Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8

Funding Opportunity Title: Region 8 Fiscal Years 2023/2024 Wetland Program Development Grants

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-REG08-WPDG-23-01

Assistance Listing Number: 66.461

Key Dates:

Application submission
All applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov as explained further in Section IV. Applications must be submitted by **October 23, 2023, *at* 9:59 P.M. MT (equivalent to 11:59 P.M. ET)**. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

Questions submission
Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified in Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS, before October 9, 2023.

Written responses to questions will be posted on EPA's website at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grant.

Other dates

12/15/23	EPA anticipates selecting applications for awards.
01/31/24	EPA anticipates awarding grants/cooperative agreements to recipients.

Note to Applicants: *Following EPA's evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status.* If you name subawardees and/or contractor(s) in your application to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the most recent EPA SOLICITIATION CLAUSES, CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provisions found at: https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs) assist state, tribal, territory (Insular Areas), local government agencies, and interstate or intertribal entities in developing or refining state, tribal, territory, or local programs which protect, manage, and restore wetlands. The primary focus of these grants is to develop/refine state, tribal, and territory wetland programs. A secondary focus is to develop/refine local (e.g., county or municipal) programs.

The statutory authority for WPDGs is Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act (CWA), 33 U.S.C. § 1254(b)(3). Section 104(b)(3) of the CWA restricts the use of these funds to developing or refining wetland programs by conducting or promoting the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution. Projects that are demonstrations must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches to be eligible for WPDGs. EPA expects that the results of each project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. More information on transferring the results of grant outputs see Section IV.B.5.B.9: Transfer of Results.

All applications submitted under this RFA must be for projects that *develop or refine* state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland programs. **Implementation of wetland protection programs is not an eligible project under this announcement.** An implementation project is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project intended to carry out a task rather than **transfer information or advance the state of knowledge**. All monitoring and mapping projects transfer information or advance the state of knowledge and therefore are eligible under this grant program.

This document describes the grant selection and award process for eligible applicants interested in applying for WPDGs under this announcement. For reference, a list of previously funded projects is posted in EPA's Wetland Grants Database.

A. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The goals of EPA's wetland program include increasing the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and restoring wetland acreage and improving wetland condition. In pursuing these goals, EPA seeks to develop the capacity of all levels of government to develop and/or refine effective, comprehensive programs for wetland protection and management. In addition to developing and/or refining wetland protection and management programs EPA seeks to build wetlands programs to incorporate climate change and environmental justice considerations as described in Section I.C.2.a: Climate Change and Section 1.C.2.b: Justice40 (J40) of this announcement on the program's National Priorities.

Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. For this grant program, the term *wetlands* generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

WPDGs provide states, tribes, territories, local governments, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia (hereafter referred to as applicants or recipients) an opportunity to develop and/or refine comprehensive state, tribal, territory or local government wetland programs. These programs are meant to:

- Develop the capacity of state, tribal, territory, or local governments to increase the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and restoring wetland acreage and improving wetland condition.
- Use one or more of the following "Core Elements" to achieve this goal.

Core Elements. With the work of many states, tribes, and territories EPA has distilled a set of core elements, actions, and example/suggested activities that together comprise a comprehensive wetland program. EPA has

summarized these common core elements, actions, and activities in the *Tribal, State, Territory Wetlands Program Core Element Framework*, also called the *Core Elements Framework (CEF)*. The CEF describes in greater detail the four core elements that make up an effective state, tribal, or territory wetland program. These four core elements are:

1. Monitoring and assessment.
2. Voluntary restoration and protection.
3. Regulatory approaches including Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 certification.
4. Wetland-specific water quality standards.

Only program development and/or refinement activities are eligible. Each of these four core elements consists of several broad "phases," "actions," and "activities" that if collectively carried out, would complete that core element. The list of activities in the CEF is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all activities that can be carried out to develop a "wetland" program. Of this broad array of actions, only some are program development actions (as opposed to implementation actions) and are eligible for funding under this RFA. Examples of actions eligible for funding are listed below as outputs. A larger list of examples of actions that are eligible for funding under this RFA can be found under the "Program Building Activities" menu for each core element at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities.

Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement. A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not considered a demonstration project.

Wetland mapping as part of a project to develop or refine a state, tribal, territory, or local government program to research, investigate, experiment, train, demonstrate, survey, and study the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution is eligible for funding. Mapping projects are required to meet the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Wetlands Mapping Standards (see Section VIII.C). Wetland mapping and monitoring projects are eligible for funding under this announcement as they are considered studies or investigations that develop or refine state, tribal, territory, or local government programs.

Funds received through the WPDG competition cannot be used to fund application tasks to implement a wetland program, for fundraising, honorarium, or to fund the purchase of land or conservation easements. Tasks can only be for developing or refining wetland programs. Tasks that are or might be required by a previous or pending permit, e.g., CWA Section 404 permit, CWA Section 402 permit, CWA Section 401 certification, or federal, state, territorial, tribal, or local government regulatory requirement(s) are not eligible for funding because they are implementation tasks. Implementation of individual mitigation projects, mitigation banks, or in-lieu-fee mitigation programs are not eligible for funding. Funds cannot be used for projects that construct wetlands to treat wastewater or stormwater.

Purchase of vehicles (e.g., cars, boats, motor homes, etc.) and office furniture is not eligible for funding under this program. The lease of vehicles is eligible for funding under this program but must be described in the budget detail and linked to project activities.

Additional details on ineligible activities are provided under Section III. E, "Ineligible Activities," of this announcement.

Proposed projects must comply with all state, territorial, tribal, local, and federal regulations applicable to the project area. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance. Under the competition, each proposed project must be able to be completed within the project period.

Funds awarded under this announcement for wetland meetings/training workshops may be used by recipients to promote participation and to support the travel expenses of non-federal personnel. Assistance funds may be used by the successful applicant to defray transportation and subsistence expenses for non-federal attendees at training sessions, roundtables, or workgroup meetings. The applicant will select meeting locations, secure meeting facilities (e.g., meeting rooms, accommodations, audio-visual equipment), and develop meeting agendas and materials. The successful applicant will use its logos on any materials it provides; EPA will use its logos on any materials it provides. The applicant is solely responsible for determining a methodology for selecting and funding reimbursement requests and providing a report on how participating non-federal attendees benefited from the meetings. EPA will not participate in the selection or approval of individuals who receive travel assistance.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS AND LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The projects to be funded under this solicitation support EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this announcement will support Goal 5 - Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities: Provide clean and safe water for all communities and protect our nation's waterbodies from degradation, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds: Address sources of water pollution and ensure water quality standards are protective of the health and needs of all people and ecosystems (available at: https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan).

All proposed projects must demonstrate the linkage to the Strategic Plan and include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs, and to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall goal of restoring and protecting aquatic ecosystems. Additional information regarding environmental results is available at: https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements.

Outputs refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product/output related to an environmental goal or 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 the assistance agreement funding period.

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

- Development of a state, tribal, or territory Wetland Program Plan (WPP) (described in Section I.C.1.a, Track One: WPP Applications) (All Core Elements).
- Development of training materials and tools to help state, tribal, territory, or local government decisionmakers integrate wetland protection and restoration into integrated watershed planning especially regarding environmental justice[1]/hazard mitigation/flood/drought planning and climate

[1] EPA currently defines "environmental justice" as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no one group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal environmental programs and policies. Meaningful involvement means that: (1) potentially affected community residents have an appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment and/or health; (2) the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; (3) the concerns of all participants involved will be considered in the decision-making process; and (4) the decisionmakers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected. EPA intents to define environmental justice in a manner consistent with EO 14096 Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All (April 21, 2023), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-04-26/pdf/2023-08955.pdf.

change and resiliency. The project can incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Voluntary Restoration/Protection and/or Regulatory Core Elements).

