

Federal Agency Name: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)
Funding Opportunity Title: ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER GRANT PROGRAM
Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)
Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-I-OW-OWM-22-01
Assistance Listing Number: 66.203

DATES: The closing date and time for application submissions is **Friday, July 1, 2022 at 11:59 PM, Eastern Time (ET)**. Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.epa.gov/grants) no later than **Friday, July 1, 2022 at 11:59 PM, ET in order to be considered for funding**. Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency contact identified in Section VII by **Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 11:59PM**. Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at: www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/efcn. EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs on this website prior to submitting a question.

COVID-19 Update: EPA is providing flexibilities to applicants experiencing challenges related to COVID-19. Please see the **Flexibilities Available to Organizations Impacted by COVID-19** clause in Section IV of EPA's Solicitation Clauses (<http://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>).

EPA will provide a webinar on completing applications under this announcement. The date, time, and information on how to register for the webinar is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/efcn>. The webinar will be recorded and posted on the website approximately two weeks after the webinar is held.

NOTE: Prior to naming a "partner" or other entity in your application who will receive EPA funding as part of your project carefully review the guidance on contracts and subawards in EPA's Solicitation Clauses as well as additional guidance in this RFA.

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SECTION I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

The nation has made significant progress in addressing environmental and public health needs over the past fifty years, but more remains to be done. At the same time, the cost of facilities, programs, services, and activities needed to meet environmental challenges continues to grow. Many communities with significant pollution issues and infrastructure needs have not been able to access federal funding and financing programs to address these concerns. EPA recognizes that existing environmental gains cannot be preserved, nor further progress achieved, unless tribes, state and local governments, utilities, and non-governmental organizations have the resources to develop and sustain water infrastructure and to pay for the growing costs of protecting the environment and public health.

As EPA looks to support continued environmental progress, we are mindful that many communities have never been able to access safe and reliable infrastructure, and many communities are already dealing with the impacts of climate change. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing stressors that impact public health, degrade the quality of our waterways, and destabilize the critical water infrastructure we rely upon. Disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable to these impacts. Vulnerable populations include low-income communities and communities of color, children, elderly, Indigenous people, and tribes.

Through this grant program, EPA seeks to support projects that help communities address the environmental and financial resource challenges they face. The Agency also seeks to maximize the impact of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), signed in November 2021. BIL is a historic opportunity to upgrade environmental infrastructure, particularly in underserved and disadvantaged communities, including tribes, across our nation. BIL provides the largest federal investment in water in the history of our nation. It includes over \$50 billion in water infrastructure investments, most of which will be available through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) programs. BIL also includes more than \$5 billion for Superfund and brownfields clean-up work and \$5 billion for decarbonizing our nation's school buses. Disadvantaged communities will need technical assistance (TA) to access this funding and identify sustainable, enduring infrastructure solutions. EPA, in partnership with the states and other key stakeholders, is committed to offering technical assistance to help more communities identify infrastructure needs, plan for capital improvements, and apply for the funds available through BIL.

With the funds included in this funding opportunity, EPA will carry out its mission of protecting human health and the environment by ensuring that the vital services provided by the EFCs reach communities who need them most.

Accordingly, with this RFA, EPA is seeking applications from organizations with a demonstrable history of providing effective, results-oriented technical assistance. These entities will provide local governments, states, tribes, and non-governmental organizations with eligible services, such as support in administering funds, capacity building, technical assistance, training,

reports/studies, tools, and other eligible activities to protect human health and the environment. The Agency's priorities include maximizing the potential for BIL funds to provide significant benefit to disadvantaged, and/or tribal communities; tackling the climate crisis; and advancing environmental justice and equity. EPA believes the EFCs will play an important role in helping to ensure that communities that have struggled to secure public funding receive the help they need to access resources to support infrastructure improvements that protect public health, safeguard the environment, and mitigate environmental justice concerns.

Note: Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys:

- The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and
- Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

More details on EPA's approach to environmental justice can be found at EPA's [Environmental Justice](#) webpage.

B. Project Description

EPA is soliciting applications from eligible entities to serve as a Regional EFC for an [EPA Region](#) (either covering the entire Region or a specific geographic area of the Region) or as a National EFC for EPA Headquarters. EPA encourages all eligible applicants to apply and recognizes that new applicants are essential to expanding the pool of service providers able to address the environmental and financial challenges the nation faces. New applicants may help to expand the pool and increase diversity in supporting projects that help disadvantaged communities. New applicants are applicants that have not received an EFC award from EPA in the past 10 years.

A Regional EFC will either provide services for BIL funded water related activities or will provide services that address multi-environmental media activities, which may also include water related activities that are not funded through BIL. EPA will award separate grants to Regional EFCs for BIL funded water activities and multi-environmental media activities that are not funded with BIL appropriations. National EFC(s) will provide BIL funded water related activities.

Regional EFCs will provide eligible services either across their designated EPA Region or within a specific geographical regional or local area. One or more National EFCs will provide eligible services across the country and can be located anywhere in the United States. The National EFC(s) will also serve to address any gaps that may exist in the Regional Water Infrastructure BIL Funded EFCs to ensure that these services reach geographically diverse communities, of varying sizes, and serve urban, suburban, and rural populations. In addition, the National EFC(s) may also support Regional Water Infrastructure BIL Funded EFCs by providing subawards to eligible subrecipients if additional funding is available.

