U.S. EPA GULF OF MEXICO DIVISION
Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL)
Request for Applications

Federal Agency Name:	Environmental Protection Agency - Region 4
Funding Opportunity Title:	Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023 BIL
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KEY DATES: All dates listed below are tentative.

December 6, 2023	A recorded webinar presentation will be posted to provide helpful hints to developing your application. You can find the presentation, Q&A, and the common errors document at the Gulf of Mexico Environmental Justice Grants Program link at www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico. If you have a question not included in the Q&A or presentation, please submit questions to GMP-RFP@epa.gov. Q&A will be updated weekly if new questions are received. EPA will respond to questions through March 28, 2024 but cannot guarantee a response to questions received thereafter.
April 4, 2024	Applications due to the Gulf of Mexico Division (GMD) at 11:59pm ET
July 2024	Anticipated Notification of Selection
November 2024	Anticipated Award

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I. APPLICATION INFORMATION

I.A. Background and Authority

Gulf of Mexico Division (GMD) is a non-regulatory division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) founded to facilitate collaborative actions to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico in ways consistent with the economic well-being of the Region. To carry out its mission, GMD continues to maintain and expand partnerships with state and federal agencies, federally recognized Tribes, local governments and authorities, academia, regional business and industry, agricultural and environmental organizations, and individual citizens and communities. For more information, please see https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico. This Request for Applications (RFA) is expected to result in the award of assistance agreements. GMD's statutory authority to award assistance agreements is the Clean Water Act, §104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution as codified in 33 U.S Code 1254(b)(3). Funded awards must advance protection and restoration of the Gulf of Mexico watershed in support of EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this solicitation will support Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.

Additional provisions that apply to sections III, IV, V, and VI of this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses. These provisions are important for applying to this solicitation and applicants must review them when preparing applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact listed in this solicitation (usually in Section VII) to obtain the provisions.

I.A.1 Disadvantaged Communities

The GMD supports Administration and Agency priorities, including Justice40, through actions to improve conditions in disadvantaged communities by investing in projects to improve water quality, habitat(s), community resilience, and environmental education.

For purposes of this competition and the evaluation of applications, "disadvantaged communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life such as communities with environmental justice concerns and/or vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, people of color, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, and homeless populations that may be disproportionately impacted by environmental harms and risks. More examples are identified in Section 2 of the Biden Administration's Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities.

For purposes of this RFA, "disadvantaged communities" also includes "environmentally overburdened communities." Environmentally overburdened communities are adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental, climate and human health harms and risks including remote, rural, and urban communities.

I.A.2 Objectives for Disadvantaged Communities

Projects submitted under this funding opportunity should support the Gulf of Mexico Objectives for

Disadvantaged Communities detailed below:

1. Demonstrate community-driven projects, which are projects that include activities where community residents and/or representatives are integrally involved in the planning and execution of those activities.
2. Show connections to the identified disadvantaged community(ies) (e.g., letters of support from community leaders, prior collaborations).
3. Use "meaningful involvement" to ensure success of project goals. Meaningful involvement entails:
    a. Residents have an opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their environment and/or health within their communities.
    b. Community participants' concerns will be considered in the decision-making process.
    c. Partners will seek out and facilitate the involvement of impacted communities.
4. Build the capacity of communities with environmental concerns and help them create self-sustaining, community-based partnerships that will continue to improve their community.
5. Promote learning and understanding within communities.
6. Establish collaborative and coordinated efforts, processes or procedures, and communication strategies between neighborhoods and communities with local governments regarding ongoing environmental projects and initiatives at local levels to maximize use of local resources and reduce duplication of efforts.
7. Document the beneficial impact the project has on the community.

I.B. Scope of Work

This RFA seeks applications for a partnership of five or more eligible entities **(a partnership of the applicant with four or more other organizations)** to submit a single application under this RFA to fund multiple projects/activities authorized by CWA 104(b)(3). Two of the partners must be small community-based organizations (for purposes of this RFA, this is defined as 10 or fewer full time equivalent employees). Projects must address one or more of the four Gulf of Mexico Division Priority Areas for this RFA listed below. Applications must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant (the "pass-through entity") and which eligible organizations will be subrecipients. EPA expects that the recipient and subrecipients will implement activities to support the following Priority Areas: 1. Water Quality Improvement; 2. Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat; 3. Environmental Education; and/or 4. Strengthen Community Resilience. The application must describe the activities of each.

The applications will be evaluated on how they are community-driven and include activities where residents and/or representatives are integrally involved in the planning and execution of these activities; therefore, recipients and subrecipients will also be evaluated on their plan for working with disadvantaged communities impacted by environmental harms, risks, and needs, and where the project activities will occur. All projects must be located in disadvantaged communities. Projects that address Priority Areas 1 and 2 must be located in the five Gulf states **(see map in Figure 2; for projects in Florida, see also the eligible counties in Appendix D)**. For projects that identify Priority Area 4 as the focus, all project activities must be located in the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states **(see map in Figure 1 and eligible counties in Appendix D)**. Priority Area 3 may be a component of any project, so the eligible location is dependent on whether the primary Priority Area is 1, 2, or 4.

Applications must identify disadvantaged communities where projects will take place and describe how the community was identified. Applications will be evaluated on how well they identify and address the needs of the disadvantaged community. EPA expects the applicant to partner with organizations that are knowledgeable about the needs of their respective communities. Applicants may address multiple priority areas with their projects**. Applicants must identify the <u>primary</u> Priority Area for the application as 1. Water Quality Improvement; 2. Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat; or 4. Strengthen Community Resilience.** Priority Area 3 Environmental

Education projects may be included but may not be the primary Priority Area of the application. At least 50% of the budget should be dedicated to subawards and subrecipient projects with no more than 25% dedicated to Priority Area 3 Environmental Education. Additionally, each application must include a measurable outreach component.

EACH APPLICATION MUST INCLUDE AN OUTREACH COMPONENT. The outreach component could include, but is not limited to:

- News releases, articles, and events for digital, print and television media
- Project presentations to community groups, schools, local/state government organizations, etc.
- Stakeholder and community involvement meetings
- Best practices and lessons learned to stakeholders

Priority Area 1: Water Quality Improvement

The following output must be included in projects addressing this priority:
Demonstrate improvement in and/or understanding of water quality conditions of the Gulf of Mexico watershed through monitoring in at least one water quality parameter in a water body and/or segment by the end of the project period as compared to the initial project baseline. Examples of water quality parameters that could be demonstrated in a water quality improvement project include, but are not limited to: dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, bacteria, nutrients, temperature, and garbage/trash (e.g., trash traps; cleanups coupled with prevention outreach; implementing creative prevention methods). This information must be included in quarterly reports, as appropriate, and in the final report.

Activities:
GMD seeks to fund projects to improve understanding of water quality conditions and/or improve water quality in a water body and/or segment within the five Gulf states **(see map in Figure 2; for projects in Florida, see also the eligible counties in Appendix D)**. Please identify the eight-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) in which activities will occur. For more information on HUC identification see: https://enviroatlas.epa.gov/enviroatlas/InteractiveMapEntrance/InteractiveMap/index.html. Zoom to your location, click supplemental maps, expand units, and select HUC 8 or 12. Projects are encouraged to take advantage of currently existing baseline water quality data to provide efficiency in measuring water quality improvement. Applicants are encouraged to leverage resources and increase efficiency of practices to improve water quality.

Potential Community-Driven Project Ideas:

- Studies or assessments and demonstration projects that identify and apply solutions to improve understanding of water quality conditions or to improve water quality via the following:
    - Nutrient Reduction
    - Blue or green infrastructure
    - Stormwater runoff prevention/infiltration
    - Water quality monitoring
    - Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) prevention
    - Trash Free Waters/Litter Reduction/Prevention
    - Marine Debris (microplastics, trash, reduction/prevention)
    - Sustainable agricultural practices
    - Septic System monitoring or studies for replacement

- Watershed priorities (non-regulatory solutions)

Priority Area 2: Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat

The following output must be included in any project addressing this priority:
Estimate the expected number of habitat acres that will be enhanced, restored and/or protected in the application. Provide in quarterly reporting, as appropriate, and in the final report the actual number of acres enhanced, restored, and/or protected.

Activities: GMD seeks to fund projects that protect, enhance, or restore habitat acreage within the five Gulf states **(see map in Figure 2; for projects in Florida, see also the eligible counties in Appendix D)** that benefit the Gulf of Mexico region, native species (e.g., pollinators, birds, non-native removal), and communities (including collaboration with private landowners).

