your convenience, an RFA web page has been created at https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/2020-rfa-great-lakes-coastal-wetland-monitoring-program where you will find information relating to the RFA process as well as a link to frequently asked questions (FAQs). We encourage all applicants to sign up for our mailing list and register with us at www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-news-email-list. Further submittal information is described in Section IV.

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U.S. EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
Request for Applications: EPA-R5-GL2020-CWMP

I. APPLICATION INFORMATION

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

This RFA is expected to result in the award of one cooperative agreement (hereafter collectively referred to as "grants") to help implement the GLRI. Authorization for GLRI funding is contained in the Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322.

EPA has authority to award cooperative agreements for planning, research, monitoring, outreach and implementation projects in furtherance of GLRI and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). The statutory authority to act to implement the U.S. responsibilities under GLWQA and for GLRI funding is contained in the Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322. The principal goal of GLWQA is the restoration and maintenance of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Funded activities must advance protection and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem in support of: (i) the GLRI Action Plan III and (ii) EPA's Strategic Plan. Projects must also either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or restore the Great Lakes, including projects impacting Great Lakes connecting river systems [i.e., St. Marys River, Lake St. Clair, St. Clair-Detroit River System, Niagara River, and St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States)]; or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health. Information about the GLRI can be found at www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-restoration-initiative-glri. Applications for other activities will be rejected.

The activities to be funded under this announcement support EPA's FY 2018-22 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this announcement will support Goal 1: *A Cleaner, Healthier Environment*, Objective 1.2: *Provide for Clean and Safe Water* of the EPA Strategic Plan (https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan). All applications must be for projects that support the goals and objectives identified above.

For projects with international aspects, the above statutes are supplemented, as appropriate, by the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 102(2)(F).

This RFA solicits applications from eligible entities for a cooperative agreement to be awarded pursuant to the statutory authorities referenced above and the GLRI Action Plan. Up to $10 million may be

awarded under this RFA over an approximately five-year period, consisting of incremental funding of about $2 million per year, contingent on the quality of applications received, funding availability, future appropriations, satisfactory performance of work, and other applicable considerations. Funding each year is not guaranteed. The application should include an annualized budget and budget detail narrative for the project, and a detailed workplan covering each year of the project.

All projects will be evaluated as described in Section V.

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs):

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

For purposes of this solicitation, the following are considered MSIs:

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities

3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; and

5. Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008 , 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at Predominately Black Institutions

Subawardees and/or Contractors:

If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s), including individual consultants, in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in Section III regarding "Coalitions" and to the “Contracts and Subawards” provisions at www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses (incorporated by reference in Section IV).

CWMP Background, Goals, and Objectives:

Coastal wetlands serve as important elements of a healthy and fully functioning Great Lakes ecosystem. Coastal wetlands are critical habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species during their life cycles, providing

spawning, nursery, feeding, and resting opportunities. Coastal wetlands sequester nutrients and sediment. Coastal wetlands protect shoreline property against erosion and wave damage. Nevertheless, greater than 50% of Great Lakes coastal wetlands have been lost relative to historic levels due to agricultural practices (e.g., diking, ditching) and industrial activities. Currently, approximately 500,000 acres of coastal wetlands still exist in the Great Lakes and understanding the overall quality of these remaining coastal wetland habitats is of high importance.

The lack of a standardized and robust monitoring protocol to determine the quality of coastal wetlands across the Great Lakes was highlighted by the EPA Great Lakes National Program Office (EPA-GLNPO) and the greater scientific community in the late 1990s. In response, the Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands Consortium (GLCWC) was created in 2000 with support from EPA-GLNPO and the Great Lakes Commission. The GLCWC developed and evaluated metrics and protocols for measuring ecosystem health of Great Lakes coastal wetlands. These protocols included the quantification and characterization of animal and plant communities as well as the determination of water quality and surrounding landscape characteristics at sampled locations. More information on these protocols can be viewed at: https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-monitoring.This effort resulted in the definition of coastal wetlands as wetlands whose water level fluctuations, either surface or subsurface, were influenced by changing water levels in the Great Lakes. The development of these protocols enabled federal, state, and non-governmental entities, for the first time, to begin to assess coastal wetlands across the basin in a standardized way and inform future management.

Following development of these protocols, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) provided funding necessary for EPA-GLNPO and a consortium of academic and government entities to begin a long-term comprehensive monitoring program to determine the status and trends of coastal wetlands across all the Great Lakes. To achieve this goal, a statistical design was chosen to optimize both one-time and repeat sampling of approximately 1,000 known coastal wetlands greater than >4 hectares (approximately >10 acres) in size with a surface water connection to the Great Lakes. All of the coastal wetlands that have been sampled for this effort can be viewed at: http://www.greatlakeswetlands.org/map/.

The GLRI provided support for the first 10 years (field years 2011-2020) of this long-term program. Data generated by this program has been disseminated to project managers and stakeholders for a variety of purposes. For example, CWMP data has been provided to managers and other GLRI partners looking for background and baseline information to inform protection, restoration, and enhancement activities in coastal wetlands.

The primary objective of the 2010-2015 CWMP work was to establish the statistical sampling design and to refine the methods for a standardized basin-wide coastal wetland monitoring program. The chosen sampling design used rotating panels of wetland sites to be sampled across years, ensuring system-wide conditions could be tracked continuously. The chosen monitoring parameters built upon the work of the GLCWC, with indicators for wetland condition based on amphibian, bird, invertebrate, fish, and plant community data and water quality parameters. During the first five years of CWMP sampling, conditions were assessed at all of the wetland sites that met the >4 hectare criteria, and the program showed the power of the resulting datasets to inform decision-makers on coastal wetland conservation and restoration priorities throughout the Great Lakes basin. During the first five years, considerable

progress was also made towards the development of: 1) a database management system; 2) Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs), and other methods documents; and 3) background documents on the indicators used to evaluate condition.

From 2016-2020, the program repeated the sampling of the sites. During this second round of sampling, there were also investigations and adjustments made to indicators. In addition, monitoring of additional wetland sites outside of the original sampling design was included to inform restoration project design and to help identify locations that would benefit from restoration.

The first 10 years of this EPA-GLNPO monitoring program have resulted in a greatly improved understanding of the status of Great Lakes coastal wetlands. However, it is important to note that this improved understanding was developed during a time period of significant federal investments in restoration and enhancement of coastal habitats, as well as dramatically changing lake levels. The implementation of restoration projects and the ongoing fluctuation of lake levels may be changing the trends in coastal wetland conditions in ways not yet understood.