- Development of wetland maps directly or by supporting wetland mapping coalitions that may also incorporate traditionally important and sacred species identification in the wetland types (All Core Elements).
- Development of strategies that take into account hazard mitigation/flood/drought planning, climate change and resiliency, and environmental justice into wetland restoration and protection (Voluntary Restoration and Protection Core Element, Regulatory Core Element).
- Development of a report on the ambient condition of wetland resources at a state, tribal, territory, or population scale and may include traditionally important and sacred species, sites, etc. (Monitoring and Assessment Core Element).
- Development of a permit program to discharge dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, state, or tribe, including the assumption of the CWA Section 404 permitting program (Regulatory Core Element).
- Development of strategies to integrate goals of wetland protection and restoration programs or activities into water reuse planning (Voluntary Restoration/Protection and/or Regulatory Core Elements).
- Development of methods or strategies to incorporate wetland water quality standards into EPA approved state, tribal, or territory water quality standards and may include traditional and culture uses (Wetland-specific Water Quality Standard Core Element).
- Development of methods and studies to address at-risk or vulnerable wetland ecosystems, aquatic resources, and wetland-dependent priority species due to hazard mitigation/flooding/drought impacts and climate resilience into wetland protection and watershed planning (Monitoring and Assessment Core Element).
- Development of education and outreach materials for wetland staff, the public, and other sectors (All of the Core Elements).
- Development of tools or procedures, or studies and programs, to evaluate the ecological performance of compensatory mitigation projects (e.g., mitigation banks, in-lieu fee projects, and permittee-responsible mitigation) and incorporate the results/findings/lessons learned into future compensatory mitigation project decision-making to help determine mitigation program success (Regulatory Core Element).

Outcomes are objectives or goals that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity. Outcomes are used as a way to gauge a project's performance. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature. For instance, if there is a great need to improve the knowledge and decision-making ability, with respect to environmental issues, of local, tribal, territorial, and state government officials who are in the position of creating laws, ordinances, permits, etc. In this context, certain efforts designed to improve decision-making and behavioral changes can be viewed as environmental outcomes (results) if the grantee can show or measure the improvement in the knowledge of decisionmakers who are in the position to create environmental and/or institutional changes that are necessary to restore or protect the environment. In such instances, outcomes are not measured typically by environmental or water quality indicators, but rather by the institutional indicators that lead to the adoption and application of laws and regulations and the active management of programs necessary to provide environmental protection.

Outcomes must be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within an assistance agreement funding period. Outcomes may be short-term (e.g., changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, or skills), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (e.g., changes in the condition of the natural resource).

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the assistance agreements to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:

- Increased quantity of wetlands.
- Increased quality of wetlands.
- Improved wetland protection efforts.
- Increased stakeholder and decisionmaker's understanding of a wetland's condition for a variety of uses/functions, including traditional and cultural uses.
- Increased stakeholder and decisionmaker's understanding of wetland ecologic condition and/or function at population scales (i.e., state, territorial, tribal, or regional).
- Increased stakeholder and decisionmaker's understanding of the impacts of increased flooding/drought and/or climate resilience on wetlands, especially on traditional and cultural uses.
- Improved wetland inventories and baseline condition assessments to address hazard mitigation/flood/drought effects and climate adaptation.
- Improved data to use in modeling potential hydrologic change, ecosystem/biogeographic shifts, wetland losses, or wetland increases on the landscape that can be used to inform stakeholders and decisionmakers.
- Increased stakeholder and decisionmaker's understanding of how to develop a CWA Section 404 state, territorial, or tribal regulatory program.
- Increased stakeholder and decisionmaker's knowledge through training and outreach for state, tribal, or territory wetland staff, the public, at-risk communities, and/or other partners.
- Improved baseline information on wetland extent, condition, and performance to inform state, tribal, and territory regulatory programs.
- Increased stakeholder and decisionmaker's understanding of the ecological success of compensatory mitigation and use to inform stakeholders and decisionmakers.

As part of the application, applicants must describe how the project will protect wetland resources and link the anticipated outputs and outcomes to the Agency's Strategic Plan. Further information is in Section IV.C, CONTENT OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION, of this RFA. Additional information regarding EPA's definition of environmental results in terms of outputs and outcomes can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements.

C. TRACK CONCEPT AND PRIORITY AREAS

EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants to develop or refine state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland programs. Comprehensive wetland programs help enable states/territories/tribes/local governments to more effectively protect, restore, and manage their wetland resources.

Under this announcement, EPA will have two separate applicant tracks for eligible applicants:

- **States, territories, and tribes** can apply under *Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP*.
- **Local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and eligible colleges and universities that are agencies of a state government** can apply under *Track Two: Non-WPP only*.

Applicants may submit more than one application under this RFA under the applicable track. Each application must be separately submitted, be for a different project, and will be separately evaluated. In addition, state, tribal, and territory applicants may submit applications under each track, but each application must be submitted under either Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP. State, tribal, and territory applicants cannot submit one application covering both tracks. If the applicant indicates that an application covers both tracks or has placed an application in the wrong track, EPA will determine the most appropriate track in which to evaluate the application.

All applications submitted under this RFA, regardless of track, must be for projects that develop or refine state/territorial/tribal/local government wetland programs. Accordingly, all applicants must demonstrate in

their application how their project will develop or refine a state/territorial/tribal/local government wetland program as follows:

> **Track One: WPP Applicants: demonstrate how they will develop or refine a state, tribal, territorial Wetland Program Plan (and, if they so choose, by also carrying out actions described in the CEF at** https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities**), or reference one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved Wetland Program Plan (see Section I.C.1.a, Track One: WPP Applicant Applications) that they plan to undertake or**
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> **Track Two: Non-WPP Applicants: demonstrate that their application is developing or refining a state, tribal, territory, or local wetland program. Applicant should indicate which core element(s) and one or more action(s) under a core element(s) described in the CEF at** https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities **they will be developing or refining. A local government, university, interstate agency, or intertribal consortium applicant can reference one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved State, Territorial, or Tribal Wetland Program Plan (see Section I.C.1.b, Track Two: Non-WPP Applicant Applications) that they plan to undertake as part of the proposed project.**

Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects under this announcement. The complexity of projects to develop or refine state, territorial, tribal, or local wetland programs requires various levels of government and non-government stakeholders (e.g., community residents, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, etc.) to work together. EPA supports and empowers such collaborative partnerships. Such partnerships create ownership amongst partners and the grantee, which fosters success and sustainability. Projects are encouraged to include meaningful involvement of all partners ranging from preparation and execution of the project through project evaluation/next steps. Applications will be evaluated based on their partnerships described in Section IV.B.5.B.11, Partnership Information, and Section V, APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION, partnership criteria.

Track One: WPP -eligible-applicants will only be ranked against other Track One: WPP-eligible applicants. Track Two: Non-WPP-eligible applicants will only be ranked against other Track Two: Non-WPP-eligible applicants. See Section V, APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION, for further information.

The two tracks are described in more detail below.

1. <u>Track Concept</u>

a. Track One: WPP Applications

Only **state, tribal, and territory** applicants are eligible to submit applications and compete under Track One: WPP. Track One: WPP applications will be evaluated based on Track One: WPP criteria in Section V.A. of this RFA.

EPA has found that long-term wetland planning (i.e., Wetland Program Plans or WPPs) helps states, territories, and tribes develop their wetland programs more effectively and efficiently, therefore emphasizing WPPs as a national priority.

Under Track One: WPP, states, territories, and tribes must submit applications for either: 1) carrying out grant-eligible actions from a current EPA-approved WPP or 2) developing or updating a WPP (and, if they so choose, also carrying out actions that develop or refine a wetland program described in the CEF at https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities). If a state, tribe, or territory submits any other type of application, they will be included and evaluated under Track Two: Non-WPP as long as the application meets the threshold eligibility requirements delineated in Section III.

Wetland Program Plans. WPPs are voluntary plans developed by state, tribal, and territory agencies that articulate what the state, tribe, or territory wants to accomplish with their wetland programs over time. WPPs describe overall program goals along with broad-based actions consistent with the CEF and more specific activities that will help achieve the goals. Timelines for the WPPs vary between three to six years, with more specific timeframes typically associated with the WPP actions/activities.

WPPs should include the following five minimum components:

1. An overall goal statement(s) for the program over the period covered by the WPP.
2. An overall timeframe for the WPP, with a minimum timeframe of three years starting from the time of WPP submittal to EPA.
3. A list of planned actions consistent with the CEF that the program intends to carry out over the WPP's timeframe which, if collectively met, will accomplish the overall WPP goal(s).
4. An intended schedule for the achievement of each action.
5. A listing of more specific activities to be accomplished under each action.

