

## OVERVIEW

**AGENCY:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

**TITLE:** Chesapeake Bay Program Office Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications for:  
**Technical Analysis and Programmatic Evaluation Support to the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership**

**ACTION:** Request for Applications (RFA)

**RFA #:** EPA-R3-CBP-23-08

**ASSISTANCE LISTING #:** 66.466

## IMPORTANT DATES

|                    |                                                                                                     |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 9, 2023        | Issuance of Request for Applications (RFA)                                                          |
| June 23, 2023      | Application submission deadline (see Section IV for more information)                               |
| July 24, 2023      | Approximate date for EPA to notify applicants of results                                            |
| August 7, 2023     | Approximate date for selected applicant to submit revised federal cooperative agreement application |
| September 22, 2023 | Approximate date of award/Project start date                                                        |

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## FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

### I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

#### A. Background

##### 1. About the Chesapeake Bay Program

The Chesapeake Bay is North America's largest and most biologically diverse estuary. A resource of extraordinary productivity, it is worthy of the highest levels of protection and restoration. Authorized by Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 117, 33 USC Section 1267, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) is responsible for supporting the Executive Council through a number of actions, including the coordination of federal, state, and local efforts to restore and protect living resources and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. CWA Section 117 also authorizes EPA to provide assistance grants to support the goals of the program.

The CBP is a unique regional partnership that has led and directed the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. Today, the CBP partners include the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission (a tri-state legislative body); and EPA, representing the federal government. The partnership's work is guided by the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#), which establishes the plan for collaboration across the Bay's political boundaries and establishes goals and outcomes for the restoration of the Bay, its tributaries, and the lands that surround them.

##### 2. About the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership

The CBP partnership is guided at the direction of the **Chesapeake Executive Council** (Executive Council), which, through its leadership, establishes the policy direction for the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and exerts its leadership to rally public support for the Bay effort and signs directives, agreements, and amendments that set goals and guide policy for Chesapeake Bay restoration. The Executive Council is established by CWA Section 117. To ensure implementation of the Executive Council's Chesapeake Bay Agreements, the CBP partnership has several committees, teams, workgroups comprised of participating partners.

The **Principals' Staff Committee** (PSC) acts as the senior policy advisors to the Executive Council, accepting items for their consideration and approval and setting agendas for Executive Council meetings. The PSC translates the restoration vision by setting policy and implementing actions on behalf of the Executive Council. The PSC also provides policy and program direction to the Management Board.

The **Management Board** provides strategic planning, priority setting, and operational guidance through implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, accountable implementation strategy for the CBP. It directs and coordinates all of the goal teams and workgroups under it.

The **Goal Implementation Teams** (GITs) include federal and non-federal experts from throughout the watershed. Thus, academic, federal, and state scientists and experts, advocacy organizations, environmental managers and others become active members of the broad restoration partnership.

As described above, the CBP partners include federal agencies, seven watershed jurisdictions, and many non-federal organizations; however, work funded under this RFA will support the seven watershed jurisdictions and other non-federal partners.

Pursuant to CWA Section 117(b)(2), 33 USC Section 1267(b)(2), CBPO is the office within EPA charged with providing support to the Council in the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. The CBPO and CBP, mentioned above, are two distinct entities.

For additional background information on the CBP structure, achievements, and commitments, see the CBP partnership's website located at <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/>.

### **3. The Chesapeake Bay TMDL and WIPs**

EPA has established the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), a historic and comprehensive “pollution diet” with rigorous accountability measures to initiate sweeping actions to restore clean water to the Chesapeake Bay and the watershed's streams, creeks and rivers.

The Bay TMDL – the largest ever developed by EPA – identifies the necessary pollution reductions of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment across Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia and sets pollution limits necessary to meet applicable state water quality standards in Chesapeake Bay, its tidal tributaries and embayments. These pollution limits were further divided by jurisdiction and major river basin based on state-of-the-art modeling tools, extensive monitoring data, peer-reviewed science and close interaction with jurisdictional partners.

Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) are plans for how each of the seven Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions (jurisdictions), in partnership with federal and local governments, will achieve their respective Bay TMDL allocations and planning targets. The Phase I WIPs were developed in 2010 by the jurisdictions to inform the 2010 Chesapeake Bay TMDL waste load and load allocations. The Phase II WIPs were developed by the jurisdictions in 2012 followed by Phase III in 2019 to meet nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment planning targets based on updated information generated through the Bay Program partnership's Phase 6 Chesapeake Bay watershed model. The goal of the Bay TMDL and supporting jurisdictional WIP process is to implement by 2025 all nutrient and sediment pollutant load reduction and prevention measures needed to fully restore water quality in Chesapeake Bay and its tidal rivers.

### **4. Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership's Environmental Models**

Models of the Chesapeake Bay's airshed, watershed, estuary, and living resources have been developed by the partners and linked together over the past 30 years. The CBP partnership's suite of models assists in understanding the important processes affecting the health of the watershed and the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. These modeling tools provide the Chesapeake Bay watershed state and local jurisdictions with an understanding of the effect of various control strategies on pollutant levels and the level of nutrient and sediment load reductions needed to restore the Chesapeake Bay and achieve the states' water quality standards for dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll a, underwater bay grasses and water clarity. By quantifying the management actions necessary to restore Chesapeake Bay habitats and the living resources dependent on those habitats, these integrated Bay Program partnership models provide guidance to environmental managers and citizens on where the most cost-effective reductions can be made so that controls are equitable and broadly supported.