EPA expects to provide up to approximately $10 million for one cooperative agreement over a 5-year period, consisting of incremental funding of about $2 million per year, to support: 1) the continued documentation of coastal wetland conditions summarized by lake, year, and by the three wetland types (i.e., riverine, lacustrine, barrier) identified during the first 10 years of this program; 2) the assessment of trends associated with the established coastal wetland indicators; and 3) the delivery of data to EPA consistent with the EPA coastal wetlands database structure.

Program Activities:

Applicants are expected to conduct activities through the GLCWMP in support of the above goals and objectives and may also include other activities associated with conducting monitoring, assessments and special research. The following provides a brief description of the of expected activities; more extensive details can be found in Section IV.D.2.

1. ***Technical Process and Study Design***
   Applicants must outline an approach for monitoring coastal wetlands that maintains continuity with previous work and proposes any supplementary data collection (if needed).

   a. *Monitoring Approach to Maximize Coastal Wetland Characterization and Maintain Historical Data Continuity*
      Applicants are expected to propose a basin-scale monitoring program that allows for the greatest incorporation of individual coastal wetland sites and types into a monitoring approach that determines status and trends by lake, year, and wetland type. Applications must demonstrate the capability and intent to use and/or modify the existing coastal wetland monitoring sampling design and protocols in order to maintain continuity between the historical data and new data to be collected. Past monitoring protocols and analytical methodology can be viewed at: https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-monitoring/summary-great-

lakes-coastal-wetland-monitoring-program-cwmp. Applications that do not demonstrate how they will ensure continuity and comparability of sampling and analytical methods with historic GLCWMP data will be rejected.

b. *Collaboration with EPA on incorporation of Additional Coastal Wetland Sites Above Study Design Needs*
During the first two cycles of the CWMP, some additional wetlands outside the base design mentioned in Section I.1.a. were incorporated into the monitoring program to inform decisions related to coastal wetland restoration and or protection, as well as to assess wetland areas of local or regional interest and significance that are not part of the base design. Additional sites can be added to future sampling efforts provided that the applicant coordinates with EPA on the inclusion of such additional wetlands. Applicants will outline a systematic approach and process to collaborate with EPA and incorporate additional coastal wetland sites identified into the monitoring program while not comprising overall study objectives, study designs, and data quality.

c. *Special Studies and Applied Research*
Applicants are expected to discuss how additional special studies and/or enhancements to the long-term monitoring program will be implemented.

2. *Data Management, Interpretation, and Dissemination*
Applicants are expected to manage data generated through monitoring and assessment and to submit the data to EPA in electronic format. Applicants must interpret data through statistical analysis and report findings to the EPA, publish in peer-reviewed venues, and contribute to annual GLCWMP technical reports. Applicants should include a detailed plan for data management that accommodates large data sets including spatial/GIS data. Semiannual progress summaries and a final report at the end of the five-year cycle are also required. A brief summary of the results may be requested for inclusion in up to two GLWQA State of the Great Lakes Reports.

3. *Quality Assurance and Quality Control*
Applicants are expected to develop, implement, and maintain a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). See EPA's QAPP guidance for further information on QAPP requirements (https://www.epa.gov/quality/guidance-quality-assurance-project-plans-epa-qag-5).

Required Activities: To be eligible under this request, applicants must demonstrate how they will:

- Assess and report on annual status and trends (during 2021-2025) of the condition indicators (water quality, vegetation, anuran, bird, fish, macroinvertebrates) for riverine, lacustrine, and barrier protected coastal wetlands (see https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-monitoring) across all five Great Lakes, in both U.S. and Canadian waters, including connecting channels, while maintaining continuity with previous coastal wetland monitoring;
- Update EPA's coastal wetlands database in a manner that provides timely information on survey results;

- Identify specific elements of existing protocols (e.g., sampled taxa groups, seasons, wetland zones) that could be changed to improve the accuracy of the indicator outputs or overall assessment or to address issues such as high-water levels;
- Deliver to EPA the data and information needed for annual reporting on coastal wetland indicators consistent with previous State of the Great Lakes Reports or other EPA reporting requirements;
- Engage and collaborate with local, state, and tribal environmental managers, academia and/or other interested stakeholders seeking to use collected data for on-the ground management of coastal wetlands; and
- Communicate and collaborate with the EPA GLCWMP Technical Lead to revise and define the contaminants to monitor according to federal, state and tribal priorities.

Outputs and Outcomes

For purposes of this RFA:

- The term "output" means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable over the term of the cooperative agreement funding period.
- The term "outcome" means the result, effect or consequence that will be achieved by carrying out an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within a cooperative agreement funding period.

Outputs must include one or more of the following and applicants **must** link proposed outputs to the GLRI Action Plan III Measures of Progress or goals and objectives:

- A quantification of Great Lakes coastal wetland quality with attention to continuity and consistency of those measurements with previous protocols, so that trend data are not biased by changes in program operations or personnel;
- An evaluation of the spatial and temporal trends of coastal wetland quality in the Great Lakes using both raw and summarized data by lake, year, and wetland type for each indicator;
- An evaluation of elements of the protocols that are most sensitive to representing coastal wetland quality and changes due to anthropogenic perturbations and targeted restorations activities;
- Documentation of additional coastal wetlands sampled outside of the study design;
- Sample collection, sample analysis, data management, data interpretation, statistical analysis, and report writing;
- Development of Great Lakes scientists through the education of graduate and undergraduate students in Great Lakes ecosystem science;
- Dissemination of results via peer-reviewed journal articles and other media; and

- Development of coastal wetland indicator reports consistent with previous State of the Great Lakes report formats

Applicants should also demonstrate how their proposed project will achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

- Increased understanding of structure and function of Great Lakes coastal wetlands across a gradient of geographies and human impacts including degradation and restoration;
- Increased understanding of efficient and cost-saving sampling methods to continue to track Great Lakes coastal wetland quality long-term (e.g., >10 years)

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Amounts, Targets, and Number of Projects: Approximately $10 million in EPA funding is expected to be awarded under this RFA for one cooperative agreement over an approximately 5-year period, consisting of incremental funding of approximately $2 million per year. Awarding and funding of the cooperative agreement is contingent upon funding availability, the quality of applications received and other applicable considerations. The anticipated total amount and annual increments are estimates only and are being provided solely for application preparation purposes. Applications requesting funding above the anticipated total amount will not be considered.