WPPs do not need to be elaborate documents. An effective WPP may be a concise list of planned actions to help create a focused and sustainable wetland program. A WPP can refer to both wetland program implementation and program development efforts planned for the upcoming three to six years (please note, however, that program implementation efforts are **not** eligible for WPDG funding). WPPs should also include any actions the state, tribe, or territory anticipates funding through sources other than WPDGs. Actions listed in a WPP should be consistent with the broad actions listed in the relevant core elements chapter of the revised CEF (see individual core element tables at https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/what-enhancing-state-and-tribal-programs-effort). CEF actions don't need to be included verbatim in a WPP, but WPPs should reference the part of the CEF that most closely relates to the proposed actions. WPPs are approved by EPA in a process that is independent of the WPDG process. EPA-approved state, tribal, or territory WPPs can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/state-and-tribal-wetland-program-plans#r1.

WPP versus WPDG application. As described above, a WPP is a plan that outlines the goals, broad actions, and activities that a state, tribal, or territory wetland program may want to undertake to develop or refine its wetland program. A WPDG application is a more detailed set of projects and tasks that an eligible applicant may undertake over the next year or two to develop actions or activities in an approved WPP.

If a state, tribe, or territory already has an EPA-approved WPP, they may submit an application to carry out grant-eligible actions in their WPP. The state, tribe, or territory must indicate in their application(s) which of the development or refinement actions from their EPA-approved WPP they intend to carry out. All EPA-approved state, tribal, or territory WPPs for Region 8 can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/state-and-tribal-wetland-program-plans#r1.

If a state, tribe, or territory does not have an EPA-approved WPP, or if their EPA-approved WPP is expiring, they may submit an application to develop/update a WPP. In addition to developing a WPP, a state, tribe, or territory may want to include in its application other program developing or refining tasks it wants to undertake during the time it will be developing its WPP. The state, tribe, or territory must indicate in its application which core element(s) its project would include and which associated action(s) its project would take, as described in the CEF at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities.

A state, tribe, or territory may submit an application to refine an EPA-approved WPP if the plan needs significant changes. A WPP may be refined when the plan has not expired or is not about to expire but

additional changes may need to be made to update the WPP as a whole or in part because of more recent developments in the state, tribal, or territory program.

States, territories, or tribes submitting applications to develop a WPP under Track 1 may want to include travel support and meeting set-up and facilitation support to hold meetings amongst state agencies, territorial agencies, tribal agencies, or stakeholders. Alternative training workshops due to the impacts of natural disasters and/or health emergencies, such as COVID-19, may include switching from in-person formats to online only or reducing the number of participants in each training to allow participants to be located six feet apart from each other. Applicants should consider "green" or climate-neutral meetings, workshops, or in-person training.

b. Track Two: Non-WPP Applications

State, territorial, tribal, local government, interstate agencies, intertribal consortium, and university applicants that are agencies of a state government are eligible to apply under Track Two: Non-WPP, and these applications will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria in Section V.A of this RFA. Local government, interstate agencies, intertribal consortium, and colleges and university applicants **that are agencies of a state government** are only eligible to apply under Track Two: Non-WPP.

Under Track Two: Non-WPP, states, territories, tribes, local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and colleges and universities that are agencies of a state must submit applications that will develop or refine a state, territorial, tribe, or local government's wetland program by either carrying out one or more action(s): 1) under a core element(s) from the CEF or 2) that advance the grant-eligible actions articulated in an EPA-approved WPP. Applicants must indicate in their applications which core element(s) their project would develop or refine and which associated action(s) their project would take from the CEF at https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities. If the applicant is a local government, university, interstate agency, or intertribal consortium and is carrying out an action(s) from an EPA-approved WPP they must indicate which EPA-approved WPP they are working from, which core element(s) their project would develop or refine, and which associated action(s) their project would take from the WPP.

Examples of how to link to an EPA-approved WPP include but are not limited to:

- In their EPA-approved WPP, a state, tribe, or territory proposes to develop regulations on groundwater withdrawals in areas surrounding vital wetlands. To link to this WPP, a university proposes to study the effect of groundwater withdrawals on particular types of wetlands common in the state, tribe, or territory and provide the results of the study to the state, tribe, or territory. The goal would be to inform the regulations governing groundwater withdrawals in areas near vital wetlands.
- In their EPA-approved WPP, a state, tribe, or territory proposes to survey wetlands identified in its existing wetland inventory to verify location, hydric conditions, and wetland type. To link to this WPP, a county proposes to perform this verification within its own boundaries.

The EPA-approved state, tribal, and territory WPPs can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/state-and-tribal-wetland-program-plans#r1.

2. National Priority Areas

a. Climate Change

Taking action on climate change is one of EPA's top priorities. Taking action to fight the urgent threat of climate change offers an opportunity to build more resilient infrastructure, protect public health, advance environmental justice, strengthen America's working communities, and spur American technological innovations. EPA is working to improve society's understanding of climate

change, its impacts on human health and the environment, and actions that can be taken to adapt to climate change and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. The data, tools, and resources that EPA supports the development of can also be used by states, tribes, territories, and communities to help tackle the climate crisis effectively, equitably, and sustainably. The term “climate change" refers to any significant change in the measures of climate lasting for an extended period of time, including major changes in temperature, precipitation, or wind patterns, that occur over several decades or longer. Climate change can include increased air and water temperatures, changes in the timing and intensity of precipitation, and sea level rise. Changes in snowpack, streamflow, and forest cover are already occurring and future climate change will likely continue to influence these changes, including the availability of a reliable water source found in mountain snowpack, which melts and runs off into streams and rivers in the late spring and summer, a time when there is very little rainfall. Climate change will threaten this natural storage, with important consequences for the timing of runoff and amount of water available in streams and rivers (streamflow) and wetlands throughout the year.

Climate change is a national priority for this RFA and is intended to call attention to the impacts of climate change as well as adaptation efforts and resiliency needed to respond to those impacts. Many projects under the WPDG will be affected by climate change in the long term. Therefore, EPA believes that applicants incorporating climate change impacts and adaptation into their applications will achieve more successful long-term outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to consider their aquatic resources' vulnerabilities to climate change and how to address them as part of a strong wetland program.

For EPA’s Office of Water 2022-2026 Climate Adaptation Implementation Plan, visit: https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-10/bh508-OW-12113_ClimateAdaptatImplementPlan_508final.pdf . For more information and tools on climate change adaptation, visit: https://www.epa.gov/climate-change-water-sector.

Applicants should describe how and why their project will address the impacts of climate change on aquatic resources, specifically wetlands; how the project will help communities or ecosystems become more sustainable and resilient to the effects of climate change; and/or how the project will increase the ability of state, tribal, territory, and/or local decisionmakers to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of a changing climate.

b. Justice40 (J40)

Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, issued on January 20, 2021, expresses the Administration’s policy that the Federal Government should pursue “a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.” The Executive Order defines “underserved communities” in part as “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.” In addition, Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, signed on January 27, 2021, created the Justice40 (J40) Initiative that for the first time in our nation’s history made it a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain covered federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities.

Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards (due to causes such as age, chronic medical conditions, lack of health care access, or limited access to quality nutrition); unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status (for example, subsistence

fishing or farming); cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision making processes (due to causes such as lack of or ineffective language access programs, lack of programs to make processes accessible to persons with disabilities, inability to access traditional communication channels, or limited capacity to access technical and legal resources); and degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation.

The WPDG Program is a J40 covered program. Consistent with the Addendum to the Interim Implementation Guidance for the J40 Initiative, M-21-28, on using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), signed on January 27, 2023 (M-23-09), applicants that will be submitting tasks or entire projects in their applications that benefit disadvantaged communities must indicate which disadvantaged communities will benefit under this National Priority by using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) as **part** of their application to help characterize and describe the affected communities/populations and area(s).