Development and application of the next generation of Chesapeake Bay models will require an unprecedented level of direct involvement of a wide array of non-federal CBP partners and stakeholders

in each step of the planning, development, calibration, verification, management application, and continued refinement/enhancement. Given that Bay restoration decision-making occurs at a very local scale as a result of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, the jurisdictions' WIPs, and the greatly expanded level of accountability, the next generation of the partnership's Chesapeake Bay models must reflect these shifts in scale and accountability. These models must be developed for direct application by state and local jurisdictional partners, academic partners, and stakeholders alike, feeding directly into their respective and unique decision-making processes and supporting adaptive management at all scales.

Through the application of airshed, watershed, estuarine, and living resource modeling activities, the Bay Program's state and local jurisdictional partners gain access to information that is used directly in decision making for Chesapeake Bay environmental restoration efforts. Chesapeake Bay environmental models are developed, calibrated, verified, and applied through an expanding cooperative network of state, federal, regional and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutional partners. These partnership models help set the pace and direction of Chesapeake Bay restoration by providing information on water quality and biological resource responses to different management actions.

## **5. Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership's Monitoring Networks**

Undergoing adaptive changes over the past three decades as the partnership's management needs and requests have significantly evolved over time, the Chesapeake Bay tidal monitoring network now includes: tidal water quality monitoring for 26 parameters at over 150 stations distributed over the 92 Chesapeake Bay tidal segments across Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia; shallow-water monitoring addressing a select set of segments on a rotational basis; benthic infaunal community monitoring at fixed and random stations across the tidal waters; annual aerial and ground surveys of underwater Bay grasses; decadal records of phytoplankton and zooplankton monitoring; and fisheries independent population monitoring programs and surveys.

Each component of the tidal monitoring network has been designed to support the four Bay jurisdictions' tidal water Bay section 303(d) listing decision makings, addressing dissolved oxygen, water clarity, underwater bay grasses, and chlorophyll *a* criteria attainment assessments, and benthic infaunal community-based impairment decisions. The Chesapeake Bay tidal monitoring network is funded, operated, and maintained through a longstanding state-federal-university partnership that produced the fundamental monitoring data supporting Chesapeake Bay TMDL development. This data is also utilized in public reporting on the health of Chesapeake Bay, its tidal tributaries and embayments, and supporting ecosystem; assessment of achieving the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions' Chesapeake Bay water quality standards regulations; evaluation of the effectiveness of actions to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution loadings from the surrounding watershed; developing, calibrating, verifying and applying models; and generating and reporting water quality and biological indicators.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed monitoring network is a network of 123 streamflow gauges and water-quality sampling sites operated across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The network is an essential component to reporting, tracking, and modeling stream flow as well as nitrogen, phosphorus, and

sediment concentrations and loads across the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it provides the only consistent, coordinated monitoring effort across all seven Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed monitoring network is designed to measure the discharge of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loads with routine samples collected monthly with additional storm-event samples to obtain a range of discharges and loadings. The seven jurisdictions, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) all use the same set of standardized CBP protocols that are based on USGS sampling methods and EPA-approved analytical methods.

## **B. Scope of Work**

This RFA is seeking insightful, expert, and cost-effective applications from eligible applicants to provide technical analysis and programmatic evaluation support of non-federal agencies and organizations that are members of the CBP partnership. While the CBP partnership is comprised of federal and nonfederal agencies and organizations, the activities funded under this RFA shall only support the non-federal partners. The recipient of the cooperative agreement awarded under this RFA may work directly with federal agencies, but the nature of that work will result only in benefits to the non-federal agencies, organizations, partners, and the general public. The non-federal CBP partners will provide programmatic direction to the cooperative agreement recipient through the CBP partnership's Water Quality GIT and its workgroups, the CBP partnership's Habitat GIT and its workgroups, the CBP partnership's Fisheries GIT and its workgroups, the CBP partnership's Scientific, Technical, Assessment and Reporting (STAR) Team and its workgroups, other CBP partnership's GITs, and the CBP partnership's Management Board.

The selected organization will support the CBP mission of expanding and accelerating the implementation of nutrient and sediment load reduction practices and technologies throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed through collection and evaluation of tidal and watershed water quality and living resources monitoring data. This mission also includes:

- Managing the CBP partnership's jurisdiction-based tidal and watershed water quality and living resources monitoring data network, working directly with federal, state, regional, and local governmental and non-governmental data providers;
- Enhancing multiple-partner, consensus-based environmental decision-making throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed via the analysis of water quality and living resource data trends and supporting the integration of monitoring data with the CBP partnership's airshed, watershed and estuarine models and other decision support tools;
- Better understanding the past, present, and future responses of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its watershed to management actions through management, analysis, and interpretation of long-term monitoring network data; and
- Expanding the acquisition, maintenance, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of water quality and living resources monitoring data and information important to the CBP partners.

Applications should be oriented towards further promotion and enhancement of the capacity of environmental professionals working within the partnership-oriented, implementation-focused structure of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

EPA plans to award one six-year cooperative agreement under this RFA. The total estimated funding under this solicitation is approximately **\$2,100,000** overall, with an estimated **\$350,000** available for the first year and each year thereafter. There is no guarantee of funding throughout this period or beyond.

To support this activity, the selected organization may request that staff, for matters of efficiency, be located at the U.S. EPA CBPO located in Annapolis, Maryland. Office space, valued at \$9,400 per person per year, may be provided by EPA as in-kind assistance under the cooperative agreement, if requested, and is considered matchable funding. The EPA in-kind funding would be in addition to the \$2,100,000 referenced above.

If your organization has an interest in this project, has the skills to accomplish the activities described in this Section, and is eligible to receive a federal assistance agreement as described in Section III of this announcement, we encourage you to apply. Each eligible application will be evaluated using the criteria described in Section V. The activities are multi-year projects (up to six years), and the application should have a work plan and budget for the first year and a projected work plan and estimated budget detail for each of the subsequent five years.