Potential Community-Driven Project Ideas:

- Demonstration projects that identify and apply nature-based solutions to improve habitat which improve ecosystem and community health (e.g., reduce flooding, expand wetland to reduce nutrients/runoff, etc.)
    - Green way and blue way habitat
    - Riparian zone enhancement
    - Coastal prairie, dune, marsh and/or forest restoration or enhancement
    - Innovative restoration or protection of wildlife corridors
    - Habitat window studies
    - Study controlled burning to maximize ecosystem health
    - Community habitat/garden (especially related to pollinators and Gulf migratory species benefit)
    - Living Shorelines (non-construction)
- Fund innovative efforts to produce native plants for restoration efforts
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of animal grazing to aid restoration efforts

Priority Area 3: Environmental Education

The following output must be included in any Priority Area project that includes Environmental Education
In your application, estimate the number of expected audience(s) and/or individuals to be reached. In quarterly reporting, as appropriate, and in final reporting, track and report the actual number of individuals reached and the method(s) used to reach them as a result of the project**.**

Activities: GMD seeks to fund projects that engage disadvantaged communities located within the place of performance to:

- Promote and support environmental education and/or training
- Develop and/or improve existing environmental education programs that can include, but are not limited to, building stewardship as it relates to improving water quality; protecting, enhancing and/or restoring habitat; promoting smart growth practices; and promoting community resiliency.
- Dedicate no more than 25% of project funds to Priority Area 3 (Environmental Education). Applicants must identify the **primary** Priority Area for the application as 1. Water Quality Improvement; 2. Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat; or 4. Strengthen Community Resilience. Environmental Education projects may be included but may not be the primary Priority Area of the application.

Potential Community-Driven Project Ideas:

- Develop and demonstrate programs that will educate and provide job training for students or adults for careers in:
    - Habitat creation, restoration
    - Water quality issues and management
    - Water quality testing
    - Community resilience, smart growth
    - Climate/climate change adaptation
    - Oyster farming, aquaculture, aquaponics
    - Green infrastructure design, installation, and/or operation and maintenance
    - Living shorelines
    - Subsidence, flood, and stormwater mitigation
    - Home septic system maintenance and upkeep
- Student led research projects focused on habitat restoration, water quality or community resilience

Priority Area 4: Strengthen Community Resilience

The following output must be included in any resilience project:
In the application, estimate how the community will become more resilient by the end of the project. In quarterly reporting, as appropriate, and in the final report, report the actual number of communities made more resilient and how a resilience assessment tool or program served to strengthen the community resilience.

Activities: GMD seeks to fund projects that engage disadvantaged communities located in the eligible coastal counties in the five Gulf states (see map in Figure 1 and Appendix D) to:

- Develop and/or demonstrate programs, projects and/or tools that improve a community's understanding of vulnerabilities and/or strengthen resilience
- Utilize **existing or new** techniques, tools, and information to assist coastal stakeholders in assessing risks and vulnerabilities to natural or man-made disasters

Potential Community-Driven Projects Ideas:

- Studies or assessments and demonstration projects that identify and apply nature-based solutions to improve resilience as it relates to heat island, subsidence, stormwater, and/or flooding impacts such as:
    - Living shorelines
    - Community or pollinator gardens
    - Green or Blue Infrastructure
    - Multi-Use Conservation/Restoration
    - Flood Mitigation
    - Vulnerability Assessments
    - Community planning
    - Climate Change Resilience/Adaptation
    - Nature-Based Resilience
    - Resilience tool or application development

EPA plans to award approximately five grants of up to $6,000,000 each. At least 50% of the budget should be dedicated to fund subawards to conduct activities with no more than 25% dedicated to Priority Area 3 (Environmental Education). For Priority Areas 1 and 2, recipient and subrecipient projects must be located

within the five Gulf states eligibility map (see map in Figure 2; and for projects in Florida, see also the eligible counties in Appendix D). Priority Area 3 may be a part of any project and location is dependent on project focus. Priority Area 4 must be within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states (see map in Figure 1 and eligible counties in Appendix D).

FIGURE 1: Eligible Coastal Counties Map for Priority Area 4 *Strengthen Community Resilience*

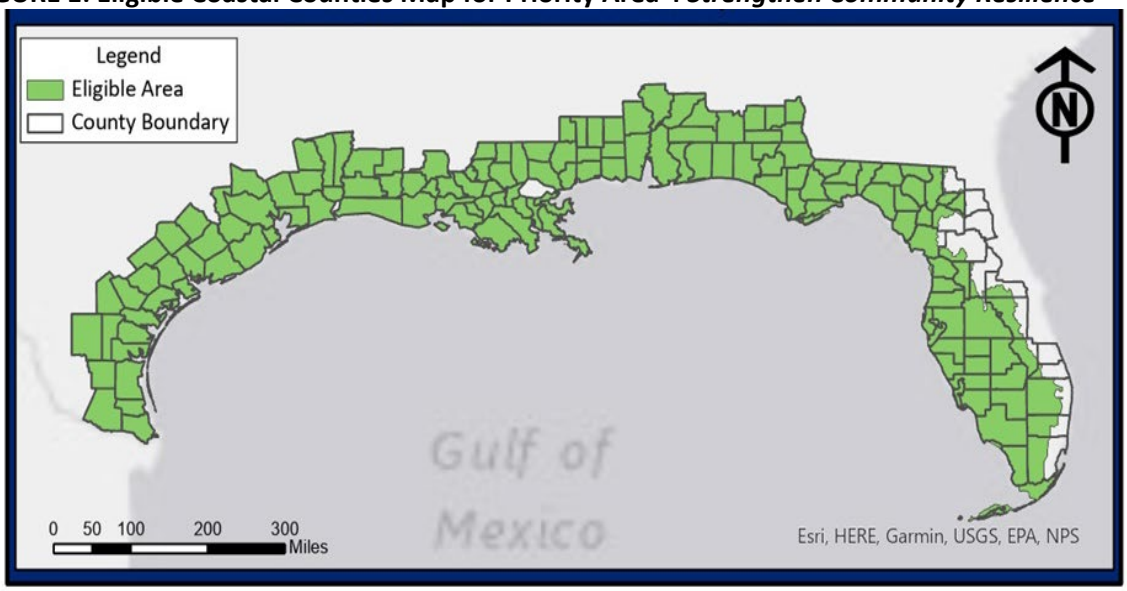


Figure 1: Eligible Coastal Counties Map for Priority Area 4 Strengthen Community Resilience

FIGURE 2: Eligibility Map for the Priority Areas of 1. *Water Quality Improvement* and 2. *Protect, Enhance or Restore Habitat.* [For these two Priority Areas, projects must take place in one or more of the five Gulf states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida) AND be within the Gulf of Mexico watershed. Please see the map below. For Florida projects, please also see the eligible county listing in Appendix D.

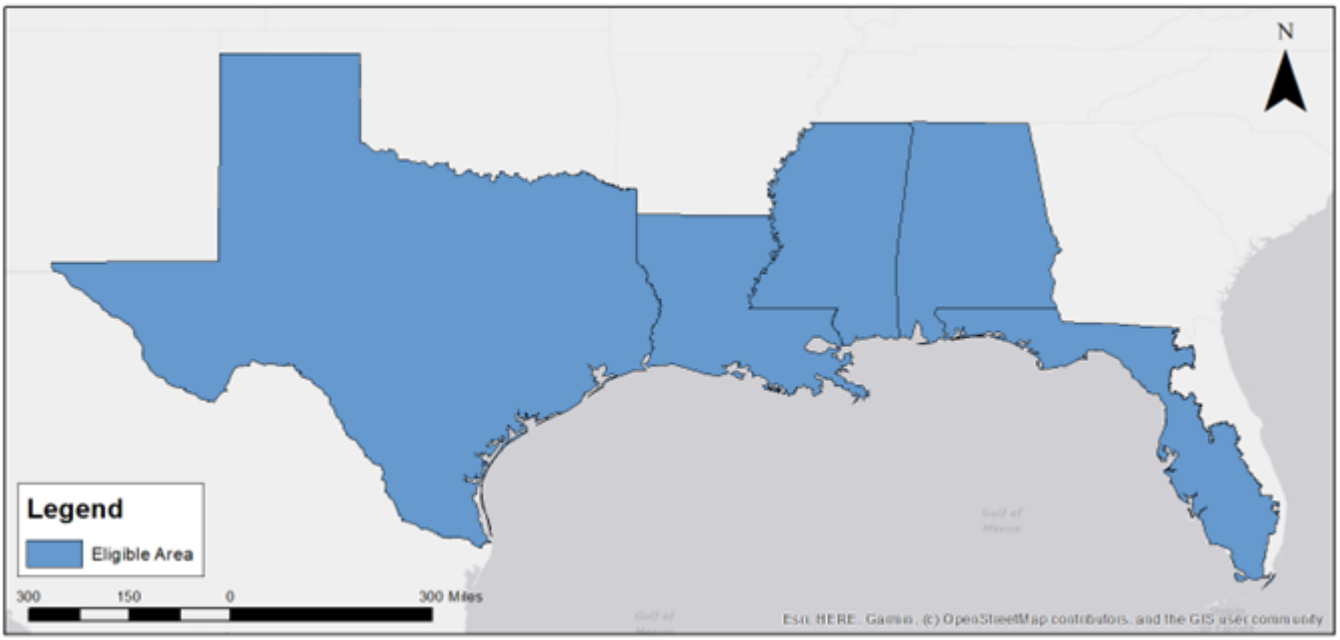


Figure 2: Eligibility Map for the Priority Areas of 1. Water Quality Improvement and 2. Protect, Enhance or Restore Habitat.