Objective

The objective of this RFA is to solicit eligible entities to apply for funding as a designated EFC. The EFCs are a key mechanism by which EPA supports its partners with technical, managerial, financial, and administrative support. EFCs are expected to have a project period up to 5 years, with funding up to \$650,000 annually.

There are three types of EFCs that will be evaluated in one of the following categories:

- 1) Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFCs,
- 2) Regional Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding, and
- 3) National Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding.

Eligible services are described below.

Category 1: Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFCs

This EFC category represents the traditional work of prior EFC grant programs. These Regional EFCs serve as hubs focused on providing technical assistance for, managerial, and financial capacity building services to local, state, and tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations in the equitable implementation of environmental programs and infrastructure investments in the areas of water, air, and land. This work is structured to focus on a range of environmental finance issues. The Regional EFCs will provide eligible services either across their entire designated EPA Region or within a specific geographical regional or local area.

It is anticipated that approximately 10 Multi-Environmental Media EFCs will be selected for these functions, and EPA anticipates that there will be one in each Region.

Under the cooperative agreements issued under this funding opportunity, EFCs will provide eligible services to assist communities, specifically disadvantaged, rural, and/or tribal communities, with environmental finance-related projects in clean water, drinking water, solid waste, clean air, toxic substances, insecticides, fungicides, and rodenticides. Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFC applications must propose activities that are eligible for funding under CWA 104(b)(3), SDWA 1442(c)(3), SWDA 8001(a), CAA 103(b)(3), TSCA 10, FIFRA 20, MPRSA 203.

EFCs may develop and share environmental financing information through, for example, the provision of direct services and consultations, training, workshops, studies and reports, videos, case studies, best practices and how-to guides, models, and/or technical tools. Other similar services that the applicant believes will effectively carry out the objectives of this RFA may be offered as well. Applicants are encouraged to list specific services to achieve the RFA's objective in their application.

Category 2: Regional Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding

This is a new EFC category structured to specifically provide clean water and drinking water finance technical assistance services to support community access to BIL funding. These Regional EFCs will provide eligible services either across their designated EPA Region or within

a specific geographical regional or local area.

Core functions of the Regional Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding include:

- **Capacity Development and Technical Assistance.** Building the capacity of local governments –especially in disadvantaged communities –is essential to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and effective utilization of federal investment from the EPA. EFCs will provide technical assistance and/or research to support communities in a range of activities, such as developing water infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) and other capacities that bolster communities’ ability to obtain state and federal support. A significant emphasis will be on supporting communities in preparing for, accessing, and implementing the \$50 billion in funding that the EPA will distribute from the BIL.
- **Tools and Resources.** The EFCs will work collaboratively with the EPA (as part of the Agency’s substantial involvement) to identify the tools, research needs, data, and other technical information to support local, state, and tribal partners to effectively implement environmental regulations and infrastructure investments.

It is anticipated that at least 10 EFCs will be selected for these functions, one in each Region.

Under the cooperative agreements issued in this funding opportunity, EFCs will provide eligible services to assist communities, specifically disadvantaged, rural, and/or tribal communities, with environmental finance-related projects to address clean water, drinking water, and stormwater needs. Applicants should list specific services in their application designed to achieve the RFA’s objective of providing technical assistance related to access to BIL funding. BIL services may include, but are not limited to:

- Helping identify and then support disadvantaged communities to access funding;
- Supporting pre-application development and coordination for infrastructure project delivery, including providing technical assistance in drafting funding applications and then providing technical assistance on project and construction management (including how to acquire professional services in compliance with applicable procurement requirements) to help disadvantaged communities implement capital funding;
- Supporting community engagement;
- Identifying affordable financing strategies;
- Researching ways to lower costs of environmental protection;
- Providing technical assistance for responsible asset management; and/or
- Encouraging the use of appropriate revenue approaches.

Figure 1 below provides a non-exhaustive summary of eligible activities that can be used as examples of finance related technical assistance activities under Category 2, including for water infrastructure.