#### **Activity 1: Chesapeake Bay Program Water Quality Data Manager**

*Available Funding: \$1,092,000 (\$182,000 per year for six years)*

To support this activity, the selected applicant will provide staff who have significant, in-depth academic and/or professional experience in the acquisition, quality assurance review, management, maintenance, and dissemination of water quality and biological resource monitoring data in support of the CBP partners' accelerated implementation of the most cost-effective, pollutant-load-reduction-efficient and geographically targeted nutrient, sediment and chemical contaminant reduction actions. Priorities for this activity are set by the CBP's STAR Team and its workgroups as part of their charge to provide information management, monitoring network design/coordination, and integrated analysis support to the CBP's GITs, management/policy-setting committees, partners and stakeholders.

The compilation, analysis, and evaluation of tidal and watershed water quality monitoring data are essential to determining progress towards effective implementation efforts in reaching the CBP's water quality and biological restoration goals. These tidal and watershed water quality and biological resource data are drawn from state, federal and local agencies, academic institutions, regulated entities, and, increasingly, non-governmental organizations across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Direct partnership and public access to water quality and biological resource data stored in an integrated format through a distributed network of servers is critical to supporting state, regional, and local jurisdictions' and non-governmental organizations' Chesapeake Bay restoration and protection efforts.

The cooperative agreement recipient will be responsible for managing the CBP partnership's jurisdiction-based tidal and watershed water quality and biological resource monitoring network databases, maintaining/updating repositories of monitoring programs and network information, and expanding access to and management of nontraditional monitoring program partners' water quality and biological resource data. The water quality data and programmatic information collected, documented, managed and maintained by the cooperative agreement recipient will serve as the authoritative data and information source for the CBP partnership.

The following are examples of the types of activities that the non-federal CBP partners have indicated they need based on past and recent experiences in determining progress towards effective

implementation efforts in reaching the CBP's water quality and biological resource restoration and protection goals. Applicants are encouraged to consider these examples but to also describe alternative approaches to providing for the compilation, analysis, and evaluation of tidal and watershed water quality and biological resource monitoring data in support of and to inform state, regional, and local decision-making on the implementation of the most cost-effective, pollutant-reduction-load-efficient and geographically targeted nutrient and sediment reduction actions.

#### Water Quality and Biological Resource Data Management through Data Exchange

- Provides data management support for the CBP partners addressing water quality monitoring data collected through jurisdictions' monitoring programs and the partnership's monitoring networks in operation across the entire Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding watershed.
- Maintains the authoritative sets of water quality monitoring data and programmatic information used by the CBP partnership.
- Undertakes data collection, computer entry, quality assurance, and metadata documentation.
- Coordinates the design and implementation of the partnership's distributed network of watershed, river input and tidal water quality and biological resource databases for Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.
- Provides support in advanced-level programming and processing of water quality and biological resource-related-monitoring databases generated by a multitude of state, regional, and local jurisdictional and academic institutional partners in the tidal and nontidal regions of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Assists in the design and development of relational databases for data storage, retrieval, and processing by state, regional, and local partners and stakeholders.
- Assembles data for analysis and for publication on the CBP partnership's websites and updates corresponding documentation of analysis and methods to accompany updates when applicable.
- Works closely with the CBP partners to obtain information required to properly program, process, and document the monitoring database information.
- Develops data-sharing agreements and partnerships required to support tidal and watershed water quality and biological resource data exchanges across and between the seven watershed jurisdictions.

#### Expanded Access and Management of Non-traditional Monitoring Program Partners' Data

- Works as part of a team targeting hundreds of non-traditional monitoring program partners for integration into the partnership's tidal and watershed monitoring networks.
- Identifies non-traditional monitoring program partners—including but not limited to riverkeepers, watershed organizations, citizen monitoring groups, regulated entities (e.g., wastewater treatment owners/operators)—generating water quality and biological resource data of known quality who are willing and ready to incorporate their monitoring efforts into the ever-expanding partnership's tidal and/or watershed monitoring networks.
- Provides a full menu of data quality assurance protocols, data management system design and support to these non-federal organizations, tailored to their existing capabilities and monitoring infrastructure.
- Works to provide full access to the water quality data and biological resource data routinely generated through these organizations' monitoring programs utilizing their respective state jurisdiction's NEIEN node.

#### Team and Workgroup Support

- Provides technical support in preparation for, and participates in, the meetings of the CBP's Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team and its workgroups, CBP's Water Quality GIT and its workgroups as well as other GITs and workgroups as necessary.

#### Coordination and Communication with Partners, Stakeholders and Public

- Seeks review and input from the CBP partner jurisdictions on all data- and information management-related work.
- Serves as the central point of contact for water quality and biological resource data inquiries and data acquisition requests.
- Responsible for resolving problems and improving procedures for submission, quality assurance, documentation, and distribution of water quality and biological resource data to CBP partner agencies and the public.
- Works to promote the development of distributed, generator-maintained databases linked via Internet web site interfaces.
- Supports development of new, and refinement of existing, partnership indicators to further enhance public communication regarding the status and effectiveness of reducing these sources of pollutants.
- Makes all water quality and biological resource monitoring networks' databases, information and documentation available on the Web and updates the partnership's websites as necessary.

#### **Activity 2: Chesapeake Bay Program Habitat and Living Resources Data Manager**

*Available Funding: \$1,008,000 (\$168,000 per year for six years)*

To support this activity, the selected applicant will provide staff who have significant, in-depth academic and/or professional experience in the acquisition, quality assurance review, management, maintenance, and dissemination of biological resource monitoring data in support of making progress toward the CBP partners' goals regarding the restoration of tidal and nontidal aquatic ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay. Priorities for this activity are set by the CBP's Habitat Goal Implementation Team, as well as the Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team and its workgroups as part of their charge to provide information management, monitoring network design/coordination, and integrated analysis support to the CBP's GITs, management/policy-setting committees, partners and stakeholders.