Responsibilities of the successful recipient(s) include, but are not limited to:

- Establish and administer a partnership of eligible entities that fund projects/activities authorized by CWA 104(b)(3) and address one or more of the four priority areas listed in Sec. I.B.
- Projects must be community-driven and include activities where community residents and/or representatives are integrally involved in the planning and execution of these activities. Award recipients are to collaborate with leadership from disadvantaged communities affected by environmental and human health harms or risks.
- Develop and execute project(s) that will be led by the recipient.
- Administer subawards to the partners (subrecipients that must be named in the application).
- Dedicate 50% or more of the budget to fund at least four subawards for subrecipient projects.
- Ensure recipient and subrecipient activities achieve the Objectives for Disadvantaged Communities in I.A.2 and environmental results in a cost-effective manner (ensuring the majority of subaward funds go directly to project activities).
- Disburse monies to subrecipients in a timely manner to reduce unliquidated obligations and as required by the applicable regulations.
- Establish and follow a system for monitoring subrecipient performance that includes the elements required by 2 CFR 200.332(d) and report the monitoring results in performance reports submitted to EPA.
- Comply with EPA's Subaward Policy (see section I.B.1) and Establishing and Managing Subawards in EPA's General Term and Condition.
- Track the environmental results (quantitative and qualitative outputs and outcomes) of the recipient led projects and subrecipient projects and ensure that data and results are communicated to EPA GMD via quarterly progress reports and to stakeholders and the community via education and outreach.
- Document lessons learned from the recipient and subrecipient projects and ensure project results are disseminated to the broader stakeholder community to inform future practices.
- Provide final project presentation to EPA GMD.
- Ensure redundant subawards are not being received by related federal or non-federal partners.

I.B.1 Subawards

The subrecipient projects must be authorized by CWA 104 (b)(3) and address one or more of the Priority Areas in Sec. I.B. The subawards funded under the grant are anticipated to have project periods up to four years and must be completed in sufficient time to allow the award recipients to aggregate results, lessons learned, and ensure subrecipients have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs. The environmental and financial benefits of the recipient and subrecipient projects must be targeted to disadvantaged communities that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. Projects should be community-driven.

The application will be evaluated on how well it describes the work each subrecipient will accomplish and how they will meet EPA requirements for reporting environmental and/or programmatic outputs, outcomes, and metrics. This includes identifying how metrics will be collected from subrecipients and reported to EPA. The recipient must comply with applicable provisions of 2 CFR Part 200 and the EPA Subaward Policy, which may be found at https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients, including the National Terms and Conditions for Subawards, which may be found at https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-general-terms-and-conditions-effective-october-1-2023-or-later. Additional guidance on compliance is available in EPA's Subaward Frequent Questions.

I.B.2 Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)

EPA recognizes that it is important to engage a diverse group of stakeholders 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 not have previously participated in such dialogues to participate in EPA programs. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III.A., including MSIs, to apply and/or partner 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.

I.B.3 Federally Recognized Tribes

EPA recognizes the importance of the nation-to-nation relationships with Federally Recognized Tribes in the environmental challenges the U.S. faces. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages Federally Recognized Tribes in the Gulf states to apply and/or partner under this opportunity.

I.C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage, Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes and Performance Measures

Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7A1, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA must link proposed assistance agreements with the Agency's Strategic Plan. EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7A1, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements, https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results- under-epa-assistance-agreements).

1.Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan The activities to be funded under this solicitation must support the FY2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan. Awards made under this solicitation must support Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds. Applicants are also encouraged but not required to describe if project activities will also support EPA's Goal 1: Tackle the Climate Crisis, Objective 1.2: Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts.

2. Environmental Results Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the priorities described above.

a. Outputs
Outputs (or deliverables) refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement project period. Outputs as a result of training, education, monitoring, surveys, demonstrations and other activities authorized by CWA 104(b)(3) are required and must include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The number of subawards to organizations that perform the work to support the objectives identified in Section I.A.1
- Development and verification of subrecipient tracking (reporting) process to track expenditures and environmental results/data
- Quarterly reporting of recipient and subrecipient activities which must include at least one of the following:
    - Estimated number of segments or bodies with water quality improved; an initial baseline must be included to provide an accurate view of water quality parameter improved (if this is nutrient reduction project, please indicate if it resulted in effective practices and tools to manage or reduce nutrients)
    - Number of habitat acres enhanced, protected, or restored
    - Number of individuals reached through education activities
    - Number of communities educated on adopting or have implemented resiliency practices
- Outreach events/presentations (number of events and individuals reached) that share the successful outcomes, lessons learned, technologies developed, approaches gleaned, and practices employed.

Progress reports and a final report are required, as specified in Section VI.B. Reporting Requirements of this announcement.

b. Outcomes
Outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out a program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective and are used to gauge a project's performance. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must also be quantitative. Outcomes may be short-term (changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (changes in condition of the natural resource).

Applicants **should** describe how their proposed project will achieve Objectives for Disadvantaged Communities in Section I.A.2.

One or more of the following outcomes as a result of training, education, monitoring, surveys, demonstrations and other activities authorized by CWA 104(b)(3) are required:

- Improvement in at least one water quality parameter in a water body and/or segment over the life of the project, with quarterly milestones clearly reflected. Applicant should evaluate the baseline conditions as a part of their project to provide an accurate view of progress (e.g., % change against baseline).
    - Pollutant reduction and/or prevention (e.g., nutrient load reductions in the Gulf of Mexico watershed)
    - Examples of water quality parameters that could be used include nutrients (primarily nitrogen and phosphorus) and associated indicators (chlorophyll, turbidity, total suspended solids, dissolved oxygen, and pH).

- Acres of habitat enhanced, protected, or restored over the life of the project, with quarterly milestones clearly reflected. An initial baseline must be included to provide an accurate view of progress.
- Number of individuals with improved understanding of environmental issues in their community. The applicant should describe how the change will be measured.
- Number of communities that are more resilient over the life of the project as a result of increased willingness to adopt, fund, and implement resiliency projects. The applicant should describe how the change will be measured and how resiliency was improved.

Additional outcomes may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Stormwater and/or flood mitigation improvements
- Improvements made to state, county, or local environmental programs, requirements or policies that better protect human health and the environment
- Climate change improvements should identify project impacts to acidification, algal blooms, biodiversity loss, cultural resources loss, flood, heat, infrastructure destruction, public health, sea level rise, seasonal shifts, subsistence resources loss, warming ocean and other water bodies, and/or weather events. For additional information, see EPA's Climate Adaptation page.

Additional information regarding the EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at: www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1- epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements.

3. Performance Measures Applicants should describe how they plan to track and monitor their project performance and progress throughout the project period. The applicant should also develop performance measures they expect to achieve through the proposed activities and describe them in their application. These performance measures will help gather insights and will be the mechanism to track progress concerning successful processes and output and outcome strategies and will provide the basis for developing lessons to inform future recipients. It is expected that the description of performance measures will directly relate to the project outcomes and outputs.

Outputs and outcomes are critical components of an applicant's overall plan for measuring project performance. The following are questions to consider when developing output and outcome measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

- What are the measurable short-term and long-term results the project will achieve?
- How does the plan measure progress in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes) and how will the approach use resources effectively and efficiently?
- Are the projected outputs and outcomes specific and detailed? Are specific target measures included where possible? Are target measures reasonable and achievable within the project period and for the funding amount?

I.D. RFA Terms

The following are defined for the purposes of this RFA only:

Community: The term "**community(ies)**" means any group of people working on or planning for strengthening community resilience. This can include municipalities, cities, towns, states, specific Gulf of Mexico watershed waters, regional planning commissions, and other groups. *Community should be defined within the project by the*

applicant.

Community driven: The term **"community driven"** means a community of individuals, partners, and stakeholders, including residents, businesses, nonprofits, and public agencies, who are committed and eager to accomplish a common goal and integrally involved in the planning and execution of project decisions and activities.

Demonstration Project: The term "**demonstration project**" means a project that must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. The applicant must clearly explain in the proposal how the technologies, methods, or approaches used are new or experimental and how the project otherwise meets the requirements of a demonstration as described in this RFA. If your project uses technologies, methods or approaches that have been used previously in other geographic areas and/or other situations, then your proposal must include an explanation as to how your demonstration project is different from such prior projects. The applicant must also explain what will be learned from the demonstration project.

Environmental Justice: The term "**Environmental Justice**" is defined as the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of income, race, color, national origin, tribal affiliation or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment. See EO 14096 for more information.

Green Infrastructure: The term "**Green Infrastructure**" means the range of measures that use plant or soil systems; permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates; stormwater harvest and reuse; or landscaping that allows storage, infiltration, or evapotranspiration of stormwater and reduces flows to sewer systems or to surface waters.

