

Bureau of Reclamation

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Desalination and Water Purification Research Program: Research Projects

Funding Opportunity Number

R26AS00052

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BASIC INFORMATION

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: R26AS00052

Assistance Listing Number(s): 15.506

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$5,700,000

Expected Number of Awards: 15

Award Ceiling: \$800,000

Award Floor: \$100,000

Approximately 6-15 awards will be awarded under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), depending on the amount requested by each applicant.

Applicants are invited to submit proposals under the following project groups:

Laboratory-Scale Projects: Up to \$300,000 in Federal funds.

Pilot-Scale Projects: Up to \$800,000 in Federal funds.

Cost Sharing Required?

No

Closing Date Explanation

Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 4PM, MT, on the listed application due date.

Have Questions?

For questions regarding application and submission, contact the NOFO team at bor-sha-fafoa@usbr.gov. Staff availability on the day of the NOFO closing will be limited.

For questions regarding applicant and project eligibility or application content, contact the Program Coordinator, Andrew Tiffenbach, atiffenbach@usbr.gov, 303-445-2393.

Please include the funding opportunity number R26AS00052 in the subject line of any email correspondence.

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Reclamation's Desalination and Water Purification Research (DWPR) Program aims to increase water supplies by reducing the costs, energy requirements, and other barriers to adoption of treating impaired water for beneficial uses.

This NOFO invites proposals from eligible applicants to conduct innovative laboratory and pilot-scale water treatment research. Strong applications will demonstrate widespread applicability and benefits of the proposed research and provide a pathway for technology commercialization. This initiative supports the Bureau of Reclamation's mission to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public by providing water managers with new and innovative technologies and approaches to develop additional water resources and increase water supply flexibility.

The DWPR Program demonstrably advances Trump administration priorities, such as those identified in Presidential Executive Order 14154 (January 20, 2025): Unleashing American Energy (E.O. 14154) and Secretarial Order 3418, and aligns with other priorities and requirements, such as those identified in Presidential Executive Order 14332 (August 7, 2025): Improving Oversight in Federal Grantmaking (E.O. 14332).

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

Others (see text field entitled "Additional Information on Eligibility" for clarification)

Additional Information on Eligibility

The program office will review all proposed projects to determine whether the application is an eligible activity under the NOFO and can proceed to merit review evaluation. Applicants can apply for two categories of projects under this NOFO:

- **Laboratory-Scale Projects.** Laboratory-scale projects are typically bench-scale studies involving small flow rates. These projects are used to determine the viability of a novel process, new materials, or process modifications. Laboratory-scale projects can also include modeling studies, decision support tools, literature and technology reviews, etc. that address objectives identified in the *Program Goals* section. Research at this stage can involve a high degree of risk and uncertainty. These projects should be completed within 24 months of award.
- **Pilot-Scale Projects.** Pilot-scale projects test a novel technology or process at a sufficiently large scale to determine the practicality of implementing the technology. These projects should involve flow rates above 1 gallon per minute and use natural water sources rather than synthetic or laboratory-made feed water. Pilot-scale studies are used to generate data over a sufficient time period that can be used to estimate the operational requirements (e.g., labor, chemical addition, power requirements) of the process and show performance with respect to finished water quality goals. Pilot-scale projects are generally preceded by laboratory studies (funded previously by the DWPR Program or others) that demonstrate technology feasibility. These projects should be completed within 36 months of award.

Projects not eligible for funding under this NOFO include, but are not limited to:

- Proposals for planning activities eligible under the WaterSMART: Water Recycling and Desalination Planning funding opportunity,
- Proposals for the construction of permanent research facilities or infrastructure, and
- Proposals for the testing of established water treatment processes for the purposes of generating site specific information.

Cost Sharing Requirement

Cost Sharing Required?

No

Non-Federal cost share is not required but is strongly encouraged. All cost-share contributions must be non-Federal and comply with [2 CFR 200.306](#). Cost sharing can come from direct cash contributions, third-party in-kind contributions, or a combination of both. In-kind contributions may include equipment, supplies, and services directly benefiting the project.

However, third-party in-kind contributions used to meet cost-sharing requirements for other Federal awards cannot be counted for this NOFO's cost-share requirement. Applicants should refer to 2 CFR §200.434 for regulations on valuing third-party in-kind contributions.

Cost share funding is an evaluation criterion (see the Merit Review section), and reported cost-share amounts will be verified. If the reported cost share cannot be confirmed, funding for the project may be changed or delayed. Therefore, it is crucial that reported cost share meets the outlined requirements.

Other sources of Federal funding generally cannot be counted towards the required cost-share, except where specific Federal statutes allow it. If it is determined that Federal funds cannot be used for the non-Federal cost-share, the related work may need to be excluded from the project, or those Federal funds will count towards the Federal share. Please identify any other Federal funding associated with the Project.

See the *Budget Narrative* section for information on reporting cost share funding in your application.

Total project cost is the sum of all allowable costs, including cost share and third-party contributions.