The compilation, analysis, and evaluation of habitat and living resource data are essential to determining progress towards effective implementation efforts in reaching the CBP's habitat and living resource goals. These tidal and nontidal aquatic ecosystem data are drawn from state, federal and local agencies, academic institutions, regulated entities, and, increasingly, non-governmental organizations across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Direct access to, and public dissemination of, authoritative habitat and living resource data are critical to supporting state, regional, and local jurisdictions' and non-governmental organizations' Chesapeake Bay restoration and protection efforts.

The cooperative agreement recipient will be responsible for managing the CBP partnership's jurisdiction-based habitat and living resource monitoring network databases, maintaining/updating repositories of monitoring programs and network information, and expanding access to and management of nontraditional monitoring program partners' habitat and living resource data. The data and programmatic information collected, documented, managed, and maintained by the cooperative agreement recipient will serve as the authoritative data and information source for the CBP partnership.

The following are examples of the types of activities that the non-federal CBP partners have indicated they need based on past and recent experiences in determining progress towards effective implementation efforts in reaching the CBP's habitat and living resource restoration and protection goals. Applicants are encouraged to consider these examples but to also describe alternative approaches to providing for the compilation, analysis, and evaluation of tidal and nontidal aquatic ecosystem monitoring data in support of and to inform state, regional, and local decision-making for achievement of CBP habitat and living resource goals.

#### Living Resource Data Management through Data Exchange

- Provides data management support for the CBP partners addressing living resource monitoring data collected through jurisdictions' monitoring programs and the partnership's monitoring networks in operation across the entire Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding watershed.
- Maintains the authoritative sets of living resource monitoring data and programmatic information used by the CBP partnership.
- Undertakes data collection, computer entry, quality assurance, and metadata documentation.
- Coordinates the design and implementation of the partnership's network of living resource databases for the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.
- Provides support in advanced-level programming and processing of habitat and living resource-related-monitoring databases generated by a multitude of state, regional, and local jurisdictional and academic institutional partners in the tidal and nontidal regions of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Assists in the design and development of relational databases for data storage, retrieval, and processing by state, regional, and local partners and stakeholders.
- Assembles data for analysis and for publication on CBP partnership's websites and updates corresponding documentation of analysis and methods to accompany updates when applicable.
- Works closely with the CBP partners to obtain information required to properly program, process, and document the monitoring database information.
- Develops data-sharing agreements and partnerships required to support habitat and living resource data exchanges across and between the seven watershed jurisdictions.

#### Expanded Access and Management of Non-traditional Monitoring Program Partners' Data

- Works as part of a team targeting hundreds of non-traditional monitoring program partners for integration into the partnership's habitat and living resource monitoring networks.
- Identifies non-traditional monitoring program partners—including but not limited to riverkeepers, watershed organizations, citizen monitoring groups, regulated entities (e.g., wastewater treatment owners/operators)—generating habitat and living resource data of known quality who are willing and ready to incorporate their monitoring efforts into the ever-expanding partnership's habitat and living resource monitoring networks.
- Provides a full menu of data quality assurance protocols, data management system design and support to these non-federal organizations, tailored to their existing capabilities and monitoring infrastructure.
- Works to provide full access to the habitat and living resource data routinely generated through these organizations' monitoring programs utilizing their respective state jurisdiction's NEIEN node.

### Team and Workgroup Support

- Provides technical support in preparation for, and participates in, the meetings of the CBP's Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team and its workgroups, CBP's Habitat GIT and its workgroups as well as other GITs and workgroups as necessary.

### Coordination and Communication with Partners, Stakeholders and Public

- Seeks review and input from the CBP partner jurisdictions on all data- and information management-related work.
- Serves as the central point of contact for living resource data inquiries and data acquisition requests.
- Responsible for resolving problems and improving procedures for submission, quality assurance, documentation, and distribution of living resource data to CBP partner agencies and the public.
- Works to promote the development of distributed, generator-maintained databases linked via Internet web site interfaces.
- Supports development of new, and refinement of existing, partnership indicators to further enhance public communication regarding the status and effectiveness of reducing these sources of pollutants.
- Makes all habitat and living resource monitoring networks' databases, information and documentation available on the Web and updates the partnership's websites as necessary.

## **C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage & Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs**

Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7A1, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to 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, accessible at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements>).

### **1. Linkage to EPA's Strategic Plan**

The activities to be funded under this solicitation support the [FY 2022-2026 EPA 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* of the [Strategic Plan](#).

[EPA Order 5700.7A1](#) also requires that grant applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements. 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.

### **2. Outputs**

The term "output" means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period. Examples of potential outputs under the Scope of Work of this announcement may include but are not limited to the following:

- Support the WQGIT, Habitat GIT, STAR and other technical and management/policy CBP groups as needed.
- Maintenance of the authoritative databases of water quality and living resource monitoring data used to support and inform state, regional, and local partners on progress in reaching CBP's water quality and living resource restoration goals.
- Documented quality assurance, database design, and data processing procedures for providers of monitoring data, including non-traditional monitoring programs.
- Work to provide full access to the water quality and living resource data routinely generated by these organizations' monitoring programs utilizing their respective state jurisdiction's NEIEN node.
- Advanced level programming and data analysis tools used to develop and routinely produce indicators used in reporting progress.
- Assembled data for analysis and publication on CBP partnership's websites with updated corresponding analysis and methods documentation to accompany indicator updates, when applicable.

Progress reports and a final report will also be required outputs for all activities, as specified in Section VI.C., Reporting, of this announcement.