Heat Island: The term "**Heat Island**" is defined as urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures than outlying areas. Structures such as buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit the sun's heat more than natural landscapes such as forests and water bodies. Urban areas, where these structures are highly concentrated and greenery is limited, become "islands" of higher temperatures relative to outlying areas. High temperatures of pavement and rooftop surfaces can heat up stormwater runoff, which drains into storm sewers and raises water temperatures as it is released into streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes. Water temperature affects all aspects of aquatic life, especially the metabolism and reproduction of many aquatic species.

Metropolitan Statistical Area: The term "**Metropolitan Statistical Area**" is a Core Based Statistical Area associated with at least one urbanized area that has a population of at least 50,000. The Metropolitan Statistical Area comprises the central county or counties containing the core, plus adjacent outlying counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the central county or counties as measured through commuting.

Microbial Source Tracking: The term **"Microbial Source Tracking"** is an approach used toidentify and track sources of fecal contamination impacting water quality in stream, river, lakes, and marine (including beaches) ecosystems.

Partners: The term **"partners"** means the eligible organizations, defined in Sec. III.A, who have partnered with the applicant for this grant and will be subrecipients (receive subawards) to carryout project activities. See additional information for partnerships in Sec. III.B. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332(d), subrecipients (partners) are accountable to the recipient for proper use of EPA funding.

Partnership: The term **"partnership"** is defined as a formal relationship between two or more eligible [grant or cooperative agreement] recipients that is memorialized in writing and is legally binding under applicable law. The partnership agreement must specify which member of the partnership will enter into the assistance agreement with EPA for the purposes of accountability for the proper expenditure of Federal funds, performance of the assistance agreement, liability for claims for recovery of unallowable costs incurred under the agreement and must specify roles in performing the proposed scope of work for the assistance agreement. One eligible recipient in the partnership must receive EPA funding as the direct recipient of the [grant or cooperative agreement] and the other partner(s) receiving funding as a subrecipient(s).

II. AWARD INFORMATION Amounts, Targets, and Number of Projects

II.A. Award Amounts

Approximately $30 million in EPA funding is expected to be awarded under this RFA for approximately five awards. The amount of federal funding per award is up to $6,000,000. **Applications seeking EPA funding more than $6,000,000 will be rejected.** The number of awards EPA will fund as a result of this RFA will be based on the quality of applications received, the availability of funding, and other applicable considerations. In addition, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards under any or all of the funding opportunities identified in this RFA or make fewer awards than anticipated.

II.B. Anticipated Project Start and End Dates

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation will begin in Calendar Year 2024. Proposed project periods may be up to five years.

II.C. Funding Type

Successful applicants will be issued a grant or cooperative agreement as appropriate. A cooperative agreement is an assistance agreement that is used when there is substantial federal involvement with the recipient during the performance of an activity or project. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the performance of the project. 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 recipient's performance; 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; reviewing qualifications of key personnel; 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.

II.D. Additional Funding Information

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.

Award Funding: Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability,

satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

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, then 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.

Pre-Award Costs: Recipients may incur otherwise eligible and allowable pre-award costs up to 90 days prior to award at their own risk without prior approval from EPA's award official. Pre-award costs must comply with 2 CFR 200.458 and 2 CFR 1500.9. If EPA determines that the requested pre-award costs comply with the relevant authorities, and that the costs are justified as allocable to the project, then these costs may be included as allowable expenditures at the time that the assistance award document is prepared. However, if for any reason EPA does not fund the application or the amount of the award is less than the applicant anticipated, then EPA is under no obligation to reimburse the applicant for these costs incurred. Thus, applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk. Costs incurred more than 90 days prior to award require the approval of EPA Region 4's grant official.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

III.A. Eligible Entities:

In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.475, 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 200.1) are eligible to apply for funding under this RFA. School districts or high schools designated as one of the eligible entities above are eligible.

An intertribal consortium must meet the definition of eligibility in the Environmental Program Grants for Tribes Final Rule, at 40 CFR 35.504 (66 FR 3782. January 16, 2001) (FRL-6929-5) and be a non-profit organization within the meaning of 2 CFR 200.1. For certain competitive funding opportunities under this assistance listing, the Agency may limit eligibility to compete to a number or subset of eligible applicants consistent with the Agency's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy.

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

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law.

For-profit organizations are not eligible entities for this funding opportunity. Additionally, non-profit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

III.B. Partnerships:

For the purposes of the RFA, groups of five or more eligible entities must form a partnership and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Applicants must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients. Subawards and subrecipients must be consistent with the definitions of those terms in 2 CFR 200.1. The recipient must administer the grant, will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting, and will be the point of contact for the partnership. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332(d), subrecipients are accountable to the recipient or grantee for proper use of EPA funding.

Partners 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 at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a "partner" or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.

Eligible Activities:

Projects submitted must fit under the following funding statute Clean Water Act 104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of grants to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.

Letters of Commitment:

Applicants must include signed letters of commitment from their partner entities that provide detailed information about the partnership agreement, including the roles and responsibilities of the partner signing the letter of commitment as well as information about the planned subaward(s) (if applicable). Only partnerships that include a signed letter of commitment will be considered valid partnerships during the evaluation of the application. The letters should describe the resources (funding, in-kind, technical assistance, etc.) they are bringing to the effort, and their interest in the project and community. Please do not include generic letters of support. A generic letter of support will not count as a valid letter of commitment.

For the purposes of this RFA, a "partnership" is a formal relationship between eligible entities, including state agencies, interstate agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, public or nonprofit institutions of higher learning

(i.e., colleges and universities), and non-profit organizations (as defined at 2 CFR 200.1), including intertribal consortia, school districts, or high schools.

A letter of commitment must be signed by each party and specify which member of the partnership will enter into the assistance agreement with EPA for the purposes of accountability for the proper expenditure of federal funds and receipt of the funds from EPA, performance of the assistance agreement, liability for claims for recovery of unallowable costs incurred under the agreement and must specify roles in performing the proposed scope of work for the assistance agreement. These letters of commitment from the partners must indicate a subaward agreement will be established post-award.

III.C. Match or Cost-share

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

III.D Ineligible Activities: *If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible activities, that portion ofthe application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible.* The following are ineligible activities:

- Projects that do not comply with Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order; or specified as a required mitigation measure under a state, local, or federal permit for a specific project; however, grant funding may be used to enhance or expand such projects beyond minimum requirements for compliance.
- Work involving only routine maintenance of storm water infrastructure and other facilities
- Projects which fall under the existing planning responsibilities of an individual state or local government (e.g., development of TMDLs or MS4 permits)
- Solely "gray infrastructure" projects (e.g., installation of sewer lines)
- Construction activities that are not a part of a demonstration project. This includes, but is not limited to, preliminary planning to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of a facility; the engineering, architectural, legal, fiscal, and economic investigations and studies; surveys, designs, plans, working drawings, specifications, procedures, and other actions necessary to the construction of a facility; the erection, acquisition, alteration, remodeling, improvement, or extension of a facility; and the inspection and supervision of the constructionof a facility.

III.E. 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 from eligible entities listed in Section III.A that meet these criteria by the time of application submission will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V.A. of this RFA. Applications deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified by e-mail within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

- Substantial Compliance: Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV.B of this announcement or else they will be rejected. ***Where a page limit is stated for the Project Narrative in Section IV.B with respect to the application, or***

parts there of, pages in excess of the limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.

- Grant.gov submission: In addition, initial applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV.A of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Appendix A) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV.A of this announcement. **Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV and Appendix A of this announcement to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Appendix A, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.**
- Application Deadline: Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or technical problems associated with Grants.gov or SAM.gov. **An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a submission outside of Grants.gov.**
- Project Scope: Applications must address how the applicant will establish and manage a partnership and at least 4 subawards to partners to support the GMD's Objectives for Disadvantaged Communities identified in Section I.A.2.
- Project Results: Applicants must identify anticipated project results in their application and identify major anticipated results on the Summary Information page.
- Project Location: For an application to be considered eligible for funding, projects must be located in disadvantaged communities and within the respective Five Gulf States eligibility map for that Priority Area. For Priority Areas 1 and 2, **please see the eligibility map in Figure 2; for projects in Florida, see also the eligible Florida counties in Appendix D.** For Priority Area 4 projects, **please see the eligibility map in Figure 1 as well as the eligible counties in Appendix D)**. Priority Area 3 can be part of any application. Applicants must provide a description or map of locations where recipient and subrecipient activities will be conducted. Applicants must describe how disadvantaged communities were identified. **Applications that address geographic areas outside the five Gulf states will be deemed ineligible.**
- Funding Request Limit: **Applications seeking EPA funding in excess of the specified maximum amount of $6,000,000 will be deemed ineligible.**
- **The application must also include the following to be deemed eligible:**
    - **Identification of Priority Area 1, 2, or 4 that is the focus of the application (See Sec. I.B)**
    - **Estimated Quantitative Environmental Results including output(s) and outcome(s); see Sec. I.B. for required output specific to the Priority Area.**
    - **An outreach component**
    - **Identification of disadvantaged communities where projects will take place and how these were identified as disadvantaged (i.e., if tools were used, describe what tool(s) were used such as, but not limited to, EJScreen and CEJST)**
    - **A minimum of four partners (subrecipients) in addition to the primary applicant, Letters of Commitment from every partner (See Sec. III.B.).**
    - **Detailed budget narrative and/or table**

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

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

Complete application packages must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on April 4, 2024. Please see the complete instructions for submitting applications via Grants.gov and the limited exception procedures in Appendix A of this announcement.