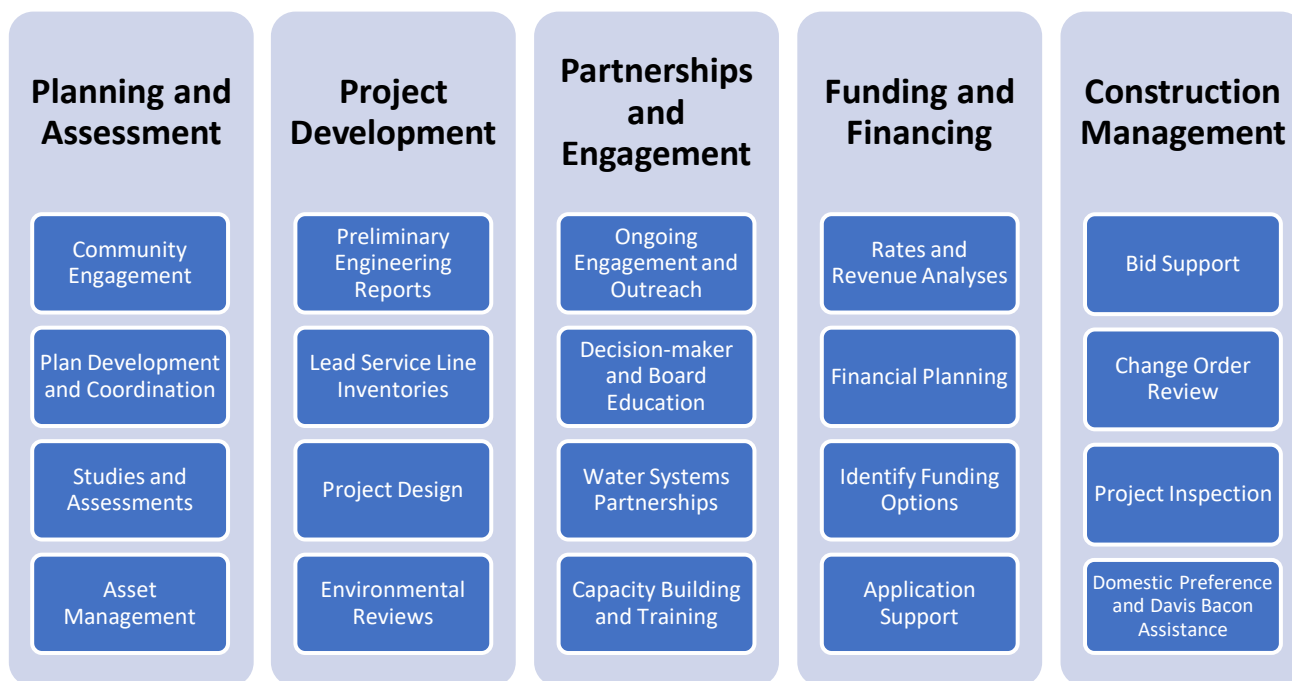


Figure 1: Description of Technical Assistance Activities for Water Infrastructure Projects

NOTE: If an engineering or consulting firm or similar firm provides technical assistance to a local government or other organization in drafting specifications, requirements, statements of work, or invitations for bids or requests for proposals for a contract that will be funded through transaction subject to the Procurement Standards in 2 CFR Part 200, that firm must be excluded from competing for the procurement as provided in 2 CFR 200.319(b).

The EPA is particularly interested in EFCs with a demonstrable history of assisting communities within their Region, especially disadvantaged communities (as defined by states in their SRF Affordability Criteria) with environmental issues, to meet program funding and compliance requirements for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and to access state and federal funding sources for water related activities. EFCs may develop and share environmental financing information through the provision of direct services and consultations, training, workshops, studies and reports, videos, case studies, best practices and how-to guides, models, and/or technical tools as well as other means applicants deem to be effective.

Category 3: National Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding

This is a new EFC category. The National EFC(s) will identify any gaps that may exist in the Regional Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding and develop a strategy to address those gaps to ensure that these services reach geographically diverse communities, of varying sizes,

and serve urban, suburban, and rural populations. In addition to other methods of identifying gaps in services, the National EFC(s) may also support Regional Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding by providing subawards to the extent allowable under 2 CFR 200.331 and EPA's [Subaward Policy](#). The National EFC(s) will work on BIL related clean water and drinking water finance activities. Please refer to the list of eligible services listed under Category 2.

It is anticipated that at least one EFC will be selected under this category.

Applicants may propose other eligible services that achieve the goals described in the categories of this Section of the RFA as well. Note that under [2 CFR 200.315](#), as implemented in the General Terms and Conditions of EPA financial assistance agreements, EPA may require that EFCs provide EPA funded tools, data, and other materials to other EFCs to avoid duplication of effort and promote efficient use of EPA funding.

Minority Serving Institutions

EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available and eligible entities to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. EPA seeks to expand the pool of service providers by including institutions which may have not previously participated in EPA programs. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III, including minority serving institutions (MSIs), to apply under this opportunity.

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

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)
2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at [American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities](#)
3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#)
4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions](#); and
5. Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at [Predominately Black Institutions](#).

C. Project Partnerships

Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects solicited under this announcement. Partnerships between organizations can greatly enhance the delivery of services to communities. In their applications, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project. Applicants should include a clear description of

the roles of specific partners, or planned partners or partnership approach, in the project's components/tasks.

All applicants should develop project teams that include both: 1) technical and engineering expertise, and 2) community outreach and engagement expertise. EFCs may consider working with technical and engineering consultants (in compliance with applicable competitive procurement requirements) that have a demonstrable track record of providing direct technical assistance (such as helping communities write funding applications and providing technical assistance for project and construction management for capital projects); and partnering with community-based organizations that have a history of conducting community outreach and engagement and have established trusted relationships within communities that have struggled or are currently struggling with environmental challenges.

A Regional Water Infrastructure EFC with BIL Funding should consider how it will effectively lead and manage a project team to help significant numbers of communities within its region to access BIL funding.

A National Water Infrastructure EFC with BIL Funding should consider how it will effectively lead and manage a project team to help significant numbers of communities across all regions to access BIL funding.

Contracts with technical and engineering firms must be awarded in compliance with the competitive procurement requirements in 2 CFR Part 200 as interpreted in EPA's [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#). Services from these firms are widely available in the commercial marketplace so EPA expects that contracts in excess of the 2 CFR 200.320(a)(1) micro-purchase threshold (\$10,000 for most recipients) to be entered into competitively. If the applicant chooses to identify any partner entities who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including contracts with consultants), please pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision, found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>. EPA will not consider partner entity qualifications unless the applicant selects them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. Contracts in excess of the micro-purchase threshold at [2 CFR 200.320\(a\)\(1\)](#) with very few exceptions (e.g., a patent) must be awarded competitively. Naming a contractor (including consultants) in your application does not justify a sole source procurement or establish that EPA has approved the sole source contract. Additional information on EPA's interpretation of the competition requirements in 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500 is available in the [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).