The actual total and incremental award amount may differ from what is estimated for many reasons, including funding availability. In addition, EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no award under this announcement or make an award for less than expected.

Anticipated Project Start and End Dates: This Request for Applications (RFA) instructs applicants to submit certifications and other documentation required for a full and complete funding package so that their projects could, if selected, proceed expeditiously. Applications should specify a start date on or around, November 1, 2020 and must specify an end date no later than October 31, 2025.

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

Funding Type: The successful applicant will be issued a cooperative agreement. EPA intends to award a cooperative agreement under this solicitation. Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work being funded. EPA expects to have substantial involvement in this project in the form of technical assistance, network guidance, use of the R/V *Lake Guardian* as appropriate, provision of historic data, evaluation of project progress, and quantification and reporting of results. EPA will negotiate the precise terms and conditions of "substantial involvement" as part of the award process. Federal involvement may include close monitoring of the successful recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant; collaboration during the performance of the scope of work; in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, as appropriate, review of proposed procurements; approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recpient); and/or review and comment on the content of printed or electronic publications prepared. EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.

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

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

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Applicant Eligibility (CFDA 66.469): Qualified non-federal entities eligible to apply for grants include non-federal governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, and institutions. This includes state agencies; any agency or instrumentality of local government; interstate agencies; federally-recognized tribes and tribal organizations; colleges and universities; non-profit organizations; and other public or non-profit private agencies, institutions, and organizations.

Nonprofit Definition: Non-profit organization, as defined by 2 CFR 200.70, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve and/or expand its operations. Note that 2 CFR 200.70 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. While not considered to be a non-profit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR 200.70, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA

Note that 2 CFR Part 200 specifically excludes the following types of organizations from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation: (i) institutions of higher education; and (ii) state, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments. While not considered to be a non-profit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, Institutions of Higher Education and state, local and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA.

Encouraging Minority Serving Institutions To Compete: Eligible Minority Serving Institutions, as described in Section I, are strongly encouraged to apply for funding under this competition.

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

Coalitions: Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity **must** be responsible for the grant. Coalitions **must** identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subawardees of the recipient. Subawards and subgrants **must** be consistent with the definitions of those terms in 2 CFR 200.92. The recipient that administers the grant will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.331(d), subrecipients or subgrantees are accountable to the recipient or grantee for proper use of EPA funding.

Coalitions may not include for-profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards. For-profit organizations are eligible to receive contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR 200.319, as applicable. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. (Please see 2 CFR 1500.9, formerly at 40 CFR 30.27(b) or 31.36(j), as applicable.) For additional information, please review the following Federal Register: edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-7867.pdf.

Match or Cost-Share: There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement as a condition of eligibility under this RFA.

Threshold Eligibility Criteria: These are requirements that, if not met by the applicant by the time of application submission, will result in elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications for eligible activities from eligible entities that meet these criteria by the time of application

submission will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this RFA. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified by email within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

A. Applications **must** substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this RFA or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is stated in Section IV with respect to the application, of parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
B. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this announcement to ensure that their application is timely submitted.
C. Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues. An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with Matt Pawlowski (pawlowski.matthew@epa.gov) as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
D. Unless specifically excluded under this RFA, assistance is available to eligible applicants for planning, research, monitoring, outreach, and implementation of the GLRI and GLWQA. Proposed projects must also either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or restore the Great Lakes, including projects impacting connecting waterways such as Lake St. Clair and the St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States); or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health. Applications for other activities will be rejected.
E. Applications requesting funding above the anticipated total amount specified in Section II ($10 million) will not be considered.
F. Applications for projects lasting beyond the maximum end date of October 31, 2025 will be rejected.

Ineligible Activities: If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, including, but not limited to, those listed above, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

Applicants should contact the applicable individual listed in Section VII with any questions about the threshold eligibility requirements.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

Applicants, except as noted below, must apply electronically through Grants.gov under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If an applicant does not have the technical capability to apply electronically through Grants.gov because of limited or no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials to Grants.gov, the applicant must contact OGDWaivers@epa.gov or the address listed below in writing (e.g., by hard copy, email) at least 15 calendar days prior to the submission deadline under this announcement to request approval to submit their application materials through an alternate method.

Mailing Address:
OGD Waivers
c/o Jessica Durand
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.
Mail Code: 3903R
Washington, DC 20460

Courier Address:
OGD Waivers
c/o Jessica Durand
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Rm # 51278
Washington, DC 20004

In the request, the applicant must include the following information:

1. Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
2. Organization Name and DUNS
3. Organization's Contact Information (email address and phone number)
4. Explanation of how they lack the technical capability to apply electronically through Grants.gov because of 1) limited internet access or 2) no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials through Grants.gov.

EPA will only consider alternate submission exception requests based on the reasons stated above and will timely respond to the request--all other requests will be denied. If an alternate submission method is approved, the applicant will receive documentation of this approval and further instructions on how to apply under this announcement. Applicants will be required to submit the documentation of approval

with any initial application submitted under the alternative method. In addition, any submittal through an alternative method must comply with all applicable requirements and deadlines in the announcement including the submission deadline and requirements regarding proposal content and page limits (although the documentation of approval of an alternate submission method will not count against any page limits).

If an exception is granted, it is valid for submissions to EPA for the remainder of the entire calendar year in which the exception was approved and can be used to justify alternative submission methods for application submissions made through December 31 of the calendar year in which the exception was approved (e.g., if the exception was approved on March 1, 2019, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to EPA through December 31, 2019). Applicants need only request an exception once in a calendar year and all exceptions will expire on December 31 of that calendar year. Applicants must request a new exception from required electronic submission through Grants.gov for submissions for any succeeding calendar year. For example, if there is a competitive opportunity issued on December 1, 2018 with a submission deadline of January 15, 2019, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2019.

NOTE: The process described in this section is only for requesting alternate submission methods. All other inquiries about this announcement must be directed to the Agency Contact listed in Section VII of the announcement. Queries or requests submitted to the email address identified above for any reason other than to request an alternate submission method will not be acknowledged or answered.

B. Grants.gov Application Submission Instructions

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through Grants.gov, go to Grants.gov and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then go to the "Get Registered" link on the page. If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. DUNS number) and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through Grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the submission deadline. Registration on Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and DUNS number assignment is FREE.