IV.B Content of Application Submission

Unless otherwise stated, the application package must include the following materials:

1. **Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance:** Complete the form. Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, fax and e-mail address. This form also requires a registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov), and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. See Appendix A for more information. The contact person you provide in Block 8.f. should be different than the Authorized Representative listed in Block 21.

2. **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs:** Complete the form. Provide overall budget information. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22.

3. **EPA Form 5700-54, EPA Key Contacts Form:** Complete the form. A minimum of two different people (contacts) should be identified. Please be sure the contacts on this form are consistent with all other forms, as applicable.

4. **EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report:** Complete the form. See Tips for Completing EPA Form 4700-4 for guidance on filling out this form.

5. **Project Narrative Attachment Form – Prepared as described in Appendix C:** Includes **the Summary Information Page; Workplan; Detailed Budget Narrative; and Maps.** The project narrative must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the threshold eligibility criteria in Section III.D., the objectives in I.A.2, the requirements in Section I.B, and address the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.A. The project narrative cannot exceed a maximum of 12, single-spaced typewritten pages, including the summary page, workplan, and detailed budget narrative. Excess pages will not be reviewed. **The project narrative must substantially comply with the specific instructions, format and content as defined in Appendix C or it will be rejected.**

6. **Other Attachments Form – Budget Table.** A fillable template for the budget table is available for download with the RFA on grants.gov and by following the Gulf of Mexico Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023 BIL RFA Announcement link at https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico. Prepare as described in the budget table section of the announcement. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the budget

table template. This file should be submitted using the "Other Attachments Form" in Grants.gov and may be uploaded as an excel file.

7. **Other Attachments Form - Resumes or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigators and critical staff.** Use the "Other Attachments Form" to attach a copy of the resume or curriculum vitae of principal investigators and critical staff for the proposed project. Such documentation should outline the education, work history, and knowledge/expertise of the individual(s) that relate to managing the proposed project. ***Please consolidate all resumes into one file and include the word "resume" in the filename.***

8. **Other Attachments Form – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable**. Use if indirect costs other than the 10% *de minimis* are included in the project budget. Use the "Other Attachments Form" to attach a copy of your organization's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable. See Application Preparation and Submission Instructions below for more details. Please include the words "cost agreement" in the filename. Please see EPA's Indirect Cost Policy for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements for more information about indirect cost rate requirements.

9. **Other Attachments Form – Commitment and Support Letters**. Use the "Other Attachments Form" to attach required commitment letters from partners and any other relevant letters from collaborators or communities in support of the applicant. Specifically indicate how the applicant has the ability to reach the broader community by demonstrating past successes. Please consolidate all commitment letters into one file and include the word "Letters of Commitment" or "LOC" in the file name. Please consolidate all support letters into one file and include the word "Letters of support" or "LOS" in the file name.

Communications: See EPA Solicitation Clauses for general provisions regarding communications with applicants. A recorded presentation with helpful hints to develop your application, a Q&A and common errors document can be found by following the Gulf of Mexico Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023 BIL RFA link here: https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico. Any questions you have after reading the Q&A and the common errors document should be submitted to gmp-rfp@epa.gov. EPA will update the Q&A weekly with responses to questions received through April 4, 2024 but cannot guarantee that it will respond to questions received thereafter.

Documents 1 through 5 listed under Application Materials above should appear in the "Mandatory Documents" box on the Grants.gov Grant Application Package page.

For documents 1 through 4, click on the appropriate form and then click "Open Form" below the box. The fields that must be completed will be highlighted in yellow. Optional fields and completed fields will be displayed in white. If you enter an invalid response or incomplete information in a field, you will receive an error message. When you have finished filling out each form, click "Save." When you return to the electronic Grant Application Package page, click on the form you just completed, and then click on the box that says, "Move Form to Submission List." This action will move the document over to the box that says, "Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission."

For document 5, you will need to attach electronic files. Prepare your narrative proposal as described above and in Sec. 6.4 and save the documents to your computer as a PDF file. When you are ready to attach your proposal to the application package, click on "Project Narrative Attachment Form," and open the form. Click "Add Mandatory Project Narrative File," and then attach your proposal (previously saved to your computer) using the browse window that appears. You may then click "View Mandatory Project Narrative File" to view it. Enter a brief descriptive title of your project in the space beside

"Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename;" the filename should be no more than 40 characters long. If there are other attachments to submit to accompany your proposal, you may click "Add Optional Project Narrative File" and proceed as before. When you have finished attaching the necessary documents, click "Close Form." When you return to the "Grant Application Package" page, select the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" and click "Move Form to Submission List." The form should now appear in the box that says, "Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission."

Other Attachments: Documents 6 through 9 are submitted using the Other Attachments form. You must submit document 6 – Budget Table and document 7 - Resumes or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigators and critical staff. You are required to submit document 8 – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement – if you have included any indirect costs in your proposed budget. You are required to submit document 9 – Commitment Letters – to demonstrate evidence of the partnership. Letters of support are recommended to show connections to the identified disadvantaged community(ies) and prior collaborations, if applicable. To attach documents 6 - 9, use the "Other Attachments Form". After attaching the documents, please remember to highlight the "Other Attachments Form" and click "Move Form to Submission List" Please submit eachdocument from 6 through 9 as a separate file.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

Application Review: Applications meeting the threshold eligibility criteria in Sec. III.E will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth below. **Applicants should explicitly address these criteria as part of their application package submittal and should follow the Project Narrative Format in Appendix C.** If not, applicants risk the possibility of information being left out, overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored. Each application will be rated under a points system, with a total of 150 points possible.

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

V.A. Evaluation Criteria

Project Approach (30 points)	Applications will be evaluated based on the completeness and strength to which the project narrative demonstrates the applicant's ability to: A. Establish and manage a partnership of 5 or more eligible entities (direct recipient of the award and four or more subrecipients). At least two of the partners must be small community-based organizations (defined as 10 or fewer full time equivalent employees). B. **Include a brief, yet detailed description of every recipient project and every subrecipient project and how each will meet the Objectives for Disadvantaged Communities in Sec. I.A.2 and meet one or more of the Priority Areas in Sec. I.B.**1. Community-driven projects are projects that include activities where community residents and/or representatives are integrally involved in the planning and execution of those activities. Applicants are encouraged to have projects that support more than one Priority Area. Applicants must identify the **primary** Priority Area for the application as 1. Water Quality Improvement; 2. Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat; or 4. Strengthen Community Resilience. Environmental Education

	projects may be included but may not be the primary Priority Area of the application. C. Describe how the applicant organization is knowledgeable about disadvantaged communities affected by harms or risks that affect communities in the identified project area. This must include a brief description of how the project supports *EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.* Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section
Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes, and Milestones (25 points)	Applicants will be evaluated based on the completeness and strength to which the application demonstrates: 1) Anticipated results (outputs and outcomes) for the applicant organization and the subrecipient organizations 2) If applicable, how the project will address nutrient pollution reduction to the Gulf of Mexico or climate change impacts 3) Develop a plan for monitoring subrecipient progress and environmental results from subaward projects and report outputs and outcomes to EPA 4) Demonstrate a clearly articulated milestone schedule for project tasks including, but not limited to subaward agreements with subrecipients, recipient project implementation schedule, subaward implementation schedule, major outreach activities, and quarterly/final reporting. This should include a clearly articulated approach to ensure that subaward projects are completed in sufficient time to allow the grant recipient to aggregate results, lessons learned, and ensure subrecipients have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs. Applications that include a detailed table may be scored more favorably. Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.
Disadvantaged Communities (10 points)	Disadvantaged Community Applicants will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they demonstrate i) how disadvantaged communities were identified ii) a plan for working with disadvantaged communities affected by environmental, climate and human health harms or risks, and iii) the project's benefit to address the needs of the disadvantaged communities (see Sec. I.A.1).
Outreach (20 points)	Under this criterion, the applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the project workplan includes a plan to communicate early and often and to disseminate project-related information such as successes and lessons learned to EPA, identified disadvantaged communities, and stakeholders, with a goal of expanding adoption of successful approaches. Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.
Timely Expenditure of Award (5 points)	Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.
Programmatic	Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability

Capability (40 points)	to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their: A. The applicant's and subrecipients' organizational knowledge and experience in working with disadvantaged communities, including having the necessary partnerships, contacts, or established networks. B. Applicants will be evaluated based on the quality of the letters of commitment with subrecipients submitted with the application. **Applicants are required to submit letters of commitment from all partners (see Sec. III.B). If letters of commitment from all partners are not received, the application will be rejected**. Note: Applicants and subrecipients who demonstrate they are experienced and familiar with local community issues and demonstrate credibility and a presence in the communities, may improve their score for this criterion. This may also be demonstrated through letters of support from communities or community members who are not official partners. C. Organizational capacity to manage subawards. This must include staff expertise and qualifications. Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.
Past Performance (5 points)	Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their organization's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their past performance: (i) completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to Section 7 of Appendix C and (ii) meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 7 of Appendix C, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. If such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported why not. 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 the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and the application will receive a neutral score (2.5 points) for these subfactors.** ***If the applicant does not provide any response for these items, the application may receive a score of 0 for these factors.*** Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.
Budget (15 points)	Applications will be evaluated based on the reasonableness, necessity, allowability (of costs) and cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget**.** ***Projects that allocate at least 50% of the funds directly to subawards with partners will be evaluated more favorably. Applicants should describe in the approach or budget narrative how they will ensure the majority of subaward funding goes directly to project***

	activities. This section will be evaluated by reviewing two items: 1) budget table and 2) budget narrative (located within the project narrative workplan). The budget table should be easy to understand and link the expenses to the tasks and deliverables from the project workplan. The budget narrative should be used to provide a description of costs in the budget table. Subawards are included in the budget as Other Direct Costs. Each subaward should have its own line and aggregate cost. *Applicants should consider utilizing the suggested budget table template to help ensure all information is included.* Applicants should refer here and here for information to include in Budget.

V.B. Review and Selection Process:

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in III.E. Only eligible applications meeting threshold criteria will advance and be evaluated by review panels, composed of federal agency staff, using the criteria listed in V.A. Review panels will rank the applications based on the criteria in V.A. and develop preliminary recommendations for funding to the selection official(s). Each Priority Area in Sec. I. B. will have its own ranking list and recommendations for funding if sufficient applications are received. Information pertaining to proposed recommendations may be shared with appropriate governmental departments or agencies before selections are made to determine whether potential selections (a) are expected to be funded by another funding source or (b) could be affected by permitting or regulatory issues.

V.C. Other Factors

Final funding decisions for each funding opportunity will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decisions, the selection official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider the following factors: any duplicate funding issues; the amount of the organization's unliquidated obligations on previous GMD grants; program priorities; funding availability; appropriate balances of geographic and jurisdictional distribution of projects; and organizational diversity in terms of applicant type selected to receive awards (e.g., local government, state agency, Indian Tribe**,** college and university, other not for profit entity) in order to help ensure a broad representation of entity types receiving awards to promote program effectiveness.

Any final selections out of rank order must be documented and justified based on the factors listed above. Once selections have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA approving and awarding official.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

VI.A. Award Notices and Status:

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

1. EPA anticipates notification to *unsuccessful* applicants will be made via email to the original signer ofthe application or the project contact listed in the application.

2. EPA anticipates that notification to successful applicants will be made via email to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application within 60 days after the closing date of this RFA. The notification will advise them that their proposed project has been evaluated and forwarded to the EPA approving official for further consideration and possible award. This notification, which advises finalists that their proposed project has been forwarded to the approving official, **is not and should not be considered as** an authorization to begin work. Applicants are cautioned that only the EPA award official is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding, or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. Theaward notice

signed by the EPA award official is the authorizing document and will be provided through postal mail. The applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms, which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification to finalists and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

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 200 Subpart E), Administrative Requirements (2 CFR 200 and 1500), and Audit Requirements (A-133).This includes government-wide requirements pertaining to accounting standards, lobbying, minority or woman business enterprise, 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: https://www.epa.gov/grants/policy-regulations-and-guidance-epa-grants.

VI.B. Reporting Requirements:

Applicants selected for funding shall provide narrative technical progress reports addressing financial and work progress. Special conditions requiring quarterly progress reporting, a detailed final technical report, and post-project reporting will be added to awards. Applicants should budget time and resources for these activities.

VI.C. 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) whichcan 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. Note, the Federal Register notice references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding the regulatory changes, 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.

VI.D. Additional Programmatic Items of Note:

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. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no 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.

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.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For further information, contact:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Mexico Division
ATTN: Rachel Houge
2510 14th Street – Suite 1212
Gulfport, MS 39501
GMP-RFP@epa.gov

Please send all questions to gmp-rfp@epa.gov. Questions and answers will be posted at the Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023 BIL link on the GMD home page https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico and will be updated weekly as new questions are received**. Note: Prior to submitting a new question, please check the Q&A to ensure your question is not already answered there.**

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

VIII.A. Quality Assurance

Assistance agreements that involve environmental information and that are expected to exceed $200,000 (in federal funding) at solicitation issuance or award shall develop a written QA system commensurate with the degree of confidence needed for environmentally related data operations as defined in 2 CFR 1500.12. Environmental information is defined as data and information that describe environmental processes or conditions which support EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment. Environmental information includes but is not limited to data from direct measurements or analytical testing results; data produced from environmental modeling; and data compiled from other sources such as databases or literature.

GMD uses a graded approach to QA requirements for awardees depending on the environmental information being collected and how it will be used. Prior to collecting environmental information, the recipient must develop and implement QA procedures, specifications, and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives through a Quality Management Plan (QMP), a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and/or another agreed upon QA document such as a combined QMP/QAPP. A QMP is an organization-specific document that describes the quality control, policies, qualifications, and procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating work and may apply to multiple projects. A QAPP is a project-specific planning document that describes comprehensive details about the QA requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure the project objectives are met and are of sufficient and known quality. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA Directive No: CIO 2105-S-01.0: Quality Management Plan Standard, and the QAPP should be prepared in accordance with EPA Directive No: CIO 2105-S-02.0: Quality Assurance Project Plan Standard. EPA can assist successful applicants in determining which QA document(s) is required for the proposed project. The recipient shall ensure that subawards involving environmental information issued under this agreement include appropriate quality requirements for the work. The recipient shall ensure those subrecipients develop and implement QA planning document(s) in accordance with EPA Quality policy and terms and conditions of the award. The QMP and/or QAPP must be approved by EPA at least 30 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process.

Organizations may be granted an exception or modification to the QMP requirement if they meet certain criteria, which may include but are not limited to one-time, short-term, and special projects or projects of limited scope; and/or organizations generating, collecting, compiling, and/or using environmental data for public education purposes. EPA Requirements for QMPs and QAPPs can be found here: http://www.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial.

See Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS for Agency Contact information for referral to an EPA QA staff member.

VIII.B. Water Quality (WQ) Exchange

If WQ data are generated, either directly or by subaward, the successful applicant must ensure all WQ data are transmitted into the Agency's Data Warehouse annually or by project completion using the Water Quality Exchange (WQX) in accordance with an EPA approved QAPP. WQ data that are appropriate include physical, chemical, and biological sample results for water, sediment and fish tissue. The data include toxicity data, microbiological data, and the metrics and indices generated from biological and habitat data. WQX is an online tool for EPA data partners to upload and share data with EPA and the public. WQ data collected using continuous monitors, either by the recipient or by subaward, are not required to be uploaded into the EPA Data Warehouse. More information about WQX including tutorials, can be found at www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-wqx.

Appendix A. Grants.gov Application Submission Instructions

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

Applicants must apply electronically through Grants.gov under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined here. Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in section Appendix A. under Technical Issues with Submission.

B. Submission Instructions

1. SAM.gov (System for Award Management) Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will need to create an account using login.gov to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining a Unique Entity Identification (UEI). This a 12-character alphanumeric ID that is assigned to an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the Entity Registration Checklist for details on this process.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you to renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

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

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current eBusiness (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

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

2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the Grants.gov Applicant Registration instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be

assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). **Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov**. Please review the Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles and Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions for details on this important process.

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

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

3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to Grants.gov and click on the red "Apply" button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

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. If the submit button is grayed out, it may be because you do not have the appropriate role to submit in your organization. Contact your organization's EBiz point of contact or contact Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

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

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.

4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov **no later than April 4, 2024, 11:59pm (ET).** Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Please note that successful submission of your application through Grants.gov does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

C. **Technical Issues with Submission** If applicants experience technical issues during the submission of an application that they are unable to resolve, follow these procedures **before** the application deadline date:

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.

3. Send an email with the Funding Opportunity Number: **EPA-I-R4-GM-2023** in the subject line to gmp-rfp@epa.gov **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:
4. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
5. Description of the issue
6. The entire application package in PDF format.