### **3. Outcomes**

The term "outcome" means 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 qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature but must also be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. Examples of potential outcomes under the Scope of Work of this announcement may include but are not limited to the following:

- Reduced nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment delivered to tidal Bay waters appropriate to respond to future climate change and other water quality challenges to achieve Bay water quality standards.
- Amount of habitat restored as represented by achievement of the Chesapeake living resource-based water quality standards and water quality standards of other tidal Chesapeake TMDLs and assessments.
- Increased knowledge and strategies to improve local economic, human health, and environmental goals through a restored Chesapeake Bay.
- Improved knowledge about Chesapeake Bay critical load of nutrients for improved ecosystem health and future climate change scenarios through achievement of water quality standards in all Chesapeake tributaries
- Improved CBP decision-making and leadership in responding to climate change conditions and other future water quality challenges.

### **D. Authorizing Statutes and Regulations**

This grant is made pursuant to CWA Section 117(d), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267(d), which authorizes EPA to issue grants and cooperative agreements for the purposes of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake

Bay's ecosystem. This project is subject to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200) and EPA-specific provisions of the Uniform Grants Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 1500).

#### **E. Minority Serving Institutions:**

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

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

#### **F. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation**

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

## **II. AWARD INFORMATION**

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

The total estimated federal funding under this solicitation is approximately \$2,100,000 for one cooperative agreement. Funding will be awarded incrementally in the amount of \$350,000 per year for six years depending on funding availability, satisfactory performance, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

To support this activity, the selected applicant may request that staff, for matters of efficiency, be located at the U.S. EPA CBPO located in Annapolis, Maryland. Office space may be provided by EPA as in-kind assistance under the cooperative agreement, if requested. Until amended, the EPA in-kind amount is \$9,400 per person per year, which is in addition to the \$2,100,000. Applicants requesting in-kind assistance must include in-kind funding in the calculation of the cost share for this opportunity (see Appendix A).

EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no award under this announcement or award less than the estimated funding amounts above. EPA makes no commitment of annual funding amounts for any fiscal year(s), as funds may be limited based on these applicable considerations.

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 selection is made. Any additional selection for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decision.

## **B. Award Type**

EPA has determined that a cooperative agreement is the appropriate funding vehicle for this project. Cooperative agreements are used under circumstances where substantial involvement is anticipated between EPA and the recipient during performance of the Activities. 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 C.F.R. 200.317 and 2 C.F.R. 200.318, as appropriate; review of proposed procurements; review of 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.

For this project, federal involvement would typically be in the form of participation with other CBP partners and stakeholders in an advisory capacity to the grantee. The participation is expected to include involvement through the Modeling Workgroup, various CBP GITs, and related committees and workgroups (on which EPA also participates to ensure that all the recommendations for technical work support the CBP partners). All work conducted is to support the *2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* and the Chesapeake TMDL.

## **C. 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 a project, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice the applicant 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.

#### **D. Expected Project Period**

The expected project period for the cooperative agreement is six years, with funding provided on an annual basis. No commitment of funding can be made beyond the first year. The expected start date for the award resulting from this RFA is **September 22, 2023**.

### **III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

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

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

Under CWA Section 117(d), funds are available for technical and general assistance grants to nonprofit organizations, State, tribal (federally recognized) and local governments, colleges, universities, and interstate agencies. For-profit organizations are not eligible to submit applications in response to this RFA.

#### **B. Cost-Share or Matching Requirements**

Pursuant to CWA Section 117(d)(2)(A), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267(d)(2)(A), the agency shall determine the cost-share requirements for awards. The Assistance Listing Number, 66.466, states that assistance agreement applicants must commit to a cost-share ranging from 5 to 50 percent of total eligible project costs as determined at the sole discretion of EPA. For this RFA, EPA has determined that an applicant must provide a minimum of 5 percent of the total cost of the project as the non-federal cost-share.

Cost-share may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. Involvement from foundations, watershed groups, private sector, eligible governmental, as well as non-conventional partners can help with the match. The match must be met by eligible and allowable costs and is subject to the match provisions in grant regulations. Applications that do not demonstrate how the five percent match will be met will be rejected.

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

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III.A., B., and C. to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
2. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this solicitation (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this solicitation. Applicants are responsible for following the

submission instructions in Section IV of this solicitation to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submission through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.

3. Applications submitted outside of Grants.gov will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or technical problems associated with Grants.gov or SAM.gov. An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a submission outside of Grants.gov.
4. Applications must be for projects linked to the strategic goal outlined in Section I.C.1.
5. For an application to be considered eligible for funding, project-related work included in the application must take place within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which includes portions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia, and all of the District of Columbia.
6. Applications must show how they will meet the five percent cost-share requirement of Section III.B. Applications that fail to meet the minimum five percent cost-share requirement will be rejected. (See Appendix A for additional information regarding the budget narrative and formula for calculating cost share.)
7. Applications requesting funding over the maximum funding available listed in Section II will be rejected.
8. If an application is submitted that 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.
9. Applications must clearly address both activities detailed in Section I.B.

#### **IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

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

##### **A. How to Obtain an Application Package**

Applicants can download individual grant application forms from the application package available in the Workspace associated with this opportunity on Grants.gov.

##### **B. Submission Process**

###### **1. 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 3. Technical Issues with Submission below.

## 2. Submission Instructions

### a. SAM.gov (System for Award Management) Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov \(1\)](#) to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

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

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

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

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

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

### c. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and click the red "Apply" button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

The electronic submission of your application to this funding opportunity must be made by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance. If the submit button is grayed out, it may be because you do not have the appropriate role to submit in your organization. Contact your organization's EBiz point of contact or contact [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

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

### d. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov no later than <<<**June 23, 2023**>>> 11:59 PM ET. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

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

## 3. 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 RFA number EPA-R3-CBP-23-08 in the subject line to Autumn Rose ([rose.autumn@epa.gov](mailto:rose.autumn@epa.gov)) before the application deadline time and date and must include the following:
  - a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)

- b. Description of the issue
- c. The entire application package in PDF format.