Applicants need to ensure that the AOR who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose Unique Entity Identifier (e.g., DUNS number) is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the Unique Entity Identifier listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to Grants.gov and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then "Apply for Grants" from the dropdown menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. Please note: To apply through Grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit Adobe Reader Compatibility Information on Grants.gov

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on Grants.gov. Go to Grants.gov and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, **EPA-R5-GL2020-CWMP**, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.469), in the appropriate field and click the Search button.

Alternatively, you may be able to access the application package by clicking on the Application Package button at the top right of the synopsis page for the announcement on Grants.gov. To find the synopsis page, go to Grants.gov and click "Browse Agencies" in the middle of the page and then go to "Environmental Protection Agency" to find the EPA funding opportunities.

Please Note: All applications must now be submitted through Grants.gov using the "Workspace" feature. Information on the Workspace feature can be found at the Grants.gov Workspace Overview Page.

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov no later than **October 26, 2020**, 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time (ET). Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below using the Grants.gov application package. that you downloaded using the instructions above. All documents must be submitted as PDF files.

Application Materials: The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

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

Optional Documents:

6. This is requested before time of award.
7. Resumes and/ or CVs
8. Other Attachments, if applicable

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from Grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Matt Pawlowski at 312-886-7834. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

Technical Issues with Submission: Once the application package has been completed, the "Submit" button should be enabled. If the "Submit" button is not active, please call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Applicants should save the completed application package with two different file names before providing it to the AOR to avoid having to re-create the package should submission problems be experienced, or a revised application needs to be submitted.

Submitting the Application: The application package must be transferred to Grants.gov by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the "submit" button of the application package. The Internet browser will launch, and a sign-in page will appear. Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation. The Grants.gov support desk operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays. A successful transfer will end with an on-screen acknowledgement. For documentation purposes, print or screen capture this acknowledgement. If a submission problem occurs, reboot the computer – turning the power off may be necessary – and re-attempt the submission.

NOTE: Grants.gov issues a "case number" upon a request for assistance.

Transmission Difficulties: If transmission difficulties result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application, and following the above instructions does not resolve the problem so that the application is submitted to Grants.gov by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to pawlowski.matthew@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Matt Pawlowski at 312-886-7834. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.

A. If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be sure to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated

to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Matt Pawlowski at 312-886-7834.

B. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, send an email message to pawlowski.matthew@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the Grants.gov case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.

C. Grants.gov rejection of the application package: If a notification is received from Grants.gov stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal promptly send an email to pawlowski.matthew@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by Grants.gov the entire application should be attached in PDF format.

NOTE: Successful submission through Grants.gov or via email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

C. Content of Application Submission

The application package must include all of the following materials:

1. Grant Application Forms: Please complete the forms as appropriate.

a. Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance. Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711.
b. Standard Form 424A, *Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs*
c. EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report for All Applicants Requesting Federal Financial Assistance
d. EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contacts Form
e. Project Narrative Attachment Form (See Section IV.C.2. below for additional information)
f. Other Attachment Form, if applicable (See Section IV.C.8. below for additional information)

2. Narrative Proposal: Narrative Proposals (including the Summary Information Page, Workplan, Detailed Budget Narrative, Maps, Charts and Figures, and Meeting/Conference/Workshop Information) must be no more than 30single-spaced pages in length and include the items below (Sections IV.C.2.1 - IV.C.2.7) in the requested order. Excess pages will not be reviewed. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures must be included in the Narrative Proposal file. They may be included within the body of the workplan or as an appendix. In either case, inclusion of those items will be counted against the 30-page limit. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures that are submitted as a separate attachment will not be reviewed.

Each Narrative Proposal must be formatted for 8½" x 11" paper and should use no smaller than an 11-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Do not use a "double column" (aka newspaper) format.

Readability is of paramount importance. Do not include more than one application in any file. Please do not zip the file or use a zip extension for your file because it will not be accepted.

1. **Summary Information Page (should not exceed one page):**

   Funding Opportunity Number. The RFA number **EPA-R5-GL2020-CWMP**

   a. **Project Title**. Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience.
   b. **Applicant Information.** Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, and email address. Do not include private information.
   c. **Proposed Funding Request.** The total dollar amount requested from EPA. (Make sure it is within the limits specified in Section II or your application will be rejected.)
   d. **Project Duration.** Provide beginning and ending dates. See "Anticipated Start and End Dates" in Section II.
   e. **Brief Project Description.** Summarize the proposed project in 100 words or less in a clear and succinct manner using PLAIN LANGUAGE, including expected outputs, outcomes and environmental benefits resulting from implementation of the project. Include environmental KEY TERMS that could be used as search terms (e.g., water quality, toxins, mercury, etc.). Do not use acronyms. Should the proposal be selected, and a grant awarded, this description may be posted to the EPA Web. EPA reserves the right to make unilateral changes to conform to posting requirements. Examples can be found here.
   f. **Project Location**. Specify a single, representative project location within the Great Lakes basin, including 8- or 12-digit HUC code available here, and latitude and longitude specifying decimal degrees available here, **even if the work will be done at multiple locations or by applicants who are located outside the Great Lakes basin. Please include the reason for the location you identify if that is not self-evident.**

2. **Work Plan:** The Work Plan for the proposed project **must** explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III of this RFA (including the threshold eligibility criteria in Section III) and **must** address each of the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V. Each Work Plan should be organized in the order and with the headings and information requested below. Details and associated point values for each section of the workplan are described in RFA Section V (Application Review) below.

   a. ***Technical Process and Study Design***
   Applicants should describe with specificity the nature of the proposed project including what will be done, by whom, how, and when it will be accomplished. Outline the steps to be taken and the significant milestones to be achieved to complete the proposed project as well as the estimated dates of these achievements, including the submittal of the final report.

Include a statement of the project's relevance to the Great Lakes, particularly: (1) the needs and priorities of the GLRI Action Plan III; or (2) Great Lakes protection and restoration pursuant to Focus Area 4 (Habitats and Species) Objective 4.1 (Protect and restore communities of native aquatic and terrestrial species important to the Great Lakes) of the Fiscal Year 2019-2024 Action Plan and the EPA Strategic Plan. It is sufficient for this purpose to include a general statement of how the project will protect and restore the Great Lakes ecosystem without specifying a connection to the strategic measures for the Great Lakes that are included in the EPA Strategic Plan.