Applications that do not include partnerships will be evaluated based on the applicant's demonstration of its ability to successfully meet the objectives described in Section I.B without the use of partners.

D. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs

The capacity building, administrative support, technical assistance, training, outreach, reports/studies, tools, and other eligible activities to be funded under this announcement support the following Strategic Goals and Objectives of EPA's FY 2022-2026 [Strategic Plan](#):

- Goal 1: Tackle the Climate Crisis;
 - Objective 1.1: Reduce Emissions that Cause Climate Change;
 - Objective 1.2: Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts;
- Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights;
 - Objective 2.1: Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels;
- Goal 3: Enforce Environmental Laws and Ensure Compliance
 - Objective 3.2: Detect Violations and Promote Compliance
- Goal 4: Ensure Clean and Healthy Air for All Communities;
 - Objective 4.1: Improve Air Quality and Reduce Localized Pollution and Health Impacts;
 - Objective 4.2: Reduce Exposure to Radiation and Improve Indoor Air;
- Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities;
 - Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure;
 - Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds;
- Goal 6: Safeguard and Revitalize Communities;
 - Objective 6.1: Clean Up and Restore Land for Productive Uses and Healthy Communities;
 - Objective 6.2: Reduce Waste and Prevent Environmental Contamination
 - Objective 6.3: Prepare for and Respond to Environmental Emergencies;
- Goal 7: Ensure Safety of Chemicals for People and the Environment;
 - Objective 7.1: Ensure Chemical and Pesticide Safety; and
 - Objective 7.2: Promote Pollution Prevention.

EPA also requires that applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7A1, [Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements](#)). All proposed projects must address the applicable Goals and Objectives of EPA's FY 2022-2026 [Strategic Plan](#) and 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 overall protection of human health and the environment. Outputs and outcomes are defined as follows:

Outputs: Financial and environmental outputs (or deliverables) are an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and programmatic objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing small, rural, tribal, and/or disadvantaged communities with administrative, pre-development coordination, and technical assistance to apply for, and access, SRF funding through BIL, which should include helping communities draft SRF funding applications, providing community outreach and engagement services, and providing technical assistance for project and construction management for capital projects;
- Providing an established number of communities, determined by the EFC's work plan, with training and knowledge of available infrastructure funding and financing resources;
- Providing an established number of states or tribal governments, determined by the EFC's work plan, with technical assistance to identify and pursue tools, resources and other opportunities that support state and/or tribal SRF programs to build their TA offerings to support disadvantaged communities.
- Development and implementation of training courses, information exchanges, and forums that focus on environmental finance;
- Development of electronic models and software tools focused on paying for environmental protection; and,
- Case studies and lessons learned related to asset management, financial planning, and effective communication of needs for infrastructure investments and environmental projects (particularly for rural, small, tribal, and/or disadvantaged communities).
- Development of tools and resources to support identification of communities that need assistance and tracking status of implementing solutions.

Outcomes: Finance and environmental outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature. Outcomes should be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within the assistance agreement funding period. 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).

Examples of anticipated outcomes for cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increase in the number of communities (especially small, rural, tribal, underserved, and/or disadvantaged communities) that successfully apply for and access financing and funding for infrastructure projects;
- An increase in the number of communities (especially small, rural, tribal, underserved, and/or disadvantaged communities) that understand how to access financing and funding for infrastructure projects;
- An increase in the number of local, state, and tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations that have the financial, technical, and institutional resources and capabilities to pay for environmental protection and operate in compliance with environmental requirements

As part of the Project Narrative, applicants are required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to the EPA's FY 2022-2026 [Strategic Plan](#) Strategic Goals including assisting small, rural, and tribal municipalities to access financing. In addition, applicants will have to describe their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes. Additional information regarding EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at EPA Order 5700.7, [Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements](#).

E. Statutory Authority

The statutory authorities for the awards expected to be made under this announcement are:

1. For the Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFCs: the Clean Water Act, Section 104(b)(3), as amended; the Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442(c)(3), as amended; the Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001(a); the Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3); the Toxics Substances Control Act, Section 10, as amended; the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20, as amended; and the Marine Protection and the Research and Sanctuaries Act, Section 203.
2. For the BIL Funded Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure EFCs: the Clean Water Act, Section 104(b)(3), as amended; the Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442(c)(3), as amended

F. Additional Provisions For Applicants Incorporated Into The Solicitation

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

SECTION II – AWARD INFORMATION

A. Amount of Funding

The total estimated amount of federal funding available under this announcement is approximately \$100 million, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

EPA anticipates making 10 to 21 awards. EPA is prioritizing new applicants and anticipates making at least 5 of these awards to high-ranking applicants that have not received an EFC award from EPA in the past ten years (see Section V.B. for additional details). The total amount

of federal funding available under this competitive announcement is up to approximately \$20,000,000 per year.

Applicants should submit applications requesting up to \$650,000 of funding each year for five years. Applicants may submit applications requesting funding above the \$650,000 annual funding level. EPA will only be able to fund up to the amount that is requested by the applicant.

While EPA intends to make awards for an EFC at EPA Headquarters and in all ten EPA Regions within each of the two Regional EFC categories, the Agency reserves the right to make more awards than anticipated and reserves the right to make no awards in a particular EFC category or in a region. In addition, EPA reserves the right to prioritize the broadest possible coverage by selecting more than one applicant for a single region.

Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, program priorities, and other applicable considerations.

In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions. EPA also reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement or the right to make fewer awards than anticipated. While EPA intends to make awards for an EFC at EPA Headquarters and in all ten EPA Regions within each of the two Regional EFC categories, the Agency reserves the right to make more awards than anticipated and reserves the right to make no awards in a particular EFC category or in a Region. Cooperative agreements funded under this announcement are expected to have five-year project periods, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

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

B. Type of Funding

It is anticipated that cooperative agreements will be funded under this announcement and that EPA will have substantial involvement with the project work plan and budget. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement may include the following:

1. In accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart D \(200.317 through 200.327\)](#), as appropriate, review of proposed procurements in excess of the Simplified Acquisition Threshold to ensure compliance with applicable requirements. (EPA staff will not direct, recommend or suggest that recipients hire specific contractors.)
2. Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the

- applicant.
3. Collaboration during performance of the scope of work, including participation in project activities, to the extent permissible under EPA policies. Examples of collaboration include:
 - a. Consultation between EPA staff and the recipients on effective methods of carrying out the scope of work, provided the recipient makes the final decision on how to perform authorized activities.
 - b. Advice from EPA staff on how to access publicly available information on EPA or other Federal agency web sites.
 - c. With the consent of the recipient, EPA staff may provide technical advice to recipient contractors or subrecipients provided the recipient approves any expenditures of funds necessary to follow advice from EPA staff. The recipient remains accountable for performing contract and subaward management as specified in [2 CFR 200.318](#) and [2 CFR 200.332](#) as well as the terms of the EPA cooperative agreement.
 - d. EPA staff participation in meetings, webinars, and similar events upon the request of the recipient or in connection with a co-sponsorship agreement.
 4. Review of qualifications of key personnel (EPA does not have the authority to select employees of the recipient).
 5. Review and approval of the substantive terms of recipient contracts and subawards to ensure cost allowability and regulatory compliance.
 6. Review and comment on tasks/deliverables and reports prepared under the cooperative agreement(s) (the final decision on the content of these reports rests with the recipient).
 7. Review and comment on tasks/deliverables and reports prepared under the cooperative agreement(s) (the final decision on the content of these reports rests with the recipient).

SECTION III – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants under this competition are public and private non-profit universities and colleges, and non-profit organizations.

Non-profit organization, as defined by 2 CFR 200.1, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes 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 non-profit 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. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No matching funds are required under this competition.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

If these eligibility requirements are not met by the application submission deadline, the application will be eliminated from consideration for funding. Only applications that meet all the threshold eligibility requirements will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. An applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III.A of this announcement by the application submission deadline.
2. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
3. Applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) as stated in Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed, as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this announcement to ensure that their application is timely submitted.
4. Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant System for Award Management (SAM) (<https://sam.gov/content/home>) system issues. An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) because they did not timely or properly register in [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their applications via email with

Addison Chau at EFCRFA@epa.gov, within five business days after the submission deadline – failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

5. Each application submitted under this announcement must address **one, and only one**, of the three categories: 1) Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFCs, 2) Regional Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding, and 3) National Water Infrastructure EFCs with BIL Funding. Applicants may also submit more than one application for a category under this announcement as long as each application is separately submitted. If an applicant submits an application that addresses more than one category, the application will be rejected.
6. Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFC applications must propose activities that are eligible for funding under CWA 104(b)(3), SDWA 1442(c)(3), SWDA 8001(a), CAA 103(b)(3), TSCA 10, FIFRA 20, MPRSA 203 and must be for projects by EFCs that provide multi-media environmental finance and administrative expertise and outreach to regulated entities (e.g., local governments, states, tribes, and non-governmental organizations) to help them meet environmental requirements.
7. BIL Funded Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure RFCs applications must propose activities that are eligible for funding under CWA 104(b)(3) and SDWA 1442(c)(3).
8. Each application submitted under this announcement must address **one, and only one**, EPA Region or EPA Headquarters. An application submitted for an EPA Region should indicate if it covers the entire EPA Region or a specific geographic or local area. If the application does not include this specification, EPA will assume that it is intended to cover the entire EPA Region. Applicants may submit more than one application under this announcement as long as each application is separately submitted and each application addresses **only one** EPA Region or EPA Headquarters. If an applicant submits an application that addresses more than one EPA Region or a combination of an EPA Region and/or Headquarters, the application will be rejected.
9. Applicants must indicate if they have received, or have not received, an EFC award in the last 10 years from EPA. If applicants do not indicate whether they have received an EFC award, EPA will contact the applicant. EPA encourages entities that have not received an EFC award in the past to apply.
10. Environmental program implementation activities such as the construction or operation of wastewater, drinking water, and recycling facilities are not eligible for funding under this RFA. If a submitted application includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.
11. All proposed projects must address the [Agency's Strategic Plan](#) Strategic Goals in Section I.D and 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 overall protection of human health and the environment.

SECTION IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

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

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

B. Submission Instructions

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with [Grants.gov](#) and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through [Grants.gov](#), go to [Grants.gov](#) and click on “Applicants” on the top of the page and then go to the “Organization Registration” link listed under the “Get Registered” section and follow the instructions. Please note, 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 submission deadline. Registration on [Grants.gov](#), [SAM.gov](#), and obtaining a DUNS number assignment is FREE.