Applications should describe the proposed approach to effectively address the disproportionate and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts/benefits, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect people/communities in underserved communities as determined by CEJST. Applicants should include in the application a description of the project task(s) that will benefit the underserved communities as determined by CEJST; how the project benefits these communities and/or populations (outputs and outcomes); the extent to which the project addresses engagement with these communities and/or populations, especially local residents, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, project planning, and performance of the project; and/or how the project will benefit such communities and/or populations that have experienced a lack of resources or other impediments to addressing the impacts identified above.

D. 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. AMOUNT OF FUNDING

EPA anticipates approximately $2,722,000 in federal funding to be available for assistance agreements under this announcement to fund approximately 10 to 20 awards depending on funding availability and other applicable considerations. Awards for the selected projects will likely range from $50,000 to $250,000 in federal funding. EPA will fund a maximum of 75 percent of the total project cost (see Section III.B, COST SHARING/MATCH REQUIREMENTS, for information on minimum non-federal cost share/match requirement).

Under this announcement, EPA will have two separate applicant tracks with state, tribal, and territory governments in Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP, and local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and colleges and universities that are agencies of a state government in Track Two: Non-WPP.

EPA anticipates awarding approximately $1,633,200 in federal funds under Track One: WPP and approximately $1,088,800 in federal funds under Track Two: Non-WPP. It is anticipated that approximately 5 to 10 awards will

be made under Track One: WPP and approximately 5 to 10 awards will be made under Track Two: Non-WPP with the expectation of funding more projects from Track 1 than Track 2.

It is anticipated that the assistance agreements awarded under this announcement will have one-to-four-year project periods. The project period for assistance agreements under this announcement should be no more than four years.

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

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

EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including to zero) the total number of awards and dollar amounts for each track or change the ratio of Track One: WPP to Track Two: Non-WPP assistance agreements it awards. Such changes may be necessary as a response to the quality of applications received by EPA, the amount of funds awarded to the selected applicants, or budget availability.

EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement or make fewer awards than anticipated. In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

B. TYPE OF FUNDING

EPA intends to award cooperative agreements under this solicitation. Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work supported. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for these projects may include:

- Close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the Applicant.
- Collaboration during performance of the scope of work.
- In accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, review of the proposed procurement.
- Approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient).
- Review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

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.

Successful applicant(s) will be issued a grant or cooperative agreement as appropriate. A cooperative agreement is an assistance agreement that is used when there is substantial federal involvement with the recipient during the performance of an activity or project. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the recipient's performance of the project. EPA will negotiate the precise terms and conditions of "substantial involvement" as part of the award process. Federal involvement may include close monitoring of the recipient's performance; collaboration during the performance of the scope of work; in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, as appropriate; review of proposed procurements, reviewing qualifications of key personnel, and/or review and comment on the content of printed or

electronic publications prepared. EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.461, states, territories (Insular Areas), tribes, local government agencies, colleges and universities that are agencies of a state, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia are eligible to apply for WPDGs under this announcement. Tribes must be federally-recognized, although "Treatment as a state" status is not required. As explained in Section I, there will be two separate applicant tracks with states, territories, and tribes in Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP, and local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and colleges and universities that are agencies of a state government in Track Two: Non-WPP.

Please note:

- **Intertribal consortia** must meet the requirements of 40 CFR § 35.504 (a) and (c) (http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ee8aaaeb886b62da5acc07bba026ab76&mc=true&node=se40.1.35_1504&rgn=div8). These sections states that an intertribal consortium is eligible to receive grants only if the consortium demonstrates that all members of the consortium meet the eligibility requirements for the grant and authorize the consortium to apply for and receive assistance. An intertribal consortium must submit to EPA adequate documentation of: (1) the existence of the partnership between Indian tribal governments, and (2) authorization of the consortium by all its members to apply for and receive the grant(s) for which the consortium has applied.

- **Interstate agencies** are defined in CWA Section 502(2) as "an agency of two or more states established by or pursuant to an agreement or compact approved by the Congress, or any other agency of two or more states, having substantial powers or duties pertaining to the control of pollution as determined and approved by the Administrator." (Administrator refers to the head of EPA.)

- **Colleges and universities** must include documentation demonstrating that they are chartered as a part of a state government in their application. Documentation may include such things as: state constitution, college/university charter, legal opinion from the state or territorial Attorney General's Office, or case law that has confirmed the university as a state agency. Colleges and universities *that are not chartered* as a part of a state government are not eligible to apply for assistance under this RFA. Please note: if the applicant has applied to previous competitive announcements, they will still need to submit eligibility documentation with their application.

- **Non-profit and for-profit organizations** are **not** eligible to compete under this RFA.

B. COST SHARING/MATCH REQUIREMENTS

All applicants, except as noted below, must describe in their application submission how they will contribute a minimum of 25 percent of the total project cost *in cost share/matching funds* in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.306. The cost share/match must be for allowable costs and may be provided by the applicant, by the applicant's subawardee, or other third parties. The cost share/match may be provided in cash or by in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions often include salaries, equipment, or other verifiable costs and this value must be carefully documented. In the case of salaries, applicants may use either minimum wage or fair market value.

If the cost share/match is provided by a subawardee, the subawardee's contribution must comply with 2 CFR § 200.306. Any indirect costs included in the subrecipients' cost share contribution must be determined consistently with 2 CFR § 200.332(a)(4). Successful applicants are still responsible for proper accounting and documentation of cost share contributions. Other federal grants may not be used as cost share/match without specific statutory authority. All grant funds are subject to a federal audit.

The total project cost is the sum of the total requested federal share and applicant cost share/match. The minimum cost share/match is determined by dividing the total project cost by four as illustrated by the following formula:

$$\frac{\textbf{Total Project Cost (\$)}}{4} = \text{minimum cost share/match (\$)}$$

For example, if the **total project cost** (sum of federal and non-federal funds) is $100,000 the applicant must be able to provide $25,000 in cash or in-kind contributions as cost share/match.

OR

$$\frac{\textbf{Total Federal Funds Requested (\$)}}{3} = \text{minimum cost share/match (\$)}$$

For example, if the **total federal funds requested** are $75,000 the applicant must be able to provide $25,000 in cash or in-kind contributions as cost share/match.

A cost share/match calculator can be found at the WPDG website: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-and-epa-wetlands-grant-coordinators at Match Calculator.

Insular Areas. Cost sharing and matching requirements under $200,000 for Insular Areas applicants (the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands) are waived as a matter of law as authorized by the Omnibus Territories Act, 48 U.S.C. § 1469a. Insular Area applicants with applications that will require a cost share of $200,000 or more are advised to contact EPA to determine if cost share requirements will be waived in whole or in part. For contact information, refer to Section VII.

Please contact the EPA Regional grant contact person listed in Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS, of this RFA if you have any questions about calculating cost share/match.

All applicants must describe in their application (Section IV.B.5.A and IV.B.5.B.8) how they will contribute the appropriate cost share/match requirement. In addition, if an applicant cannot meet the appropriate cost share/match by the time of award, they will not be eligible to receive funding.

C. NO REQUIRED TRIBAL COST SHARE UNDER A PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP GRANT (PPG)

If a tribe or intertribal consortium includes the funds for a grant awarded under this solicitation in an approved Performance Partnership Grant (PPG), there is no cost-share requirement. Where the applicant's stated purpose is to include a grant awarded under this solicitation in a PPG, the applicant should prepare a budget and proposed workplan based upon the assumption that EPA will approve the budget and work plan without cost share included. If the applicant ultimately does not or cannot include a grant awarded under this solicitation as part of an approved PPG, or subsequently chooses to withdraw the competitively awarded grant from their PPG, the tribe or intertribal consortium must then meet the applicable cost share/match requirements identified above in Section III. and negotiate a new workplan and budget with the EPA project officer based on the same total project cost and work initially proposed. Since the new budget will be based upon the initially proposed total project cost and

the applicable cost share/match requirement will be increased, the federal award amount will be reduced accordingly. The purpose of this is to ensure that all workplan activities for a competitively awarded project will be performed as initially proposed and in accordance with the adjusted budget reflecting the applicable cost share/match requirement and federal award amount.

D. THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

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

1. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III. A., ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS, of this announcement.
2. Applicants must demonstrate in their application submission how they will meet the applicable cost share/match requirements in Section III.B., of this announcement. If the applicant has questions about the appropriate cost share/match requirements for their project, please contact the point of contact listed in Section VIII. If a tribe or intertribal consortium intends to include a grant awarded under this solicitation in a PPG, they must include a statement to that effect.
3. Projects must be performed within one or more of the states, territories, or tribes of EPA Region 8, specifically, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming and tribal lands located within those states, to be eligible to apply for funding. Inter-jurisdictional watershed projects must primarily be conducted in EPA Region 8. Applicants need not be located within the boundaries of the EPA Region to be eligible to apply for funding so long as the project will be performed primarily within the geographic boundaries of the Region.
4. Applications must **substantially** comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV., APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION, of this announcement, or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV. with respect to the Project Narrative, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. If a single-spaced Project Narrative is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 26-page double-spaced page limit for the Project Narrative as specified in Section IV.C.5., of the announcement.
5. Regardless of track, all applications submitted under this RFA must be for projects that develop or refine state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland programs. Accordingly, all applicants must demonstrate in their application how their proposed project will develop or refine a state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland program as follows: A. For Track One: WPP Applicants, by demonstrating how they will develop/update a Wetland Program Plan or by referencing one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved WPP they plan to undertake as part of the proposed project **or** B. For Track Two: Non-WPP Applicants, by demonstrating which core element(s) and one or more actions under a core element(s) from the CEF at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities their application is developing or refining, or, if the applicant is an interstate agency or intertribal consortia, by referencing one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved Wetland Program Plan they plan to undertake as part of the proposed project.
6. All applications submitted under this solicitation must conduct or promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution as described in Section I., of this announcement.

7. **Demonstration projects** must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not a demonstration and all or parts of the application will be eliminated from consideration. Such projects are implementation projects and are not eligible for funding under this announcement. Individual project tasks that are for program implementation are not eligible for funding. See Section III.E. below on ineligible activities.
8. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as specified in Section IV., APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION, of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV.) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV. of this announcement to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV., which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a complete application to EPA prior to the deadline.
9. Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems attributable to Grants.gov or relevant Sam.gov system issues. An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with Cynthia Gonzales (Gonzales.cynthia@epa.gov or 303-312-6569) as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
10. Applicants may submit more than one application under this RFA under the applicable tracks. Each application must be separately submitted and be for a different project. In addition, state, tribal, and territory government applicants may submit different applications under either track but each application must be separately submitted under either Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP. State, tribal, and territory applicants cannot submit one application covering both tracks. If the applicant indicates that an application covers both tracks or has placed an application in the wrong track, EPA will determine the most appropriate track in which to evaluate the application.

E. INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

If an application is submitted with ineligible tasks, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding. Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Wetland program implementation tasks.
2. Fundraising, honorarium, or for the purchase of land or conservation easements.
3. Application project tasks that are required by a previous or pending permit, e.g., CWA Section 404 permit, CWA Section 402 permit, CWA Section 401 certification, or federal, state, tribal, or local government regulatory requirement(s) are **not** eligible for funding because they are implementation tasks.
4. Wetland restoration training projects cannot include wetlands constructed only for the purposes of treating wastewater or stormwater.
5. Implementation of individual mitigation projects, mitigation banks, or in-lieu-fee mitigation programs are not eligible for funding. Applications that carry out studies that may be part of an in-lieu-fee program/instrument are eligible for funding, but the actual creation of an in-lieu-fee instrument is not eligible for funding.

6. Purchase of vehicles (e.g., cars, boats, motor homes, etc.) and office furniture is **not** eligible for funding under this program. The lease of vehicles is eligible for funding under this program but must be described in the budget detail and linked to project activities.
7. Restoration of wetlands through conventional methods is ineligible. If a project involves restoration, it must qualify as a demonstration project. Only education and training on restoration or restoration involving new or experimental methods are eligible. (See also section III.D.7 above on limitations for demonstration projects).

F. PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS (PPG)

Funds for a grant awarded under this solicitation may be included in a PPG. Applicants should indicate in their application submission if they anticipate incorporating the proposed project, if selected for funding, into an already existing PPG or if they intend to create a new PPG that would include the project proposed under this solicitation. The PPG should be in place before the time of grant award or created concurrently with the award of the grant funds. The proposed project under this grant solicitation must have a project period that is within the PPG project period. It cannot be longer than the PPG project period. A PPG enables entities to combine funds from more than one environmental program grant into a single grant with a single budget. Under this competition, state and interstate agency applications must first be selected under the competitive grant process described in this solicitation and, in accordance with 40 CFR § 35.138, the workplan commitments that would have been included in the, workplan must be included in the PPG workplan. After the funds have been included in the PPG, the recipient does not need to account for these funds in accordance with the funds' original program source. Similarly, tribal and intertribal consortia applications must first be selected under this competitive grant process in accordance with 40 CFR § 35.535. If a proposed PPG workplan differs significantly from the workplan approved for funding under this competition, the Regional Administrator must consult the National Program Office (see 40 CFR § 35.535). The purpose of this consultation requirement is to address the issue of ensuring that a project, which is awarded funding under this competition is implemented as proposed once combined with other grant programs in a PPG. For further information, see the final rules on Environmental Program Grants for state and interstate agencies at 40 CFR Part 35, Subpart A, and tribes and intertribal consortia at 40 CFR Part 35, Subpart B. The rules are also available on EPA's website at: (state) and (tribal). Local governments are not eligible for PPGs.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

A. FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

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

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

b. Submission Instructions

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

   Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in

SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov[2] to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining an 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.

2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the Grants.gov Applicant Registration instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov. Please review the Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles and Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions for details on this important process.

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

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

3. Application Submission Process

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

[2] Login.gov is a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit http://login.gov/help.

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 for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

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

4. Application Submission Deadline
Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov no later than October 23, 2023, at 9:59 PM MT. 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.

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

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center **before** the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3.Send an email with EPA-REG08-WPDG-23-01 in the subject line to WPDG-RFA@epa.gov **before** the application deadline time and date and you **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.

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

Mandatory Documents:

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

Optional Documents:

6. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable (Use Other Attachments Form).
7. Letters of Commitment, if applicable (Use Other Attachment Form).
8. Biographical sketches of major project managers, support staff members, or other major project participants for the proposed projects (Use Other Attachments Form).

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically.
If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from Grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Cynthia Gonzales at 303.312.6569 or Gonzales.cynthia@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

B. CONTENT OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION
Applicants should read the following section carefully and address all requirements.

All application packages must include the following documents:

1. Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance
Complete the form. There are no attachments.

2. Standard Form 424A (SF-424A), Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
Complete the form. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of the SF 424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the total indirect amount should also be indicated on line 22. In Section B: Budget Categories row 1, column (e) should be filled out for federal funds, row 1 column (f) should be filled out for non-federal cost-share/match, and row 5 should be filled out for total project costs (federal funds, non-federal cost share/match, and project total).

3. EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contacts.
Complete the form. Attach additional forms as needed.

4. EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.
Complete the form. Tips for filling out this form can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/grants/tips-completing-epa-form-4700-4. There are no attachments.

5. Project Narrative

- The Project Narrative must address Sections A-E below (Section F is optional and not part of the page limit) and must be no more than twenty-six (26) double-spaced 8.5 x 11-inch pages (a page is one side of paper) except for documents specifically excluded from the page limit as noted below.
- Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins and that applicants format their Project Narrative as described

below for ease of reading. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative.

- For ease of review, EPA encourages applicants to organize the Project Narrative based on the following outlined sections (A-E).
- Additional pages beyond the 26-page double-spaced limit will not be considered. If a single-spaced Project Narrative is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 26-page double-spaced page limit (thirteen (13) single-spaced pages is the equivalent of the 26-page double-spaced Project Narrative page limit; any single-spaced pages in excess of 13 will not be reviewed).
- Budget information and the milestone schedule, described below, must be included within the 26-page double-spaced Project Narrative limit, and not in the supporting materials or appendix.
- Any supporting materials (such as commitment letters from partners, annotated resumes, and Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plans) that the applicant chooses to provide are not included in the 26-page double-spaced limit for the Project Narrative and should be submitted as attachments. See Section IV.C.5.F, below, for a discussion of optional supporting materials.
- When possible please submit all supporting materials as one electronic file, such as but not limited to, PDF.