Describe the process by which the applicant will implement a monitoring and assessment approach as well as any needed supplementary data collection.

i. *Monitoring Approach to Maximize Coastal Wetland Characterization and Maintain Historical Data Continuity*
   Describe a basin-scale monitoring program design that allows for the greatest incorporation of individual coastal wetland sites and types into a monitoring approach that determines status and trends of each indicator by lake, year, and wetland type.

ii. *Incorporation of Additional Coastal Wetlands into Study Design*
   Describe an approach to coordinate with EPA on the inclusion of additional coastal wetlands into the monitoring program. Outline a systematic approach and process for collaborating with EPA and incorporating additional coastal wetland sites into an ongoing monitoring program while not compromising overall study objectives, study design, and data quality. Additional sites outside the probabilistic design in IV.D.2.a.i. can be added to the sampling list each year, after consulting and coordinating with EPA. These additional sites might include sites being considered for or undergoing restoration and/or protection to assist other agencies in deciding on which sites restoration and protection efforts should best be spent. The approach for sampling these sites should indicate how the sampling will address questions related to the specific restoration or protection goals at these sites. Sampling of these additional sites should not conflict with the completion of sampling of sites for the base design.

iii. *Special Studies and Applied Research*
   Discuss how additional special studies and/or enhancements to the long-term monitoring program will implemented. As an example, applicants may discuss how the monitoring design will be implemented to coincide with the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative lake schedule. Applied research activities are not required for a successful application; however, applicants may score higher in the Technical Ability and Study Design criteria to the extent they demonstrate an appropriate rationale and workplan for the proposed additional research. Research topics may include an expansion, testing, refinement etc. of new or supplementary protocols; measurement of biota/abiota conditions in areas immediately outside coastal wetlands but important to understanding status or trends within coastal wetlands; or other research.

b. ***Data Management, Interpretation, and Dissemination***
Applicants are expected to manage data generated through sample collection and analysis and submit to EPA. Applicants are also expected to interpret data through statistical analysis and report findings to EPA. Applicants should discuss project elements and processes that allow field and lab data to be efficiently managed and interpreted year-to-year. Specific details on formatting requirements and data submission timelines will be agreed upon with the selected applicant in a statement of work. Semiannual progress summaries and a final report at the end of the five-year cycle are also required. A brief summary of the results may be requested for inclusion in up to two GLWQA State of the Great Lakes Reports.

c. ***Quality Assurance and Quality Control***
Applicants are expected to develop, implement, and maintain a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). See EPA's QAPP guidance for further information on QAPP requirements.

3. **Results:** Outputs and Outcomes: Specify the estimated quantitative and qualitative expected results (outputs and outcomes) of the proposed project including but not limited to those specifically identified in Section I, as well as:
   - the GLRI Action Plan III goal of reporting on GLRI progress and Great Lakes ecosystem health;
   - the GLRI Action Plan III commitment to issue GLWQA triennial State of the Lakes reports, and;
   - the approach and measurements that will be used to track and measure progress towards achieving the applicable outputs and outcomes.

   Applicants should demonstrate how the project will achieve the desired results. Provide a timetable or schedule with target dates projected for major tasks, accomplishments and deliverables.

   Also include a statement of the project's relevance to the Great Lakes, particularly how the results will address the needs and priorities of the GLRI Action Plan and/or the GLWQA.

4. **Collaboration:** Applicants will be evaluated on their approach for promoting and/or obtaining collaboration and support from local, state and tribal environmental managers, academia, and/or other interested stakeholders in performing the project. Applicants should list the proposed groups that will be involved in the project and any related projects and studies, and what each of the groups' roles will be in the project's staffing, funding, design and implementation.

   Describe the type of collaboration/support proposed, how you will ensure that it will materialize during project performance, and what role it will play in the overall project. Any letters demonstrating evidence of collaboration and support from the public or private sector should be attached as a separate submittal document and will not count towards the narrative proposal page limit. Describe how you will coordinate activities of the project with related or complementary projects and studies. IF YOU INTEND TO PROVIDE EPA FUNDS TO ANY COLLABORATING ORGANIZATION, PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW THE PROVISIONS ON "CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS" at: www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses.

   If you do not plan on collaborating with other groups in project performance, demonstrate how you will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such collaboration. Applicants proposing to provide a voluntary cost-match or other form of leveraging to demonstrate collaboration and support for the project should describe that in this section in accordance with the voluntary cost-share requirements in Section III of this announcement.

5. **Programmatic Capability and Past Performance:** Submit a list (of no more than five) federally [1] (including but not limited to previous GLRI awards from EPA or other federal sources) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (preferably EPA agreements) and describe: (1) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements; and (2) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements. For all EPA grants listed, include the EPA Grant Number. In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current and prior federal agency grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant).

   NOTE: If you have previously received a GLRI award or awards, you should list the award(s) and provide the information described above. In addition, for EPA GLRI awards issued in 2010 to 2019 please provide an explanation of and documentation supporting your quarterly rate of expenditure on those prior GLRI projects up through the date of the applicant's submission under this solicitation.

   If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). *If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.*

   In addition, provide information on your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

   Demonstrated expertise should include publications in the literature relevant to the Great Lakes coastal wetlands science. Provide information on your organizational experience and your plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources (or the ability to obtain them) to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. This information should be supported by resumes or *curricula vitae* for key staff as defined in document 8 of Section IV.

[1] Assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements, but not federal or other contracts.

6. **Education/Outreach:** Applicants should describe how they intend to educate and train undergraduate and graduate students in Great Lakes environmental monitoring as part of the project.

   Applicants should demonstrate that the project will work with EPA to effectively disseminate data and reports for use by local, state, and tribal environmental managers, academia and/or other interested stakeholders. The applicant must also specify plans to work with EPA for timely information transfer, including annual interpretive reports, presentations at meetings and conferences, journal articles, textbooks, Internet postings, and peer-reviewed publications.

   Applicants should describe how project results will be disseminated to interested stakeholders. Applicants should demonstrate their track record of outreach to citizens on environmental issues and discuss the potential of the project for transferability and applicability to other places in accordance with the application review criteria in Section V.

7. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Applicants should clearly explain how EPA funds and any voluntary cost-shares will be used. For guidance, see Appendix 1. Use this section to provide a narrative description of the budget found in the SF-424A. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs. Applicants should use whole dollar amounts. Applicants should include costs for quality system documentation (i.e., quality assurance project plans or quality management plans) and environmental and regulatory compliance (e.g., costs for assisting EPA with compliance by conducting surveys and analysis to identify whether protected resources are in the project location and, if so, whether there will be any effects; costs associated with potential mitigation measures; etc.). Applicants that do not include such costs may have to fund these and other overlooked costs out of their own funds.

   As part of the detailed budget narrative, applicants should explain their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. Please include an explanation of expenditure projections, with quarterly fiscal projections and milestones, for the life of the grant.

8. **Other Attachments:** The additional attachments listed in Section IV.C.1.f are not part of the Narrative Proposal and are not included in the 30-page limit; however, forms 7 and 8 as described in Section IV.B may, as appropriate, be considered during evaluations. For additional information about each of these attachments, see the descriptions contained in Section IV.B.

D. Submission Date and Times: The closing date and time for submission of applications is October 26, 2020, 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time (ET). Applications submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

E. Notification

See Section VII for contact information. All applicants will be contacted following selections to tell them whether they have been selected. Selection information will also be posted to a page linked to: https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/2020-rfa-great-lakes-coastal-wetland-monitoring-program.

F. Subawardees and/or Contractors

If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s), including individual consultants, in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in Section III regarding "Coalitions" and to the "Contracts and Subawards" provisions found here.

G. Information provided to EPA

Before applying for an award, applicants should be aware that under Public Law No. 105-277, data produced under an award, and any information provided to EPA, is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

H. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated Into RFA

Additional provisions that apply to this RFA and/or awards made under this RFA, including but not limited to those related to confidential business information, application assistance and communications, management fees, contracts and subawards under grants, and duplicate funding can be found here.

These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants **must** review them when preparing proposals for this RFA. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in Section VII of this RFA to obtain the provisions.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. Application Review

Applications meeting the threshold eligibility criteria in Section III will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth below. Applicants should directly and explicitly address these criteria as part of their Narrative Proposal (specifically Sections IV.C.2.2 - IV.C.2.6) and application submission. Each submittal will be rated under a point system, with a total of 100 points possible.

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

1. Technical Ability and Study Design – 45 points
   a. *Technical Process and Study Design (30 points)*
      i. *Monitoring Approach to Maximize Coastal Wetland Characterization and Maintain Historical Data Continuity (20 points)*
      Applicants will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate a study design and monitoring protocols that continue to determine status and trends of Great Lakes coastal wetlands while maintaining continuity with past efforts, protocols, and indicators.
      ii. *Incorporation of Additional Coastal Wetlands into Study Design (5 points)*
      Applicants will be evaluated on how well they design an approach to work with EPA to include jointly identified, additional sites into the monitoring program.
      iii. *Special Studies and Applied Research (5 points)*
      Applicants will be evaluated on the quality of proposed monitoring activities that supplement and support the test new protocols important to understanding the quality and impacts of coastal wetlands restoration, and/or refine existing protocol based on components most sensitive to coastal wetland quality.

   b. *Data Management, Interpretation, Statistical analysis, and Report writing and Dissemination (10 points)*

      With large quantities of data being generated, a comprehensive and efficient data management system is necessary. Applicants must demonstrate how they will submit quality-assured analytical results within 10 months (or other EPA-approved timeframe) of receipt of samples in their laboratory (i.e., submit data on all 2021 samples collected in September 2021 by June 2022). Applicants are expected to submit data to the EPA GLCWMP Technical Lead.

      The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) directs the United States and Canada to "establish and maintain comprehensive, science-based ecosystem indicators to assess the state of the Great Lakes, to anticipate emerging threats and to measure progress…" GLWQA also directs the United States and Canada to identify and assess "the occurrence, sources, transport and impact of chemicals of mutual concern, including spatial and temporal trends in the atmosphere, in aquatic biota, wildlife, water and sediments." Applicants are expected to demonstrate how they will collaborate with the EPA GLCWMP Technical Lead to report on the status and trends coastal wetlands conditions in the Great Lakes.

      A key project component is to ensure that the surveillance information generated is made available to the Great Lakes community in a wide variety of formats, including reports, scientific journal articles and internet products. It is also important that any new information generated be placed into a historical perspective so that determinations may be made of how ecological conditions in coastal wetland conditions are changing over time and space. EPA can provide historical GLCMP data for these purposes. Applicants will be evaluated on the extent to which their proposed work will further the development of the body of knowledge related to Great Lakes coastal wetlands. The advancement of

scientific knowledge may include the use of ancillary data sources; publishing project results in scientific journals; collaboration with other long-term monitoring programs, and furthering the education of undergraduate, graduate students and post-doctoral candidates in the Great Lakes ecosystem research.

c. *Quality Assurance and Quality Control (5 points)*
Applicants are expected to develop, implement, and maintain a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). The QAPP details project organization and responsibility, sampling procedures, sample custody, analytical procedures, data reduction, validation, internal quality control checks and preventative maintenance. Applicants should discuss their plans for ensuring the continuity and consistency of GLCWMP measurements through reproducible quality assurance and quality control samples (e.g., invertebrate sorting QA checks, instrument calibration and checks, and laboratory duplicates for water quality parameters). See EPA's QAPP guidance for further information on QAPP requirements (https://www.epa.gov/quality/guidance-quality-assurance-project-plans-epa-qag-5).

2. Results– 15 points
   a. *Output (10 points)*
   Specify the estimated quantitative outputs of the proposed project including but not limited to those specifically identified in Section I, any other applicable objectives or measures from the GLRI Action Plan III (e.g., reporting on GLRI progress and Great Lakes ecosystem health, GLWQA triennial State of the Lakes reports), and the approach and measurements that will be used to track and measure your progress towards achieving the applicable outputs. Demonstrate how the project will achieve the desired results.
   b. *Outcome (5 points)*
   Specify the estimated qualitative output of the proposed project and how the output factors into the goals of the GLRI Action Plan III, the 2012 GLWQA, and EPA's FY18-22 U.S. EPA Strategic Plan Goal 1: A Cleaner, Healthier Environment. Please identify how the project outcomes can be assessed and tracked. Demonstrate how the project will achieve the desired results.

3. Collaboration – 5 points
   Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate that they will work in partnership with appropriate partners to effectively and efficiently implement the proposed project. Applicants may score higher on this criterion to the extent they demonstrate in their Narrative Proposal how the project will effectively disseminate data and reports for use by state, tribal, and local environmental managers and academia.