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

Please note that successful submission through Grants.gov or email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

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

#### 4. Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

##### Mandatory Documents:

- 1) Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424 with expiration of 11/30/2025)
- 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 (with expiration of 6/30/2024)
- 5) Project Narrative Attachment Form – The project narrative should be prepared as described in Appendix A of the announcement.
- 6) Budget Narrative Attachment Form – The budget narrative should include a spreadsheet that shows each year's cost for the salaries, fringe benefits, total salaries/wages, travel expenses, equipment, supplies, contractual expenses, other cost, and indirect cost. A multi-year budget detail template is available at <https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance>. For more information, please refer to EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment's budget detail guidance at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02> and indirect cost guidance located at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2018-g02-r>.
- 7) Other Attachment Form – The applicant's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement should be included, as applicable.

#### C. Content and Project Narrative Requirements

Each application will be evaluated using the criteria referenced in Section V.B. of this announcement, all of which must be addressed. The project narrative shall not exceed **15** pages in length; one page being one-sided, single-spaced, and typed. Font size should be no smaller than 10 and typed on 8 ½" x 11" paper. Note that the **15** pages include resumes or curriculum vitae and letters of support. The 15-page limit does not include documentation of non-profit status, cost-share letters of commitment, the SF-424, SF-424A, budget detail, Key Contacts Form, or 4700-4 form. If you submit more than 15 pages for

the project narrative, the additional pages will be discarded and will not be reviewed. See Appendix A for additional instructions.

#### **D. Other Application Information**

##### **1. Intergovernmental Review**

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. EPA implemented the Executive Order in 40 CFR Part 29. EPA may require applicants selected for funding to provide a copy of their application to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) for review as provided at 40 CFR 29.7 and 40 CFR 29.8. The SPOC list can be found on the webpage below.

##### [Office of Federal Financial Management Resources and Other Information](#)

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

##### **2. Funding Restrictions**

###### **a. Administrative Cost Cap Requirement under Statutory Authority**

Recipients applying for CBP assistance agreements must adhere to the requirements for “Administrative Costs” under the CWA Section 117 (d)(4), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267 (d)(4), which states that administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award (annual grant award = federal share plus cost-share). [Appendix B: Administrative Cost Cap Worksheet](#) is provided as an example of a method to calculate the 10-percent limitation. You are not required to submit Appendix B with your application.

###### **b. Allowable Costs**

All costs incurred under this program must be allowable under [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E](#). In accordance with applicable law, regulation, and policy, any recipient of funding must agree to comply with restrictions on using assistance funds for unauthorized lobbying, fund-raising, or political activities (i.e., lobbying members of Congress or lobbying for other federal grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts). See e.g. [2 CFR 200.450](#). Funds generally cannot be used to pay for travel by federal agency staff. Proposed project activities must also comply with all state and federal regulations applicable to the project area. The applicant must also review the solicitation for any other programmatic funding restrictions applicable to this program. If awarded funding, the recipient must refer to the terms and conditions of its award for other funding restrictions applicable to its award. It is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure compliance with these requirements. In addition, please see [2 CFR 200](#) for information on pre-award costs.

#### **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.

## V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

### A. Evaluation Process

After EPA reviews applications for threshold eligibility purposes as described in Section III, CBPO will conduct a merit evaluation of each eligible application. Reviews will be performed by a team of professionals from EPA and other CBP partner organizations with a working knowledge of the technical analysis and programmatic evaluation needs of the CBP partnership. All reviewers will sign a conflict-of-interest statement indicating they have no conflict.

### B. Evaluation Criteria: Maximum score: 100 points

The evaluation criteria below apply to the review of applications under this RFA.

| Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Points |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| <b>1. Organizational Capability and Program Description:</b> Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the extent and quality to which the application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Demonstrates the organization’s ability to timely and successfully achieve the relevant activities to support the CBP partners as described in Section I.B. <b>(15 points)</b></li> <li>b. Demonstrates that the applicant has the skill and experience in working with and supporting multiple management agencies, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholder collaborative efforts to provide technical and scientific expertise to enhance environmental protection decision-making. <b>(10 points)</b></li> </ul> | 45     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <p>c. Demonstrates that the applicant has the staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. <b>(20 points, with 10 points available per Activity)</b></p> <p><b>Activity 1:</b> Managing large, complex sets of water-quality data collected by a multitude of local, state, regional, federal, academic and nonprofit agencies and organizations; supporting full and open access to the data for supporting data analysis and interpretation and the development of solutions to highly complex technical problems involving the integration of water quality and biological resource data with other environmental data acquired from an array of data generators.</p> <p><b>Activity 2:</b> Planning and performing habitat and living resource data/statistical analyses followed by synthesis and interpretation of the results, focused on large-scale watersheds and estuarine ecosystems; preparing documentation for terrestrial and aquatic habitats and living resource data analysis activities, interpreting results, and communicating the environmental management implications to the wider Bay audience through support of full and open access data platforms.</p> <p>Note: Prior to naming a contractor (including consultants) or subrecipient in your application as a “partner”, please carefully review Section IV.d, “Contracts and Subawards”, of <a href="#">EPA’s Solicitation Clauses</a>. In evaluating this criterion, EPA will only consider the experience of any contractor(s), including consultants, if the applicant demonstrates they were selected in compliance with the competitive procurement requirements in <a href="#">2 CFR 200.319</a> and <a href="#">2 CFR 200.320</a>. EPA does not accept justifications for sole-source contracts for services or products available in the commercial marketplace based on a contractor’s role in preparing an application.</p> |    |
| <p><b>2. Programmatic Capability and Environmental Results Past Performance:</b> Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the applicant based on their programmatic capability to successfully perform the proposed activities considering the applicant’s:</p> <p>a. Past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV and Appendix A of the solicitation. <b>(15 points)</b></p> <p>b. History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV of the solicitation including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not, (10 points)</p> <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under Items a. and b., the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including Agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors; a neutral score is half of the total</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 25 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| points available in a subset of possible points. If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of zero for these subfactors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     |
| <b>3. Cost-effectiveness:</b> Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate each application based on the degree of cost-effectiveness, considering the following factors: organizational overhead, budget breakdown, and ability to control costs for the relevant Activities listed in Section I. <b>(10 points)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 10  |
| <b>4. Transferability of Results to Similar Projects and/or Dissemination to the Public:</b> Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the degree to which the application includes an adequate plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Gather and share information learned from scenarios, analyses, and other model applications with the larger CBP partnership. <b>(4 points)</b></li> <li>b. Transfer the documentation/information/data/results/recommendations to CBP partners and stakeholders in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in a timely manner. <b>(3 points)</b></li> <li>c. Document and distribute results to the appropriate audience or summarize information so that EPA can disseminate it in a timely manner. <b>(3 points)</b></li> </ul> | 10  |
| <b>5. Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds:</b> Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner <b>(5 points)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 5   |
| <b>6. Environmental Results:</b> Applicants will be evaluated based on their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving the environmental outputs and outcomes identified in Section I.C of the RFA. <b>(5 points)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 5   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 100 |