NEW – PLEASE READ: Existing and new [SAM.gov](#) registrants are also assigned a free SAM-issued Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Applicants must use their UEI, not their DUNS number, when filling out forms in the package for this funding opportunity. Please see [RAIN-2021-G01](#) for information about EPA’s implementation of the upcoming Government-wide transition from DUNS to UEI. Please note that until April 4, 2022, applicant organizations registering for the first time in [SAM.gov](#) will need a DUNS number.

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

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page. If you encounter technical difficulties or the Apply button is grayed out please contact [Grants.gov](#) for assistance at the [Grants.gov](#) support center at support@grants.gov or 1-800-518-4726 before the application

deadline. Please note: To apply through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit [Adobe Reader Compatibility Information on Grants.gov](https://www.adobe.com/reader/compatibility).

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than **Friday, July 1, 2022 at 11:59 PM ET**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below using the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) application package accessed using the instructions above.

Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

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

Optional Documents:

6. Other Attachments Form – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable.

Applications submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact **Addison Chau** at **202-564-3943**. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

C. Technical Issues with Submission

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

2. Submitting the application: The application package must be transferred to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the "submit" button of the application package. Your Internet browser will launch and a sign-in page will appear. **Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation.** The [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) support desk operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except Federal Holidays.

A successful transfer will end with an on-screen acknowledgement. For documentation purposes, print or screen capture this acknowledgement. If a submission problem occurs, reboot the computer – turning the power off may be necessary – and re-attempt the submission.

Note: [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) issues a "case number" upon a request for assistance.

3. Transmission Difficulties: If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the application is submitted to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to EFCRFA@epa.gov with the Funding Opportunity Number (FON) in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact **Addison Chau** at **202-564-3943**. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) or relevant SAM.gov system issues, or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.

If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov), it is essential to call [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be sure to obtain a case number from [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov), such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact **Addison Chau** at **202-564-3943**.

4. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, and you have already attempted to resolve the issue by contacting [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov), send an email message to EFCRFA@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.

5. [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) rejection of the application package: If a notification is received from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal and it is too late to reapply, promptly send an email to EFCRFA@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and attach the entire application in PDF format.

Please note that successful submission through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or via email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

D. Content of Application Package Submission

Applicants should read the following section very carefully. A complete application package must include the following documents described below.

1. Application Materials

- a. **Signed Standard Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance.** Complete the form. There are no attachments. The organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number must be included in the SF-424. Existing and new SAM.gov registrants are assigned a free SAM-issued UEI.
- b. **SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.** The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of the SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the total amount of indirect cost should also be indicated on line 22. If indirect costs are requested, a copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement must be submitted as part of the application package. In Section B, Budget Categories column (1) should be filled out for federal funds, column (2) should be filled out for any non-federal cost-share/match, and column (5) should be filled out for total project cost (combined federal funds and any non-federal cost-share/match).
- c. **EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54.** Complete the form. Attach additional forms as needed.
- d. **EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.** Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- e. **Project Narrative Attachment Form.** See Section IV.D.2 (Project Narrative) for details on specific information that must be included. When developing the Project Narrative, applicants should refer to Section I.B and I.C of the announcement for the project description.

- f. **Other Attachments: Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (if applicable – please see the IDC Competition Clause in [EPA’s Solicitation Clauses](#) and [EPA’s Indirect Cost Policy for Recipients](#) for more information)

2. Project Narrative

NOTE: The Project Narrative must include sections A-C below. The Project Narrative is limited to no more than twenty (20) typewritten, single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the cover page and executive summary. Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative. **Additional pages beyond the 20-page limit will not be reviewed.** Supporting materials, such as a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate agreement, resumes, and letters of support, are not included in the 20-page limit.

The application’s Project Narrative must be typewritten and must include the information listed below. If a particular item is not applicable, clearly state this in the Project Narrative.

A. Cover Page (included in the 20-page limit)

1. Project title;
2. Name of applicant;
3. EFC Category (1) Regional Multi-Environmental Media EFC, 2) Regional Water Infrastructure EFC with BIL Funding, or 3) National Water Infrastructure EFC with BIL Funding);
4. EPA Region (either covering the entire Region or a specific geographic area of the Region) or EPA Headquarters addressed in the application;
5. If the applicant has received, or has not received, an EFC grant in the past from EPA. EPA encourages entities that have not received an EFC grant in the past to apply.
6. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number);
7. Total project cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested, any non-federal cost-share/match, and the total project cost); and
8. Project period/period of performance.

B. Executive Summary (included in the 20-page limit)

Provide a brief summary of the proposed project (should not exceed one page). This should include a brief description of the proposed project and the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.

C. Workplan (included in the 20-page limit)

The workplan must address the following elements:

- i. **Project Description:** Describe the proposed approach for how the project will address the priorities, objectives, and information contained in Section I of the announcement. Describe which EFC category will be the focus of the application. An application submitted for an EPA Region should indicate which EPA Region is addressed in the application and whether it covers the entire EPA Region or a specific geographic or local area. If the application does not include this specification, EPA will assume that it is intended to cover the entire EPA Region. Describe the specific tasks/actions and methods to be undertaken and the responsible institutions. Include estimated timelines for each task/ action and method. Describe the associated work products to be developed. Explain how the project benefits the public and identify the potential audience(s) served.