The 26-page double-spaced Project Narrative must include the information listed below in items A-E (F is optional and not part of the page limit), and address the relevant evaluation criteria in Section V., APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION, for either Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP as applicable. The Project Narrative must also address the threshold eligibility factors in Section III.C. as applicable. If a particular item is not applicable, the application should clearly state this.

A. **Cover Page** - (included in the page limit) including:
   1. Project Title (the project title should reflect the main project outcome/objective and should be 15 words or less).
   2. Indicate whether the applicant is in Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP.
   3. Track One: WPP Applicants: indicate if they will develop a Wetland Program Plan (optional: also list actions described in the CEF at: http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities-0), or identify one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved WPP.

      Track Two: Non-WPP Applicants: list core element(s), and one or more action(s) under a core element(s) described in the CEF at: http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities-0 they plan to complete. A local government, university, interstate agency, or intertribal consortium applicant can reference one or more grant eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved State, Territorial, or Tribal WPP.
   4. Name of applicant and applicant's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
   5. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number).
   6. Geographic Location - state(s), territory, **or** tribe(s) (with the name of the state that the tribe is located in); **and** 8- or 14-digit Hydrologic Unit Code(s) with watershed name(s) if the project is not statewide, with weblink provided. If the project is local in scale, provide the name of the city or county, state, and zip code.
   7. Total project cost, federal dollars requested and cost share/match (if the application is from a tribal applicant and will be placed in a PPG, please indicate that as well).
   8. Abstract/project summary. The abstract should begin with one or two sentences describing the main objective of the application. It should also include a listing of the main tasks to be accomplished, and a description of the final product(s). The entire abstract should be 250 words or less.

B. **Project Description** - Please address the following categories (1-12) outlined below. Applications will be evaluated according to the selection criteria described in Section V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.

1. Project Description - Describe briefly what the overall project is about.

2. Description of Need - Describe the need for the project as it pertains to developing or refining a state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland program(s). The description should include:
   - The threats affecting your wetlands/streams/aquatic resources.
   - The need for the actions you are proposing.
   - How the deliverables will lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands.

   Describe specific aspects of your geographic area, specific adverse issues your wetlands face, and how this issue will be addressed by the development of a WPP or through the core element(s)/action(s) you have described in the application.

   Beyond a narrative description of the need for the project, some examples of ways to provide additional information that the project is needed by a state, tribe, territory, or local government or that the applicant at least exercised due diligence to further demonstrate state, tribe, territory, or local government need for the project – include (but are not limited to):

   i. Letters of commitment from state(s), tribe(s), territory(ies), or local government(s) indicating their support, need, or use for the project's deliverables.
   ii. Documentation of the responses from efforts made to reach out to states, tribes, territories, or local governments with respect to project need. Such documentation could include dates(s) of e-mails, letters, or phone calls and the title(s) of the person(s) the applicant reached.
   iii. Citing results of surveys or studies that show a clear need for the proposed outputs and outcomes.
   iv. Citing activities articulated in an EPA-approved WPP.

   For ease of review, EPA encourages applicants not to attach full documents such as surveys, studies, or journal articles. Excerpts (title page plus only relevant pages) and/or links from documents are acceptable and encouraged.

   The items listed in i-iv above are **not** subject to the Project Narrative page limit.

3. National Priority: Climate change - Applicants should describe how and why their project will address the impacts of climate change on aquatic resources, specifically wetlands; how the project will help communities or ecosystems become more sustainable and resilient to the effects of climate change; and/or how the project will increase the ability of state, tribal and/or local decision makers to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of a changing climate.

4. National Priority: Justice40 - Applications should describe the proposed approach to effectively address the disproportionate and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts and/or benefits, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect people/communities in disadvantaged communities as determined by CEJST. Applicants should include in the application a description of the project task(s) that will benefit the disadvantaged communities as determine by CEJST; how the project benefits these communities and/or populations (outputs and outcomes); the extent to which the project

addresses engagement with these communities and/or populations, especially local residents, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, project planning, and performance of the project; and/or how the project will benefit such communities and/or populations that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life to addressing the impacts identified above.

5. Project Tasks – Describe the steps you will take to meet the project product/output(s) and objective(s). Describe the projects tasks or components and the anticipated products/outputs associated with each task. Include a description of the roles and responsibilities of the applicant. If the development of a methodology is part of the proposed project, then describe the planned development steps. If travel assistance is to be provided for non-Federal attendees, describe the process for selecting non-Federal attendees who may receive travel assistance.

6. Milestone Schedule - Provide a milestone schedule covering each year of the entire project/budget period. Include a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks and products/outputs. Include the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task. Provide interim milestone dates for achieving each workplan component. Include an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

7. Detailed Budget – Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project task. Please see EPA's Budget Development Guidance, which includes a sample budget. Specific guidance for Tribes can be found in GPI 13-02, Streamlining Tribal Grants Management, with a sample budget at the end of the document.

   Also, indicate whether funds will be added to a PPG (there is no required cost-share/match under a PPG). **Tribes must indicate in their application submission if they anticipate including this project, if selected for funding, into an already existing PPG or if they intend to create a new PPG that would include this wetland project.**

   Budget information may be provided in table format if the applicant chooses, but all budget information must be included within the page limit.

   If travel for staff is planned for the project, indicate it in the budget. Include travel for applicant staff to attend wetland meetings/training workshops throughout the proposed project period that are related in scope to the application. If applicable, the budget workplan for the "other" cost category must include travel reimbursement to pay for travel costs of non-Federal attendees.

   While contractual and subgrant efforts may be part of an applicant's application, each WPDG recipient must be significantly involved in administering the award. Note that any proposed subgrants or contracts between partners for non-commercial services should be included in the "other" cost category of the SF-424A.

   Any optional letters of commitment you wish to provide, from intended cost share/match partners should be attached to your application as supporting documents. Letters of Commitment are not counted in the 26-page double-spaced limit for the Project Narrative. The letters should be submitted on the organization's letterhead and may be addressed to the applicant. For more discussion of letters of commitment, see Section IV.B.5.F., below.

   Note that additional budgetary guidelines apply to projects that are required to meet the FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standards (see Section VIII.C.).

8. Transfer of Results – Describe the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods to other states, territories, tribes, or local governments and agencies within and beyond their own organization, so that the others can better develop their wetland programs. Examples of ways to demonstrate how the project may be used by a state, tribe, territory, and/or local government including:

   i. Presentations of results at forums typically attended by representatives from states, tribes, territory, or local government wetland programs.
   ii. Documentation of how you intend to share results with a relevant state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland program.
   iii. Submitting map data to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for incorporation within the publicly available Wetlands Mapper; https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.html.
   iv. Conducting a webinar or other outreach to states, tribes, territories, or local governments at relevant conferences.
   v. Sharing results on a website and sharing the website address with relevant organizations.

Note: Successful applicants are expected to present project results at an EPA Wetland Program meeting, workshop, or webinar. The proposed budget should reflect travel costs, as appropriate.

Alternative training workshops due to the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and/or health emergencies, such as COVID-19 may include switching from in-person formats to online only or reducing the number of participants in each training to allow participants to be located six feet apart from each other. EPA encourages "green" or climate-neutral meetings, workshops, or in-person training.

9. Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes, and Tracking – This information may be provided in table or narrative form.
   i. Link to EPA's Strategic Plan - Describe how the objective of the project (outcomes) and products (outputs) contribute to meet EPA's Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.2. Description should include how the application will be a step towards the goal of restoring and protecting wetland resources. (See Section I.B., ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS AND LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC PLAN, of this announcement).
   ii. Outputs (products/deliverables) - List and describe the outputs expected to be achieved through the completion of the proposed project (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.B. of this announcement).
   iii. Outcomes (objectives/environmental improvements) – List and describe the short and long-term outcomes (environmental improvements) expected to be achieved as a result of the project outputs (i.e., examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.B. of this announcement).
   iv. Tracking Outputs and Outcomes - Describe your approach for measuring and tracking your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) and project outcome(s). This does not include your progress reports to EPA but how you will track your progress to achieving outputs and outcomes that you will then report to EPA. Examples of how you may track and evaluate progress internally and with partners include but are not limited to: frequency of updates/meetings with internal teams/management, frequency of updates/meetings with partners, how outcomes/outputs will be included in future management decisions, and reevaluation of timeline and budget and other project management activities.