### C. Review and Selection Process

Eligible applications will be evaluated and ranked using the criteria stated in Section V.B. above by a panel of reviewers from EPA and other CBP partner organizations with a working knowledge of the technical analysis and programmatic evaluation needs of the CBP partnership. The review team will then forward the highest-ranked applications to the CBPO Director or Deputy Director for final selection. In making the final funding decision, the selection official may also consider programmatic goals and priorities, including those described in the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* at [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what\\_guides\\_us/watershed\\_agreement](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement).

## VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

### A. Award Notices and Instructions for Submission of Final Application

It is expected that the applicant will be notified in writing of funding decisions on or around **July 24, 2023** either via electronic or postal mail. The notification will be sent to the signatory on 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 EPA Region 3 Grants Management Office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grant 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 grant award official, is the authorizing document and will be provided either via email or U.S. Postal Service.

Notification of selection does not indicate that the applicant can start work on the project. The selected applicant will be asked to submit a full federal assistance agreement application package. A federal project officer assists in the application process and negotiates a work plan, budget, and starting date. Processing of this cooperative assistance agreement (award) is expected to take 60 days.

## **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

If your application is selected for funding, the following information will be helpful in preparing your cooperative agreement application. A listing and description of general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-policies-and-guidance-grants>.

## **C. Reporting**

### **Progress Report/Final Report Requirements**

The awarded applicant will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports (every six months) throughout the duration of the agreement to update the EPA Project Officer on project progress. Semi-annual progress reports are due within 30 days after the end of each reporting period, as detailed in the award terms and conditions. The recipient will also be required to participate in semi-annual calls/meetings with the EPA Project Officer to discuss progress. A final progress report is due to the EPA Project Officer within 120 after the end of the award performance period.

### **EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans**

In accordance with [2 C.F.R. Section 1500.12](#), projects that include the generation or use of environmental data are required to submit a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

The QMP must document quality assurance policies and practices that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet program objectives. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA's [Quality Management Plan \(QMP\) Standard](#). The recipient's QMP should be reviewed and updated annually as needed. The QMP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 45 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation.

The recipient must develop and implement quality assurance and quality control procedures, specifications and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives. The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is the document that provides comprehensive details about the quality assurance/quality control requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure that project objectives are met. The QAPP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R-5: [EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans](#). The QAPP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 30 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data

compilation. A model template and guidance for developing QAPPs can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/quality/template-developing-generic-quality-assurance-project-plan-or-plan-elements-model>.

#### **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 person listed in Section VII of the announcement. Note, that the FR notice references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding 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](#).

#### **E. Mandatory Disclosures**

As required by [2 CFR § 200.113](#), non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in [2 CFR § 200.338](#) including suspension and debarment.

#### **VII. AGENCY CONTACTS**

For administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact Autumn Rose via email at [rose.autumn@epa.gov](mailto:rose.autumn@epa.gov). All questions must be received in writing via with the reference line referring to this RFA (Re: RFA EPA-R3-CBP-23-08). All questions and answers will be posted on <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-your-region-information-specific-epa-region-3>.

#### **VIII. OTHER INFORMATION**

In developing your application, you may find the following documents helpful. Websites for guidance documents are listed here. If you prefer a paper copy, please call 1-800-YOUR BAY.

Boundaries of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed  
<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/maps>

*Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*  
[https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what\\_guides\\_us/watershed\\_agreement](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement)

*Chesapeake Bay Program Office Grant and Cooperative Agreement Guidance*  
<https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance>

EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans  
<https://www.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial>

Please visit the EPA Grants website (<https://www.epa.gov/grants>), the EPA Region 3 Grants website (<https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-your-region-information-specific-epa-region-3>) or the Chesapeake Bay Program website (<https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance>) if you have questions about grant issues such as costs or eligibility.

Further information on CBP committees is located at:  
[https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/how\\_we\\_are\\_organized](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/how_we_are_organized)

**APPENDIX A. APPLICATION FORMAT**  
**U. S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, Region III**  
EPA-R3-CBP-23-08

The following information must be provided, or the application may not be considered complete and may not be evaluated.

**Project Narrative Format:** Use the Project Narrative Attachment Form (see Section IV.F.) to submit this document. Project narratives as described below shall not exceed 15 single-spaced pages. The project narrative must be submitted on 8 ½" x 11" paper, and font size should be no smaller than 10. Note that the 15-page limit includes all supporting materials, resumes or *curriculum vitae*, and letters of support but **excludes** the budget narrative, documentation of non-profit status, and forms 1 through 5 as listed in Section IV. F. Applicants must ensure that the project narrative clearly addresses each Activity. Applicant's responses should be numbered and submitted according to the format listed below.