The project description should also describe the focus of research, studies, technical assistance, pre-development coordination, and/or trainings (particularly the provision of direct services such as funding application development, community outreach and engagement, and technical assistance for project and construction management for capital projects) to be provided, specifying whether the project is focused on assistance for underserved, disadvantaged, rural, small, and/or tribal municipalities that may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Accessing funding, including BIL funding, from EPA, state, local, and community based nonprofit environmental organizations;
- Supporting pre-application development and coordination for infrastructure project delivery, including drafting funding applications, providing community outreach and engagement services, and providing project and construction management services to help disadvantaged communities implement capital funding;
- Identifying affordable financing and long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) strategies;
- Providing technical assistance to states and tribes to expand their capacity to administer and disburse funding, including BIL funding, from EPA, state, local, and community based nonprofit environmental organizations;
- Providing technical assistance to states and/or municipalities to encourage community outreach and engagement;
- Researching ways to lower costs of environmental protection;
- Providing technical assistance for responsible asset management; and/or,
- Providing technical assistance and research on the use of appropriate revenue approaches.

- ii. **Project Partnerships:** Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects under this announcement and can help an EFC lead applicant round out the ability of a project team to offer technical and engineering services as well as community outreach and engagement services. In their applications, to the extent possible, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project. Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components/tasks. An estimate of subawards (e.g., if partners will receive subaward funding) must be provided. If partners/

subawards are named in the application, then the estimated amount of subaward funding per partner must be named. Similarly, if partners/ subawards are not named, the application should be clear that additional partners are expected and an estimated amount of subaward funding should be provided. If the applicant chooses not to utilize partnerships, applications will be evaluated on the applicant's demonstration of their ability to successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.B without partners. **Applicants should carefully review the guidance in section I.C above regarding using EPA funds to contract with for profit firms or individual consultants or provide subawards to nonprofit or governmental partners. Naming an entity as a "partner" does not change any of the requirements for competitive procurement or eligibility for subawards.**

iii. **Technical Assistance, Research, Training, and Financial and Environmental Results and Measuring Progress**

- a. Stated Strategic Goal and Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan – List the objective of the project and the linkage to EPA's FY 2022-2026 [Strategic Plan](#) as described in Section I.D.
- b. Results of Activities (Outputs) – Describe the anticipated products/results which are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project and describe an approach for tracking and reporting your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) (**examples** of outputs can be found in Section I.D of this announcement).
- c. Projected Financial and Environmental Improvement (Outcomes) – Describe the financial or environmental improvements that will be accomplished as a result of the project activities. These improvements are changes or benefits to the financial capacity of the municipality, environment, or public health which are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s) (**examples** of outcomes can be found in Section I.D of this announcement).

iv. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF-424A such as "other" and "contractual."

Note: EPA provides guidance to applicants on how to prepare budgets in the [Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#).

- a. Costs – Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total cost. All subrecipient funding should be located in the "other" cost category. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the

allowability of costs for each project component/task, as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs.

- v. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period. The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks, and an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.
- vi. **Programmatic Capability/Experience:** Briefly describe organizational experience and staff expertise/qualifications.
 - a. Organizational Experience – Provide a brief description of your organization experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project.
 - b. Staff Expertise/Qualifications – Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their experience/expertise/qualifications, cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to serve communities in the geographic area to be served, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project.
- vii. **Past Performance:** Briefly describe federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements that the applicant performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements). If you had any EPA agreements in the last three years, those are preferred to older agreements. Please provide the following information:
 - a. Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;
 - b. Describe your history of meeting reporting requirements under those agreements including submission of acceptable final technical reports; and
 - c. Describe how you documented and/or reported on whether progress was made toward achieving the expected results (i.e., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If progress was not made, please indicate whether, and how that was documented.

Note: In evaluating an applicant's past performance, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and/or from current and prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the application, and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V. Failure to provide any programmatic past performance or reporting information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance or

reporting information, may result in a zero score for these factors (see also Section V).

Note: In the Project Narrative, the applicant should also provide any additional information, to the extent not already addressed above, that addresses the selection criteria in Section V.

viii. **Additional Materials** (not included in the 20-page limit)

- a. **Resumes:** Provide resumes or curriculum vitae for all principal investigators and any other key personnel who are employees of the applicant or proposed subrecipients. Resumes of contractor personnel, including consultants, should not be provided unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.
- b. **Support Letters:** Indicate how the supporting organization will assist in the project.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Application submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) must be received by **Friday, July 1, 2022 at 11:59 PM ET**. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

E. Coalition Coverage

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient (the “pass-through entity”). Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with EPA’s [Subaward Policy](#). The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332, subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, 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.

SECTION V – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

A. Evaluation Criteria

All eligible applications, based on the Section III threshold eligibility review, will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and weights below (100 total point scale). Points will be awarded based on how well and thoroughly each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the application package.