   Applicants should list the proposed partners that will be involved in the project and any related projects and studies, and what each of the partners' roles will be in the project's staffing, funding, design and implementation. Describe the type of collaboration and support

proposed, how you will ensure that it will materialize during project performance, and what role it will play in the overall project. (Any letters demonstrating evidence of collaboration and support from the public or private sector should be attached as part of the Application Materials.) Describe how you will coordinate activities of the project with related or complementary projects and studies. If you intend to provide EPA funds to any collaborating organization, please carefully review provisions on "Contracts and Subawards" here. Applicants proposing to provide a voluntary cost-match or other form of leveraging to demonstrate collaboration and support for the project should describe that in this section in accordance with the voluntary cost-share requirements in Section III of this announcement.

4. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance –10 points
   Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:
   a. *2.5 points* – past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C.2.5 of the announcement,
   b. *2.5 points* – history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in Section IV.C.2.5 of the announcement including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports and adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements (and if not, why not),
   c. *2.5 points* – organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and
   d. *2.5 points* – staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

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

   NOTE: Points may be reduced from an applicant's score under item (a), above, if it has previously been awarded GLRI funds and such funds, or a significant portion of them, have not been expended expeditiously as of the date of the applicant's submission without adequate explanation. Applicants must provide an explanation if they have failed to expeditiously expend previously awarded GLRI funds or a significant portion thereof.

   NOTE: Points may be reduced from an applicant's score under part c. of this criterion if the applicant, without adequate explanation, has not demonstrated an ability to timely comply with current American National Standard Specifications and Guidelines for Quality Systems for Environmental Data Collection and Environmental Technology Programs, ANSI/ASQC E4-1994.

5. Education/Outreach – 5 points
   Applicants will be evaluated based on the effectiveness of their education/outreach plans to work with EPA to disseminate project results to interested stakeholders including, but not limited to, whether the applicant has a demonstrated track record of outreach to inform citizens on environmental issues and the potential of the project for transferability and applicability to other places.

6. Budget (20 points)
   a. *Detailed Budget Narrative – 15 points*
      Describe with specificity your plan for how EPA funds will be used. Applications will be evaluated based on the reasonableness, necessity, and allowability[2] (of costs) of the proposed budget for the level of work proposed and for the expected benefits to be achieved.
      An applicant's budget and budget narrative must account for both federal funds and any non-federal funds (e.g., any voluntary cost-share/match if applicable). Applicants must precisely describe in their budget narrative how they will account for any voluntary cost-share/match or other non-EPA funds if applicable and what role EPA funding will play in the overall project.
   b. *Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds – 5 points*
      Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

B. Selection Process

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in Section III. Only those applications which meet all of the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by a review panel composed of federal agency staff.

Final funding decisions will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decision, the selection official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider program priorities.

C. Additional Provisions Incorporated by Reference

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation including the clause on Reporting and Use of Information Concerning Recipient Integrity and Performance can be found here.

These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants must review them when preparing proposals for this RFA. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA General RFA contact listed in Section VII this announcement to obtain the provisions.

[2] As determined in accordance with Grants Management Circulars on Cost Principles issued by the Office of Management (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_circulars).

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. Award Notices and Status

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

EPA anticipates notification to unsuccessful applicants will be made via email or postal mail to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application.

EPA anticipates that notification to successful applicants will be made via telephone or electronic or postal mail by November 9, 2020. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by EPA Region 5 Grants Management Office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

B. Combining Applications Into One Award

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

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirement

The successful applicants will be required to adhere to federal grants requirements, particularly those found in applicable Cost Principles (2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E), Administrative Requirements (2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500), and Audit Requirements (2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F, Circular No. A133). This includes government wide requirements pertaining to accounting standards, lobbying, minority or woman owned business enterprises, publication, meetings, construction, and disposition of property. Additional EPA regulations are codified in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations. A listing and description of general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at EPA Policies and Guidance for Grants.

D. Quality System Documentation

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

E. Reporting Requirements

Applicants selected for funding shall provide narrative technical progress reports addressing financial and work progress. Applicants may be required to input data directly into an online Great Lakes Accountability System database that was developed for the purpose of collecting and reporting information about GLRI. Special conditions requiring financial and progress reporting and a detailed final technical report will be added to awards. Applicants should budget time and resources for these activities.

PLEASE NOTE: If selected, applicants may be asked to revise their anticipated fiscal expenditure projections on a quarterly basis in order to monitor the progress of the awarded project. These projections should be submitted as a part of the fiscal and technical reporting.

F. Other Programmatic Requirements

Additional applicable programmatic terms and conditions will be included in grant agreements, including, provisions for: signage for on-the ground projects, and EPA pre-approval of subcontracting and of conference participation. Applicants should budget time and resources for these activities.

G. Issuance of Awards

EPA reserves the right to negotiate appropriate changes in project terms and amounts (i.e., changes that do not affect the integrity of the competition or materially change the application) consistent with EPA Order 5700.5A1 and other applicable policies, before making final decisions and awards. Applicants may be asked to include greater detail and specificity for their work plans before final awards are issued. Applicants may also be requested to satisfy data quality or peer review requirements before or shortly after the awarding of grants.

H. Disputes

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at Grant Competition Dispute Resolution Procedures. Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement. Please note that the FR notice references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding this, the procedures for competition-related disputes remains unchanged from the procedures described at 70 FR 3629, 3630, as indicated in 2 CFR Part 1500, Subpart E.

I. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated Into RFA

Additional provisions that apply to this RFA and/or awards made under this RFA, including but not limited to those related to human subjects, data access and information release, nonprofit administrative capability, subaward and executive compensation reporting, SAM and DUNS requirements, unliquidated obligations, website references, tax liabilities and felony convictions, unfair competitive advantage, exchange network, copyrights, restrictions on use of federal funds, and competency of organizations generating environmental measurement data, can be found here.

These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants **must** review them when preparing proposals for this RFA. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in this RFA to obtain the provisions.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

General RFA Contact: (for administrative, eligibility, and other general RFA questions):

- Jennifer Conner, 312-886-0201 / conner.jennifer@epa.gov

EPA GLCWMP Technical Contact:

- Matt Pawlowski, 312-886-7834 / pawlowski.matthew@epa.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

GLNPO will send an email announcement of these and any of its funding opportunities to all who register at **greatlakesnews@lists.epa.gov**.