10. Programmatic Capability, Technical Experience, and Qualifications – Applications should describe the following elements:
    i. Organizational Experience: Provide a brief description of your organizational experience related to the proposed project, and your infrastructure and readiness and ability to implement the proposed project in a successful and timely manner.
    ii. Staff experience/qualifications: Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their expertise/qualifications and knowledge relevant to the proposed project. Describe your organization's resources, or the ability to obtain them (through hiring, contracting, and/or other), to successfully achieve the goals of the project. Providing annotated resumes of the applicant's key staff is encouraged. The annotated resumes should be attached at the end of the Project Narrative. Annotated resumes are not included in the 26-page double-spaced limit for the Project Narrative. See Section IV.C.5.F. below for more on supporting documentation attachments.

11. Partnership Information – List proposed partner entities, describe their roles, and whether they will participate as subawardees. Describe the agencies/organizations who will partner with you as appropriate and necessary to successfully conduct the project, to help accomplish outputs/products, and to achieve the objectives/outcomes for improving state, tribal, territorial, or local wetland protection programs. Provide a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of specific partners in the project's components (or tasks) and how these partnerships will contribute to developing a state, tribal, territory, or local government's wetland program. If an applicant is in the process of engaging a partner, applications should describe how the applicant plans to engage that partner and establish a working relationship to successfully complete the project.

    A **state, tribal, territory, or local government** applicant may also describe how they will partner within their organization or, if appropriate, how having no partners is the best or only reasonable approach.

    If the applicant is an **interstate agency, intertribal consortium, or university** designated as an agency of a state government they should describe how they have already and/or will continue to partner (during the project) with the appropriate states, tribe, territory, or local government(s) in which the project is physically located, where the results of the project are intended to be used, or if appropriate, how having no partners is the best or only reasonable approach. You may attach optional letters of commitment from intended partners to your application as supporting documents. They will not be counted in the 26-page double-spaced limit for the Project Narrative. The letters should be submitted on the organization's letterhead and should be addressed to the applicant. For more discussion of letters of commitment, see Section IV.C.5.F., below.

    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 subaward(s) will be accountable to EPA for the 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 the 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.

Applicants may also describe how they will partner within their organization or, if appropriate, describe how having no partners is the best approach for accomplishing the project objectives.

12. Past Performance - Submit a list of federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements but not federal contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project that you performed within the **last three years (no more than five (5) agreements**, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe:

    i. Whether and how you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.

    ii. Your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements, and adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those assistance agreements (and if not, explain why not).

    Note: In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V., EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (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.**

C. **Restoration Demonstration Project Information** - If you are proposing a restoration demonstration project, describe the current environmental condition of the project site and the reason for restoration. Describe how the design and installation of your restoration demonstration project would take relevant potential impacts into account when considering your project's long-term viability (i.e., increased storm event intensity, increased heat stress, increased potential for wildfire). Describe your post-installation monitoring program and whether it will be funded as a part of this project or with another named funding source. If another funding source would be used, explain how you are confident that this work will be funded. Describe the regulatory authorities that you must comply with (e.g., CWA Section 404 permits, any applicable state and local permits). You may need to comply with regulations in order to conduct, monitor, and/or maintain a proposed restoration demonstration project. If you are not proposing this type of project, do not provide any description for this section and state "N/A."

D. **Quality Assurance/Quality Control Statement (QA/QC)** - If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how and when you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.A., QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL, of this announcement for a definition of environmental data which includes more than the collection of new data and information and any additional information). At a minimum, most grants will require a Quality Management Plan (QMP). A QMP is a document that describes an organization's quality system. It

identifies the organizational structure, policy and procedures, functional responsibilities of management and staff, lines of authority, and its processes for planning, implementing, documenting, and assessing all activities conducted under the organization's quality system. If data will be collected using federal funds, a QMP and/or Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) will be required before data collection can begin. To find out more about EPA's QA/QC program go to https://www.epa.gov/quality.

E. **Invasive Species Control** – If applicable, describe how you will ensure that your project does not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive species. Explain how you would respond if an invasive species problem occurs in relation to your project, including adding this information to your QA/QC documents. (See Section VIII.B., INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL, of this announcement for further information).

F. **Optional** - You may provide some or all of the optional attachments listed below. **They are not included in the 26-page limit for the project narrative**. Attachments (some are discussed above) may include the following:

i. Pictures and Maps: Pictures and/or maps may be attached to describe the project.
ii. Staff Resumes: Staff resumes may be attached to describe the experience of relevant applicant staff and should not be more than approximately two pages per person.
iii. Letters of Commitment: Letters of commitment may be useful in demonstrating support for applications submitted under either Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP. Letters of commitment may be attached to verify for example:

- Partners' support/commitment/use for the project.
- Cost share/match or other resources provided by partners.
- How partners/others will make use of the project's results.

Partners who will be providing cost share/match should describe the resources (in-kind services or dollars) that they are committing to the project for each task and budget category (see item 6. Detailed Budget under the Project Description Section, above). Letters of commitment may be useful in demonstrating support for applications submitted under either Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP. All letters of commitment should be on the official letterhead of the agency or organization and should be addressed to the applicant.

NOTE: The applicant should also provide in its Project Narrative any additional information, to the extent not already identified above, that addresses the selection criteria found in Section V., APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.

C. APPLICATION COMMUNICATIONS

In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination. Questions must be submitted in writing via e-mail to the Agency Contact identified in Section VII. Written responses on frequently asked questions or general issues will be posted on EPA's website at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

A. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Only those applications that meet the threshold eligibility criteria found in Section III. will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and point values listed below (100-point scale). Applicants need to address these criteria in their application submittal. Points will be awarded based on how well each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the application submittal.

Track One: WPP-eligible applicants will only be ranked among other Track One: WPP-eligible applicants. Track Two: Non-WPP-eligible applicants will only be ranked among other Track Two: Non-WPP-eligible applicants. There will be separate selection lists for each track.

Evaluation Criteria

Point Values	Evaluation Criteria
14 points	1) Project Need Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well the applicant demonstrates the need for the project as it pertains to developing or refining a state, tribal, territory, or local government wetland program(s).
6 points	2) National Priority: Climate Change Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which the applicant demonstrates how and why their project will address the impacts of climate change on aquatic resources, how the project will help communities or ecosystems become more sustainable and resilient to the effects of climate change, or increase the ability of state, tribal and/or local decision makers to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of a changing climate.
6 points	3) National Priority: Justice40 Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how the project will effectively address the disproportionate and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts and/or benefits, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect people/communities in disadvantaged communities as determined by CEJST. As part of this evaluation, applications will be evaluated, as appropriate, on: the project task(s) that will benefit the disadvantaged communities as determined by CEJST; how the project benefits these communities and/or populations (outputs and outcomes); the extent to which the project addresses engagement with these communities and/or populations, especially local residents, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, project planning, and performance of the project; and/or how the project will benefit such communities and/or populations that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life to addressing the impacts identified above.