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

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

D. **Application Materials**

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below using the Grants.gov application package, accessed using the instructions above. The following forms and documents are required under this announcement, as described in Section IV.B. of this announcement:

Mandatory Documents

1. Standard Form 424, *Application for Federal Assistance*.
2. Standard Form 424A, *Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs*
3. EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contacts Form
4. EPA Form 4700-4, *Pre-Award Compliance Review Report for All Applicants Requesting Federal Financial Assistance*
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form (See Appendix C for additional information)
6. Other Attachments Form – Budget Table
7. Other Attachments Form – Resumes
8. Other Attachments Form - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)
9. Other Attachments Form – Letters of Commitment (from partners)/Letters of Support (from non-partners, if applicable)

Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with Rachel Houge (gmp-rfa@epa.gov) as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

Appendix B. Helpful Links (including Grant and Budget Development Training)

A. For assistance in filling out forms, please see the Common Errors document found on EPA's Gulf of Mexico Division website. Follow the Gulf of Mexico Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023 BIL RFA Announcement for the document and other RFA information.
B. For EPA Grants Award Process Webinars and other grants information, please follow this link.
C. For EPA guidance on budget development, please follow this link.
D. For additional guidance on grant writing and other resources, please follow this link.
E. Screening tools may be found here: EJScreen and CEJST.

Appendix C. Project Narrative and Budget Table Format

The project narrative and budget table must substantially comply with the instructions, format, and content described below. It must also address the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the RFA. The project narrative, including the cover page, workplan, and budget narrative, must not exceed a maximum of 12 single-spaced type-written pages. **Excess pages will not be reviewed.**

Supporting materials, such as project team biographies, letters of commitment, letters of support, and negotiated indirect cost rate agreements can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 12-page limit. Supporting materials should be submitted using the Optional Attachments form.

Applicants should ensure that their project narratives are written clearly using understandable terms. Doing so will help ensure that the evaluation team members understand the purpose, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project.

Each Project Narrative must be formatted for 8½" x 11" paper and should use no smaller than an 11- point Calibri 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.

Do not include confidential business information in your application.

Project Narrative Format:

Project Narrative (12-page limit including the summary information page)

SUMMARY INFORMATION PAGE (SHOULD NOT EXCEED ONE PAGE)
• **Project Title. Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience.**
• **Applicant Information**. Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, e-mail address and UEI number. *Do not include private information.*
• **Type of Organization.** Specify, consistent with your SF 424, one of the following eligible entities:
  ○ Local Government (as defined in 2 CFR 200.1)
  ○ State Agency (includes Interstate)
  ○ Indian Tribe
  ○ College and University (includes private and state institutions)
  ○ Not for Profit/Non-profit
  ○ Other
• **Proposed Funding Request**. The total dollar amount requested from EPA- If the dollar amount requested from EPA exceeds $6,000,000 your application will be rejected.
• **Project Duration**. Provide beginning and ending dates, up to 5 years. See "Anticipated Start and End Dates"in Section II.B.
• **Brief Project Description**. Summarize the proposed project in 100 words or less in a clear and succinct manner in PLAIN LANGUAGE. Include environmental KEY TERMS that could be used as search terms (e.g., water quality, habitat restoration, community resilience). Do not use acronyms. If the application is 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.
• **Environmental Results.** Please describe major anticipated environmental results from this project.

- **Place of Performance**. Identify the locations where project activities will take place. The planned locations must be in the five Gulf of Mexico states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida) for 1. Water Quality Improvement and 2. Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat. For 4. Strengthen Community Resilience. the locations where project activities will take place must be within the eligible coastal counties or the application will be rejected. Education can be a part of any project. Outreach must be included in every project.
  * For more details on location, please see maps in Figures 1 and 2 as well as Appendix D.

PROJECT WORKPLAN (should not exceed 11 pages, excess pages will not be reviewed) ***Applicants must ensure that the workplan addresses the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the RFA. Applicants should use the section and subsection numbers and headings below which correspond with the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the RFA. The workplan should be written clearly using understandable terms.***

Section 1. Project Approach. Describe your approach for serving as the primary recipient to manage a partnership (see Section I.B) whose activities will address one or more of the four Priority Areas in Sec. I.B and take place in disadvantaged community(ies). The application must clearly identify who is the primary recipient and identify a minimum of four subrecipients (partners) who will receive subawards. At least two of the partners must be small community-based organizations (defined as 10 or fewer full time equivalent employees).

- Applications must identify disadvantaged communities where projects will take place, describe how the communities were identified, and clearly describe what the needs of the disadvantaged community are.
- Applications must include a brief, yet detailed description of intended activities for every recipient project and every subrecipient project and how each will meet the Objectives for Disadvantaged Communities in Sec. I.A.2 and meet one or more of the Priority Areas in Sec. I.B. Applicants must also describe how the proposed project will address the needs of the disadvantaged communities identified above.
- Applicants should describe in the project approach or budget narrative how they will ensure the majority of subaward funding goes directly to support project activities for the four Priority Areas.
- Applicants ***must*** identify the primary Priority Area (focus) for the application as 1. Water Quality Improvement; 2. Protect, Enhance, or Restore Habitat; or 4. Strengthen Community Resilience. Environmental Education projects may be included but may not be the primary Priority Area of the application. Applicants are encouraged to have projects that support more than one Priority Area.
- Applications should describe how proposed projects are community-driven and include activities where community residents and/or representatives are integrally involved in the planning and execution of those activities.
- Applications should describe recipient and subrecipient knowledge of disadvantaged communities affected by environmental and human health harms or risks. *Include a sentence briefly stating how your project supports EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds*
- Applicants should describe their plan to manage and monitor subrecipients for timely and successful completion of projects and ensure subrecipients comply with QA, financial, and reporting requirements.

NOTE: Applicants must describe as part of their application how they identified disadvantaged communities affected by environmental and human health harms or risks.

Section 2. Environmental Results and Milestones. The following items should be included in this section.

- Describe anticipated results (outputs and outcomes) for both the recipient and subrecipient organizations. Both qualitative and quantitative results should be identified. See Section I.C.2. for more information.
- Describe how you will monitor subrecipient progress and environmental results from subaward projects and report those results (outputs and outcomes) to EPA.
- Provide a milestone schedule that covers each year of the total project period and provide a breakout of the project activities into phases (quarterly per year increments is encouraged) with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks. The milestone schedule should show timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks including, but not limited to, quality assurance documentation, subaward agreements with subrecipients, recipient project implementation schedule, subaward project implementation schedule, major outreach activities, and quarterly/final reporting to EPA. Describe how this milestone schedule will ensure that subaward projects are completed in sufficient time to allow the grant recipient to aggregate results, lessons learned and ensure subrecipients have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs.

*The project start date will follow acceptance of the award by the successful applicant.
*This must include a detailed table.

Section 3. Outreach.

- Describe your plan to engage disadvantaged communities affected by environmental and human health harms or risks and how results will be shared with EPA and stakeholders. This could include how subawards improve chances of meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in all aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

Section 4. Timely Expenditure of Award. Describe your organization's approach, procedures, and controls to ensure awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

Section 5. Programmatic Capability.

- Describe the recipient's and subrecipients' (partners) organizational knowledge and experience in working with disadvantaged communities in the targeted geographic area, including having the necessary partnerships, contacts, or established networks expertise that will assist in successfully working with communities in the geographic area.
- Identify all proposed partners that will be involved and their role in the successful accomplishment of the program. Partners (subrecipients) **must** provide letters of commitment explaining their role in the project, proposed projects in disadvantaged areas, what resources (funding, in-kind, technical assistance, etc.) they are bringing to the effort, and their interest in the project and community. Generic letters of support will not be evaluated.
- Note: Applicants who demonstrate they are experienced and familiar with local community issues and demonstrate credibility with the communities, either through their local presence in the communities or through stakeholder letters of support may improve their score for this criterion.
- Describe your organizational capability to manage a subaward program. This must include staff expertise and qualifications. Resumes of applicant's key staff are encouraged as part of the application package and should be included in grants.gov as an Optional Attachment. These are not included in the page limit.

Section 6. Past Performance.

Submit a list of federally or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and grants but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no

more than 3 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and:

- describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements,
- describe 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

Note: In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors, to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant. **If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application, and the application 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 the applicant does not provide any response for these items, the application may receive a score of 0 for these factors.**

Section 7. Detailed Budget Narrative (15 points evaluated in conjunction with budget table).
In the budget table, the applicant should provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each work plan component/task. In this section, please provide a narrative description of costs in the budget table. Common examples include: 1) description of the roles and responsibilities of personnel, 2) description of what supplies will be used for, 3) description of why the equipment is needed and why purchase is preferable to rental of equipment, 4) description of activities of the contract, whether it will be sole source or competed, and why that choice was made, and 5) description of activities of a Subrecipient, etc. All subaward funding should be located under the "Other Direct Cost" cost category. Please refer to Appendix B for EPA guidance on budget development.

Describe each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine cost-effectiveness, reasonableness and allowability of costs. ***Projects that allocate at least 50% of the total project funds to subawards (partners) will be evaluated more favorably.*** The applicant should dedicate no more than 25% to Environmental Education.