Each of the three EFC categories will use the following evaluation criteria:

Criteria	Points
1. <u>Project Description</u> Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing in their application the objective described in Section I.B of this announcement. In conducting this evaluation, the following factors will be taken into account: i. the extent and quality of the strategy for addressing the objective (including listed necessary components) in Section I.B (Project Description) of this announcement (5 points); and ii. the extent to which the application demonstrates how the proposed project will address the selected EFC category and how it identifies the specific examples of environmental finance-related programs or infrastructure and cost-effective priorities such as those listed in Section I.B (Project Description) (10 points).	15
2. <u>Project Partnerships</u> Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project as described in Section IV.C.ii, including whether they have provided a clear description of roles, or planned roles, of each partner in the project's component/task, and how these partnerships will contribute to the success of the project and meeting the objectives described in Section I.B. If the applicant chooses not to utilize partnerships, applications will be evaluated on their demonstration of their ability to successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.B without partners. (15 points).	15

Criteria	Points
<u>3. Technical Assistance, Research, Training, Financial and Environmental Results and Measuring Progress:</u> Applications will be evaluated based on each of these sub-criteria: i. the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for tracking and measuring progress toward achieving the anticipated financial, environmental outputs and environmental outcomes, (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section I.D (EPA Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Outputs and Outcomes) of this announcement) (5 points); ii. the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated environmental and financial outputs and outcomes including increased access to financing and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to the Strategic Plan described in Section I.D of this announcement (5 points); iii. the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates a sound training, pre-development coordination, technical assistance program (particularly provision of direct TA services such as funding application development services, community outreach and engagement services, and technical assistance for project and construction management for capital projects, to disadvantaged communities) in a defined area. Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for making assistance available in the proposed project geography with suitable rationale for that geographic scope, within which it will provide training and technical assistance. Additionally, to the extent to which applicants describe the approach they will use to identify municipalities, tribes, and/or systems that are in the greatest need of training, technical assistance, and information (e.g., low-income, disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, disadvantaged, or historically underserved populations, permit violations, future permit limits, etc.) (10 points); and iv. the extent to which the applicant demonstrates an effective process for identifying and reaching out to communities' municipalities in most need of assistance, and the extent to which the applicant's strategy utilizes flexibility and transferability of results to tailor the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience to address all or a subset of financing needs and/or eligible projects and activities (10 points).	30

Criteria	Points
4. <u>Detailed Budget Narrative</u> Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on each of these sub-criteria: i. the extent to which the proposed project budget is appropriate to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes and whether the budget provides an approximation of the percentage of the budget designated for each major activity (5 points); ii. approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner (5 points).	10
5. <u>Programmatic Capability/Experience:</u> Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their: i. staff expertise/qualifications, cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to serve communities in the geographic area to be served, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project, including the ability to lead project partners (if any) and successfully build relationships with state and local government as well as community organizations (10 points); and ii. organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project (10 points).	20
6. <u>Milestone Schedule:</u> Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks (5 points).	5
7. <u>Past Performance</u> Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate the applicant's technical ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account the applicant's: i. past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C.vii of this solicitation (2.5 points);	5

Criteria	Points
ii. history of meeting reporting requirements and submitting acceptable final technical reports under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C.vii of this solicitation, including the extent and quality to which the applicant adequately documented and/or reported on progress towards achieving the expected outcomes and outputs (e.g., results) under assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C.vii of this solicitation and, if such progress was not made whether the documentation and/or reports satisfactorily explained why not (2.5 points). NOTE: In evaluating applicants under 7 (i) and (ii) above, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may 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). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance or reporting history must indicate that in the application and they will receive a neutral score for the factor (i.e., 1.25 points for item (i) and 1.25 points for item and (ii)). Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, may result in a score of 0 for these factors.	

B. Review and Selection Process

All applications will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

Panel(s) comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V. For selection purposes, EPA will prepare a ranked list of applications for each of the three EFC categories. The ranked lists will be provided to the Selection Official who makes the final funding decisions.

EPA reserves the right to select at least 5 high-ranking new applicants, depending on funding availability and geographic distribution.

While EPA intends to make awards for an EFC at EPA Headquarters and in all ten EPA Regions within each of the two Regional EFC categories, the Agency reserves the right to make more awards than anticipated and reserves the right to make no awards in a particular EFC category or in a region.

In addition, EPA reserves the right to prioritize the broadest possible coverage by selecting more than one applicant for a single region. In making the final funding decisions the Selection Official will consider the application score/ranking and may also take into account geographic distribution of funds and programmatic priorities. As noted above, while EPA expects to make awards in each EFC category, it reserves the right not to do so and to redistribute the number of awards, and amounts, per category.

SECTION VI – AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

A. Award Notices

EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made via telephone or electronic or postal mail by approximately 120 days after the RFA closes. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Grants and Interagency Agreements Management Division or the Regional Grants Management Office, depending on the award. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding, or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

Applicants are cautioned that only an 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. The award notice, signed by an EPA Award Official, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the cooperative agreement can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a cooperative agreement can take up to 90 days or longer.

EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final award amount and work plan narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy including the Assistance Agreement Competition Policy, EPA Order 5700.5A1.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by regulations at 2 CFR 200 and 1500. A description of the Agency's substantial involvement in the cooperative agreement will be included in the final assistance agreement.

C. Reporting

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved. Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted quarterly and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 120 days after the assistance agreement has expired. A list of communities and/or entities assisted during the reporting period and the type of assistance that was provided will be included in the quarterly reports and final report. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the work plan consistent with 2 CFR 200 and 1500.

D. Disputes

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at [Grant Competition Dispute Resolution Procedures](#). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the contacts listed in Section VII of the announcement. Note, the FR notice references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding 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.

SECTION VII – AGENCY CONTACT

Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail to the Agency Contact identified below by **Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 11:59PM**. Written responses and answers to FAQs will be posted on EPA's website at www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/efcn. EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs on this website prior to submitting a question.

Agency Contact: Addison Chau
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