20 points	4) Project Tasks Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate a description of the steps the applicant will take to meet the project product/output(s) and objective(s), including a clear description of project tasks and associated products and whether the applicant's approach (methodology) or the steps they propose is sound.
8 points	5) Milestone Schedule Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they provide a clearly articulated milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire grant period. This includes a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks and products and the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task. In addition, the program will also evaluate the approach proposed for ensuring awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.
8 points	6) Budget Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable, including whether: the applicant identified the requested federal dollars and the total project cost **for each component/task** for each budget item from SF-424A; the applicant explained if and how non-federal partners will provide cost share/match and demonstrated the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of costs and the value of in-kind contributions.
8 points	7) Transfer of Results Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods to other states, territories, tribes, or local government agencies within and beyond their own organization, so that the others can better develop their wetland programs.
10 points	8) Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes, and Tracking Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate each of the following elements: i. Outputs and Outcomes – the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates potential environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to EPA's Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.2. In addition, how the application will be a step towards the goal of restoring and protecting wetland resources will be evaluated. (6 points) ii. Tracking – The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for tracking progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. (4 points)
6 points	9) Programmatic Capability, Technical Experience, and Qualifications Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project taking into account their:

	i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure, readiness, and ability to implement the proposed project in a successful and timely manner. (3 points) ii. Staff experience/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. (3 points)
8 points	10) Partnerships Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well the applicant has demonstrated appropriate and necessary partnerships as described in Section IV.B.5.B.11, Partnership Information or if appropriate, describe how having no partners is the best or only reasonable approach.
6 points	11) Past Performance Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their: i. Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.B. of the solicitation. (3 points) ii. History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.B. 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. (3 points) Note: In evaluating applicants under these criteria, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

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

A panel or panels of EPA staff will review eligible applications against the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. above, assign scores to each application, and develop a ranked list of the applications in each Track (i.e., Track One: WPP and Two: Non-WPP) based on the evaluation scores received. The ranking list for each Track

will be provided to the Regional Selection Official who makes the final funding decisions. Final funding decisions will then be made by the Regional Selection Official based on the evaluation conducted by the review panel(s) and may also take into account the following factors:

1. Geographic distribution of funds.
2. Diversity of projects.
3. Availability of funds.
4. The distribution of awards between Track One: WPP and Track Two: Non-WPP.
5. The similarity of the project to other projects already being funded by EPA.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

A. AWARD NOTICES

Following EPA's evaluation of the applications, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified by e-mail regarding their status. The notification will be made to the original signer of the SF-424. The notification of recommendation for award is not an authorization to begin performance, nor is it a guarantee that an award will be made. The official notification of an award will be made by the Regional Grant Management Office.

Applicants are cautioned that only an Award Official is authorized to bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding, or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA Award Official, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms, which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or much longer.

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

EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final grant amount and workplan/narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy, including EPA's Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1). An approvable final narrative/workplan is required to include:

1. Project components to be funded under the assistance agreement.
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component.
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment.
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule in accordance with 40 CFR §35.115 and 40 CFR § 35.515.
5. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.
6. Grant recipients will be expected to provide to EPA project location information for any grant-funded project. The type of locational information (statewide, 8-digit hydrologic unit code, 12-digit hydrologic unit code, county, municipality, tribal land boundary, local wetland with borders defined by latitudinal/longitudinal points, etc.) will be determined by consultation with EPA and will be determined based on the geographic scale and intent of the project.
7. In consultation with EPA, grant recipients will be expected to provide to EPA a breakdown of federal funds that will be spent by "project category" (i.e., the type of effort(s) that is being conducted). Project Categories can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-category-definitions.

A list of the successful applications will be posted at EPA's Wetland Grant Database (https://wgd.epa.gov).

B. COMBINING APPLICATIONS INTO ONE AWARD

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

C. REQUIRED COMPONENTS OF FINAL WORKPLAN

EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final grant amount and workplan/narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy, including EPA's Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1). An approvable final narrative/workplan is required to include:

1. Project components to be funded under the assistance agreement.
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component.
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment.
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule in accordance with 40 CFR Part 35.115 and 40 CFR § 35.515.
5. Roles and responsibilities of the successful applicant and EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.
6. Project location information for any assistance agreement-funded project based on the geographic scale and intent of the project.
7. Breakdown of federal funds by "project category". Project Categories can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-category-definitions.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by the regulations at 40 CFR Part 35, Subpart A and B, 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500, and 40 CFR Part 33, as applicable. A description of the Agency's substantial involvement in any cooperative agreements will be included in the final assistance agreement.

E. REPORTING

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved. Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted at least annually and are due 90 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 120 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the workplan consistent with 2 CFR § 200.329, Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance, and 40 CFR Part 35.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Primary Contact: Cynthia Gonzales (303) 312.6569 or email at Gonzales.cynthia@epa.gov
Alternate Contact: Rachel Walters (303) 312.6237 or email at Walters.rachel@epa.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL

QA/QC requirements may be applicable to these assistance agreements (see 2 CFR § 1500.12). QA/QC requirements apply to the collection of environmental data. Environmental data are any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology. Environmental data include information collected directly from measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature. Applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process. EPA can assist applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the applicant is encouraged to work with EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. Contact the Agency Contact (See Section VII for Agency Contact information) for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff.

If project tasks include wetland mapping, contact USFWS to facilitate production of a standards-compliant dataset. All funded mapping projects for which the FGDC mapping standards, as described below, apply will be required to contact the USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI) at Wetlands_Team@fws.gov prior to project initiation and participate in the NWI QA/QC process to ensure that data are standards compliant. Additional information can be found at: https://www.fws.gov/media/federal-standard-compliant-wetland-data-project-coordination-and-communications-plan.

Successful applicants must ensure all water quality data generated in accordance with an EPA-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan, either directly or by subaward, are transmitted into the Agency's Water Quality Exchange (WQX) data system (formerly known as STORET) annually or by project completion. When uploading data through WQX or WQXweb, data should be identified as WPDG-related by providing project ID WPDG in the data submission. More information about WQX and WQXweb, including tutorials, can be found at https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-wqx.

B. INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Pursuant to Executive Order 13112 (https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/index.shtml), the recipient of EPA funds and all subcontractors shall monitor the project to ensure it does not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive species. If invasive species are detected or populations promoted in any way, the recipient will respond rapidly to control populations in an environmentally sound manner, as approved by the EPA Project Officer.

C. WETLANDS MAPPING STANDARD

A national wetlands mapping standard was developed by the FGDC with input from dozens of federal agencies and led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and EPA. The objective of the FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standard is to support the accurate mapping and classification of wetlands while ensuring mechanisms for their revision and update as directed under U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-16. In accordance with OMB Circular A-16, all wetlands mapping projects funded through the federal government must comply with the FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standard. (Non-federally funded wetlands mapping projects are also encouraged to comply with the standard). Standard compliant data will be added to the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) geospatial dataset and displayed on the Wetlands Mapper (https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html). Detailed information on the wetlands mapping standard, which includes mandatory use of the "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States" can be found at: FGDC Wetland Mapping Standard (FGDC-STD-015-2009). "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States," can be found at FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standard (FGDC-STD--004-2013). Information on the Wetland Mapping using EPA's funding can be found at: https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/wetland-program-development-grant-fact-sheet-jan-2023.pdf .

To facilitate production of a standards compliant dataset, all funded projects for which the aforementioned standards apply will be required to contact the USFWS NWI at Wetlands_Team@fws.gov prior to project initiation, and participate in the NWI QA/QC process to ensure that data are standards compliant. The feasibility of producing standards compliant data with a proposed budget will be considered when making grant awards. Typically, compliant data cannot be produced for less than 8 cents/acre. Please contact the USFWS if you have questions regarding the mapping standard or budget development (Wetlands_Team@fws.gov). Additional guidance on the creation of standards compliant wetlands mapping data can be found at the USFWS NWI Contributed Data page: http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Contributed-Data.html and information on how USFWS reviews standard compliant data can be found at: https://www.fws.gov/media/federal-standard-compliant-wetland-data-project-coordination-and-communications-plan.

D. ADHERENCE TO THE EPA NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL DATA POLICY

The National Geospatial Data Policy (NGDP) establishes principles, responsibilities, and requirements for collecting and managing geospatial data used by Federal environmental programs and projects within the jurisdiction of the EPA. This Policy also establishes the requirement of collecting and managing geospatial metadata describing the Agency's geospatial assets to underscore EPA's commitment to data sharing, promoting secondary data use, and supporting the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). This Policy applies to all EPA organizations, grantees, agents working on behalf of EPA, tribes, localities territories, and partner states of EPA who design, develop directly or indirectly, compile, operate, or maintain EPA information collections developed for environmental program support and can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/geospatial/epa-national-geospatial-data-policy.

E. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information about this announcement, including information about deadline extensions or other modifications, can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants and Grants.gov.