Section 8. Map(s) (not counted towards page limit)
Include a map that delineates the project boundaries and/or shows the expected location(s) of the project(s)

Section 9. Quality Assurance (not counted in page limit)

- For awards under this competition that are expected to exceed $200,000 in federal funding AND involve the generation or use of environmental data, please provide a statement acknowledging: 1) the need to demonstrate competency prior to beginning work and 2) an understanding that a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required. Please see Section VI.O. at the following link for more information: EPA Solicitation Clauses. For further information, please see the Frequently Asked Questions Document regarding this EPA requirement: https://www.epa.gov/measurements-modeling/documents-about-measurement-competency-under-assistance-agreements.
- If the applicant or subrecipients plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain compliance with the QA requirements (see Section VIII.A, QUALITY ASSURANCE, of this announcement for additional information).

Budget Table Format (15 points - Evaluated in conjunction with budget narrative and not counted in page limit).

A budget table must be provided that identifies major costs associated with the application in an easily

understandable format. Where possible, the budget table should link expenses to tasks and deliverables from the project description. The budget narrative should be used to provide a description of why costs in the budget table are necessary for the project. Subawards are included in the budget as Other Direct Costs. Each subaward should have its own line and aggregate cost. Budget resources necessary for completing a QMP or QAPP or appropriate QA document, if applicable, sharing project information broadly, and reporting progress, should be included.

Utilizing the suggested budget table template is strongly encouraged or the applicant risks the possibility of information being left out, or overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored. The template is available for download on https://www.grants.gov and by following the Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2023 BIL RFA announcement link at https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico. Projects that allocate at least 50% of the funds to subawards will be evaluated more favorably. EPA provides detailed guidance on preparing budgets in the Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance.

Appendix D. Eligible Coastal County List for Florida and for Priority Area 4: *Strengthen Community Resilience*

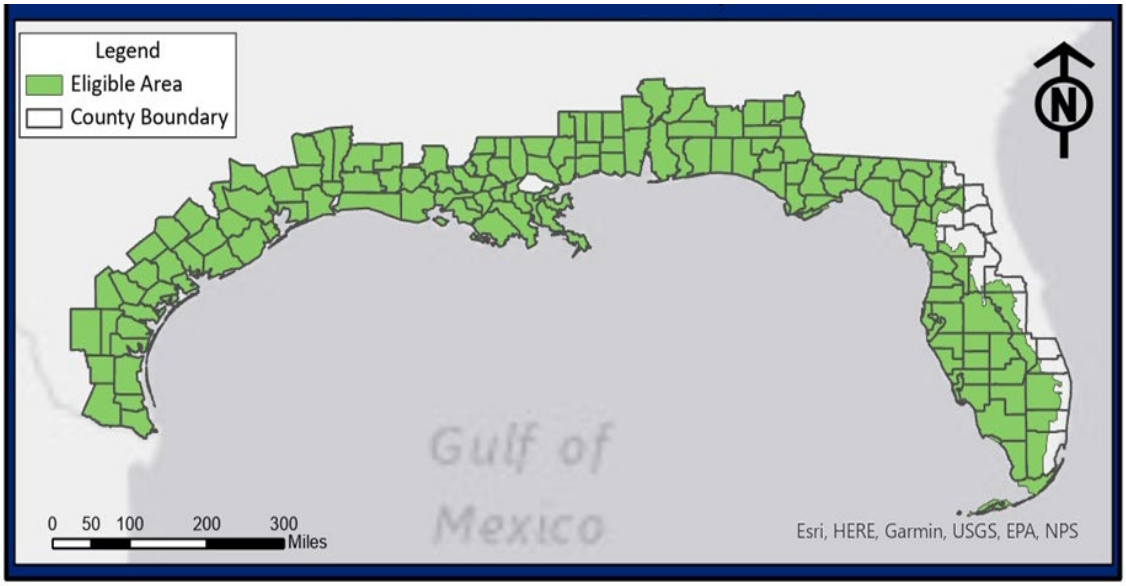


Figure 3:Eligible Coastal County List

STATE	COUNTY	ELIGIBILITY-ENTIRE COUNTY/PARTIAL COUNTY
Alabama	Baldwin	Entire
Alabama	Clarke	Entire
Alabama	Coffee	Entire
Alabama	Conecuh	Entire
Alabama	Covington	Entire
Alabama	Dale	Entire
Alabama	Escambia	Entire
Alabama	Geneva	Entire
Alabama	Henry	Entire
Alabama	Houston	Entire
Alabama	Mobile	Entire
Alabama	Monroe	Entire
Alabama	Washington	Entire
Florida	Alachua	Partial - see map
Florida	Baker	Partial - see map
Florida	Bay	Entire
Florida	Bradford	Partial - see map
Florida	Broward	Partial - see map
Florida	Calhoun	Entire
Florida	Charlotte	Entire
Florida	Citrus	Entire
Florida	Clay	Partial - see map

Florida	Collier	Entire
Florida	Columbia	Partial - see map
Florida	DeSoto	Entire
Florida	Dixie	Entire
Florida	Escambia	Entire
Florida	Franklin	Entire
Florida	Gadsden	Entire
Florida	Gilchrist	Entire
Florida	Glades	Partial - see map
Florida	Gulf	Entire
Florida	Hamilton	Entire
Florida	Hardee	Entire
Florida	Hendry	Partial - see map
Florida	Hernando	Entire
Florida	Highlands	Partial - see map
Florida	Hillsborough	Entire
Florida	Holmes	Entire
Florida	Jackson	Entire
Florida	Jefferson	Entire
Florida	Lafayette	Entire
Florida	Lake	Partial - see map
Florida	Lee	Entire
Florida	Leon	Entire
Florida	Levy	Partial - see map
Florida	Liberty	Entire
Florida	Madison	Entire
Florida	Manatee	Entire
Florida	Marion	Partial - see map
Florida	Miami-Dade	Partial - see map
Florida	Monroe	Entire
Florida	Okaloosa	Entire
Florida	Palm Beach	Partial - see map
Florida	Pasco	Entire
Florida	Pinellas	Entire
Florida	Polk	Partial - see map
Florida	Putnam	Partial - see map
Florida	Santa Rosa	Entire
Florida	Sarasota	Entire
Florida	Sumter	Entire
Florida	Suwannee	Entire
Florida	Taylor	Entire
Florida	Union	Partial - see map
Florida	Wakulla	Entire

Florida	Walton	Entire
Florida	Washington	Entire
Louisiana	Acadia	Entire
Louisiana	Allen	Entire
Louisiana	Beauregard	Entire
Louisiana	Calcasieu	Entire
Louisiana	Cameron	Entire
Louisiana	Iberia	Entire
Louisiana	Jefferson	Entire
Louisiana	Jefferson Davis	Entire
Louisiana	Lafayette	Entire
Louisiana	Lafourche	Entire
Louisiana	Orleans	Entire
Louisiana	Plaquemines	Entire
Louisiana	St. Bernard	Entire
Louisiana	St. Charles	Entire
Louisiana	St. James	Entire
Louisiana	St. John the Baptist	Entire
Louisiana	St. Landry	Entire
Louisiana	St. Martin	Entire
Louisiana	St. Mary	Entire
Louisiana	St. Tammany	Entire
Louisiana	Tangipahoa	Entire
Louisiana	Terrebonne	Entire
Louisiana	Vermilion	Entire
Louisiana	Washington	Entire
Mississippi	Forrest	Entire
Mississippi	George	Entire
Mississippi	Greene	Entire
Mississippi	Hancock	Entire
Mississippi	Harrison	Entire
Mississippi	Jackson	Entire
Mississippi	Lamar	Entire
Mississippi	Pearl River	Entire
Mississippi	Perry	Entire
Mississippi	Stone	Entire
Texas	Aransas	Entire
Texas	Bee	Entire
Texas	Brazoria	Entire
Texas	Brooks	Entire
Texas	Calhoun	Entire
Texas	Cameron	Entire
Texas	Chambers	Entire

Texas	Colorado	Entire
Texas	DeWitt	Entire
Texas	Duval	Entire
Texas	Fort Bend	Entire
Texas	Galveston	Entire
Texas	Goliad	Entire
Texas	Hardin	Entire
Texas	Harris	Entire
Texas	Hidalgo	Entire
Texas	Jackson	Entire
Texas	Jasper	Entire
Texas	Jefferson	Entire
Texas	Jim Wells	Entire
Texas	Kenedy	Entire
Texas	Kleberg	Entire
Texas	Lavaca	Entire
Texas	Liberty	Entire
Texas	Live Oak	Entire
Texas	Matagorda	Entire
Texas	Montgomery	Entire
Texas	Newton	Entire
Texas	Nueces	Entire
Texas	Orange	Entire
Texas	Refugio	Entire
Texas	San Patricio	Entire
Texas	Tyler	Entire
Texas	Victoria	Entire
Texas	Waller	Entire
Texas	Wharton	Entire
Texas	Willacy	Entire