IX. Appendix I

Budget Sample

Budget Detail

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

If the project budget includes any voluntary cost-share, the Budget Detail portion of the narrative proposal must include a detailed description of how the applicant will obtain the cost-share and how the cost-share funding will be used. If EPA accepts an offer for a voluntary cost-share, applicants must meet their sharing commitment as a legal condition of receiving EPA funding. If the proposed cost-share is to be provided by a third-party, a letter of commitment is required. Any form of cost-share included in the Budget Detail must also be included on the SF 424 and SF 424A. Please see Sections III and Section IV.C.2.B.iii of this RFA for more detailed information on cost-share.

Applicants should use the following instructions, budget object class descriptions, and example table to complete the Budget Detail section of the work plan. Use only whole dollar amounts.

1. Personnel - List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period. This category includes only direct costs for the

salaries of those individuals who will perform work directly for the project (generally, paid employees of the applicant organization). If the applicant organization is including staff time (in-kind services) as a cost-share, this should be included as Personnel costs. Personnel costs do not include: (1) costs for services of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the "Contractual" category; (2) costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the "Other" category; or (3) effort that is nor directly in support of the proposed project, which may be covered by the organization's negotiated indirect cost rate. The budget detail must identify the personnel category type by Full Time Equivalent (FTE), including percentage of FTE for part-time employees, number of personnel proposed for each category, and the estimated funding amounts.

2. Fringe Benefits - Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included. Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages.

Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pensions and unemployment benefit plans.

3. Travel - Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips in-State and outof-State and international (include specific international locations), number of travelers, and other costs for each type of travel. Travel may be integral to the purpose of the proposed project (e.g., inspections) or related to proposed project activities (e.g., attendance at meetings). Travel costs do not include: (1) costs for travel of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the "Contractual" category; (2) travel costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the "Other" category.

4. Equipment - Identify each item to be purchased which has an estimated acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year. Equipment also includes accessories necessary to make the equipment operational. Equipment does not include: (1) equipment planned to be leased/rented, including lease/purchase agreement; or (2) equipment service or maintenance contracts. These types of proposed costs should be included in the "Other" category. Items with a unit cost of less than $5,000 should be categorized as supplies, pursuant to 2 CFR Part 200 and or 2 CFR Part 1500. The budget detail must include an itemized listing of all equipment proposed under the project.

5. Supplies - "Supplies" means all tangible personal property other than "equipment". The budget detail should identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). Non-tangible goods and services associated with supplies, such as printing service, photocopy services, and rental costs should be included in the "Other" category.

6. Contractual - Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose and estimated cost. Contractual/consultant services are those services to be carried out by an individual or organization, other than the applicant, in the form of a procurement relationship. Leased or rented goods (equipment or supplies) should be included in the "Other" category. The applicant should list the proposed contract activities along with a brief description of the scope of work or services to be

provided, proposed duration, and proposed procurement method (competitive or noncompetitive), if known.

7. Other - List each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of its cost. This category should include only those types of direct costs that do not fit in any of the other budget categories. Examples of costs that may be in this category are: insurance, rental/lease of equipment or supplies, equipment service or maintenance contracts, printing or photocopying, rebates, and subaward costs. Subawards (e.g., subgrants) are a distinct type of cost in this category. The term "subaward" means an award of financial assistance (money or property) by any legal agreement made by the recipient to an eligible subrecipient. This term does not include procurement purchases, technical assistance in the form of services instead of money, or other assistance in the form of revenue sharing, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, or direct appropriations. Subcontracts are not subawards and belong in the contractual category. Applicants must provide the aggregate amount they propose to issue as subaward work and a description of the types of activities to be supported.

8. Indirect Charges - If indirect charges are budgeted, indicate the approved rate and base. Indirect costs are those incurred by the grantee for a common or joint purpose that benefit more than one cost objective or project, and are not readily assignable to specific cost objectives or projects as a direct cost. In order for indirect costs to be allowable, the applicant must have a federal or state negotiated indirect cost rate (e.g., fixed, predetermined, final or provisional), or must have submitted a proposal to the cognizant federal or state agency. Examples of Indirect Cost Rate calculations are shown below:

- o Personnel (Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs)
- o Personnel and Fringe (Indirect Rate x Personnel & Fringe = Indirect Costs)
- o Total Direct Costs (Indirect Rate x Total direct costs = Indirect Costs)
- o Direct Costs minus distorting or other factors such as contracts and equipment
- o (Indirect Rate x (total direct cost – distorting factors) = Indirect Costs)

Example Budget Table

	EPA Funding	**Cost-Share**
Personnel		
(1) Project Manager @ $40/hr x 10 hrs/week x 52 wks		$20,800
(5) Project Staff @ $30/hr x 40 hrs/week x 40 wks	$244,000	
TOTAL PERSONNEL	$244,000	$20,800
Fringe Benefits		
20% of Salary and Wages	20% ($244,000)	20% (20,800)
- Retirement, Health Benefits, FICA, SUI	$48,800	$4,160
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	$48,800	$4,160
Travel		

In State travel for Project Manager and staff: 500 mi/mo @ $0.55/mi x 12 mos.	$3,300	
Out of State (IL, WI, IA) Travel for Project Staff: 20 trips per month x $2,500 per trip	$600,000	
SOLEC Meeting (Toronto, Canada) Travel for Project Manager: 2 trips/year x $3,500 each	$7,000	
TOTAL TRAVEL	$610,300	
Equipment		
Sample Bottles (8600 x $2.98 each)	$25,700	
Fish Sampling Nets (300 x $50each)	$15,000	
1 Project Vehicle	$25,000	
1 Project Boat	$15,000	
TOTAL EQUIPMENT	81,100	
Supplies		
Office and related supplies to support training	$400	
Office computer and printer	$2,500	
TOTAL SUPPLIES	$2,900	
Contractual		
ABC Support Services Contract	$100,000	
XYZ Land & Water Conservation	$66,400	
TOTAL CONTRACTUAL	$166,400	
Other		
Travel for 3 representatives to attend workshop training – 100 trips x $1,000 each	$100,000	
Travel for 4 representatives to attend workshop training – 200 trips x $2,000 each	$500,000	
TOTAL OTHER	$500,000	
Indirect Charges		
Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate = 10% (Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs; as negotiated)	$26,480	
TOTAL INDIRECT	$26,480	
TOTAL FUNDING	$1,679,580	$24,960
TOTAL PROJECT COST	$1, 704,540	

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

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