**1. Name, address (street and email), and contact information of the applicant**

**2. Background** - Include the following in this section:

- i) Project title
- ii) Brief description of your organization.
- iii) Documentation of non-profit status, if applicable.
- iv) Brief biographies of applicant lead(s) including resumes and/or curriculum vitae.
- v) Funding requested. Specify total cost of the project. Identify funding from other sources, including cost-share or in-kind resources.
- vi) UEI number — See Section IV.B

**3. Work plan** - Include the following in this section:

- i) A clear and concise discussion of how your organization will meet the objectives and requirements of the activities described in Section I of the announcement.
- ii) Environmental Results – Outputs and Outcomes: Address how the application will meet the expected outputs and outcomes of this project.
  - Output: An output is an environmental activity, effort, or work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced within the assistance agreement period. Examples of potential outputs for the activity are provided in Section I.C.2.
  - Outcome: An outcome is a result, effect, or consequence that will result from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes are quantitative measures that may not necessarily be achievable within the assistance agreement period. Examples of potential outcomes are included in section I.C.3.
- iii) Review Criteria:  
Address in narrative form each of the review criteria identified in Section V.B of the RFA. Identify by the review criteria number and title followed by your narrative.

With specific respect to the Programmatic Capability Past Performance factor in V.B:

Submit a list of federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements but not federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last five years (no more than five agreements and preferably EPA agreements) and describe (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements.

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

- 3. Budget narrative:** For the first year and each of the subsequent years, provide a budget detail breakdown by the major budget categories (i.e., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, other, and indirect). In each of the budgets, include the cost-share amount (a minimum of five percent of the total project costs, as calculated using the formula below) and demonstrate how the cost-share will be met. Applicants may include, if applicable, letters of commitment from any third-party contributors. Please note that subaward costs must be itemized under a separate sub-line item within the “Other” budget cost category. For more information, please refer to EPA’s Office of Grants and Debarment’s budget development guidance at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02>.

In addition, recipient applying for CBP assistance agreements must adhere to the requirement for “Administrative Costs” under CWA Section 117 (d)(4), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267 (d)(4), which states that administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. Information on how to calculate the 10 percent administration cost cap is located in Appendix B: Administrative Cost Cap Worksheet.

To calculate the specific cost-share amount, follow these two-steps:

- 1) EPA assistance amount (including any in-kind) ÷ 95% = 100% of Total Grant Amount
- 2) 100% of Total Grant Amount × 5% = Applicant’s Cost-Share Amount

**APPENDIX B. BUDGET GUIDANCE**

EPA-R3-CBP-23-08

**SAMPLE**

**(DO NOT SUBMIT WORKSHEET WITH APPLICATION)**

**CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE COST CAP WORKSHEET**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** In accordance with Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 117(d)(4) and 117(e)(6), the costs of salaries and fringe benefits incurred in administering a grant under CWA Section 117(d) or 117(e) shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. The annual grant award is the total costs including Federal and cost share amounts. The worksheet below is provided to assist you in calculating allowable administrative costs. The Budget Detail of your Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) should reflect how your administrative costs will comply with the cap. For specific guidance, refer to the next page of this sample "Compliance with CWA Section 117 Requirements Restricting Administrative Costs."

|                                                                |              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Total Costs                                                    | \$ _____     |
| Cap %                                                          | X .10        |
| <b>Limit on Administrative Costs</b>                           | \$ (a) _____ |
| List Administrative Costs:<br>(Budgeted costs for application) |              |
| _____                                                          | \$ _____     |
| _____                                                          | _____        |
| _____                                                          | _____        |
| _____                                                          | _____        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                   | \$ (b) _____ |

**Line (b) cannot exceed Line (a).**

## COMPLIANCE WITH CWA SECTION 117 RESTRICTING ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

### Statutory Authority

**Under statutory authority, applicants applying for Chesapeake Bay Program grants/cooperative agreements under Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 117 (d) or (e) must adhere to the requirement on administrative costs as follows:**

- Under CWA Section 117(a)(1) Administrative Cost - The term “administrative cost” means the cost of salaries and fringe benefits incurred in administering a grant under this section.
- Under CWA Section 117(d)(4) - Administrative Costs. - Administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award.
- Under CWA Section 117(e)(6) - Administrative Costs. -Administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award.

### Guidance for Determining Administrative Costs

**As determined by EPA/CBPO, the following provides guidance in determining administrative costs for grants/cooperative agreements under CWA Section 117 (d) and (e).**

#### 1. Administrative Costs

Salaries and fringe benefits charged against the project or program element for the sole purpose of administering the grant/cooperative agreements shall not exceed 10% of the annual grant **award (Federal and cost share)**. 100% of the salaries and fringe benefits related to these functions are considered administrative costs. Examples of administrative costs include, but are not limited to, preparation and submission of grant applications, fiscal tracking of grants funds, maintaining project files, and collection and submission of deliverables.

#### 2. Non-administrative Costs

Salaries and fringe benefits related to the implementation of the project or program element of the grant/cooperative agreement are not considered administrative costs. None of the salaries and fringe benefit costs related to these functions shall be considered administrative costs. Example:

- The salaries and fringe benefits for technical staff to conduct work to accomplish specific Bay Program goals as outlined in the program or project elements are not administrative costs.

#### 3. Calculation of Administrative Costs

In order to ensure compliance with this requirement, use the format above or a similar format to calculate the costs and include in the Budget Detail of your Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).

#### 4. Questions Regarding Administrative Costs

The recipients shall direct questions to the EPA Project Officer who will determine what costs should be included as administrative costs on a case-by-case basis.