Total Project Costs	\$500,000
Cost share	x 35%
Applicant share of project costs	\$175,000
Federal share	\$325,000

GET READY TO APPLY

Required System Registrations

Unique Entity Identifier and SAM.gov Registration

Before applying, all **applicants** except individuals applying as a natural person **must be registered in SAM.gov**. During the SAM.gov registration the entity will obtain their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

The SAM.gov registration process can take several months. If your organization is not already registered in SAM.gov, begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To register in SAM.gov, go to the [SAM.gov website](#) and use the available resources to complete registration.

- **Financial assistance registrants** must review and certify compliance with the SAM.gov “Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications”.
- **Already registered?** You already have a Unique Entity ID. Before applying, check that your “Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications” on SAM.gov is complete. Remember to renew your registration every year to keep it active while you have an award or application in progress. You can update your registration whenever you need, including during renewal.
- **Need help?** For additional information and contact information on the [SAM.gov Help page](#).

GRANTS.GOV

This program accepts applications through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) so once you receive your UEI return to Grants.gov to [register](https://www.grants.gov) with Grants.gov. Please allow 30 days to register and set up a Workspace in Grants.gov. See [Submission Instructions](#) section below for additional details.

Refer to Attachment – Submission Instructions & Tips.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Goals

- The DWPR Program aims to increase water supplies by reducing the costs, energy requirements, and other barriers to adoption of treating impaired water for beneficial uses. This DWPR Research NOFO invites applicants to address any of the following research topics that support the development of new water supplies:

Improve existing desalination and water treatment technologies, including reverse osmosis, electrodialysis, nanofiltration, membrane filtration, pretreatment processes, and ancillary processes/infrastructure.

Carry out basic and applied research on next-generation desalination and water treatment technologies.

Develop cost-effective approaches for concentrate management that address feasibility, cost, and/or environmental compliance.

Develop technologies or processes for the selective removal/recovery of target contaminants in conjunction with the development of additional water supplies.

Develop improved technologies or processes for water reuse applications, including process monitoring and control of disinfection byproducts.

Evaluate the use of artificial intelligence to improve existing or emerging water treatment technologies or processes.

Program Description

The DWPR Program works with Reclamation researchers and partners to develop innovative, cost-effective, and technologically efficient ways to desalinate and treat water. DWPR funding plays a critical role in iterating an idea from the lab to a real-world demonstration, yielding products that serve the water treatment community and attract commercialization interest. Reclamation is interested in research that has a national significance—where the issues are of large-scale concern and the benefits accrue to a large sector of the public.

The goal of the DWPR program is to reduce the costs, energy requirements, and environmental impacts of treating impaired and unusable water for beneficial uses. The funds provided through this NOFO will be available for selected recipients to conduct water treatment related research. Reclamation's Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility (BGNDRF) in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and Water Quality Improvement Center (WQIC) in Yuma, Arizona, may be available if a location for testing is needed.

Certified Local Governments are encouraged to prioritize projects in support of the celebration of America's 250th birthday (American250). This may include, but is not limited to, preservation

planning, interpretation, public engagement, and rehabilitation projects that recognize and honor the nation’s founding, history, and cultural heritage.

Legislative Authority

Reclamation Act of 1902, Sec.1 and Sec.2, and the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law (P.L.) 111-11, §9509, Research Agreement Authority

Type of Award

Projects will be funded through CA (Cooperative Agreement), G (Grant).

Recipient should expect the Federal agency to have substantial involvement in the project.

This includes:

- Collaboration and participation with the successful applicant in the management of the project and close oversight of the successful applicant’s activities to ensure that the program objectives are achieved, and
- Possible oversight, including review, input, and approval at key interim stages of the project.

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application Content and Format

Pre-Application Requirements

Prior to applying, applicants should review presidential actions found at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/> and DOI Secretary’s Orders found at: <https://www.doi.gov/document-library/secretary-order>. By applying in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity, the applicant certifies awareness and compliance with all currently effective and applicable executive orders and secretary’s orders, including but not limited to the Executive Order titled Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing as well as the Executive Order and Secretary’s order titled Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History. Applicants are responsible for ensuring their proposed activities are consistent with the intent and requirements of these directives.

Application Documents

Applicants must submit the following forms with their application as specified below. Instructions for accessing and submitting application forms are provided in the [Submission Instructions](#) section of this document below. For instructions on completing form fields, see the form instructions on the [Grants.gov Forms Repository](#).

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance Note: For applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Representative’s signature (or electronic equivalent) on the Application for Federal Assistance form also	Required from all applicants

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
represents their certification of the statements in Appendix A to 43 CFR 18-Certification Regarding Lobbying	
SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs	Required for non-construction projects
SF-429 (Cover Page & Attachment B), Request to Acquire, Improve, or Furnish Real Property Note: The SF-429 forms are only available in the Grants.gov Forms Repository . Applicants must download the form and include the completed form as an application attachment.	Required if requesting to acquire, improve, or furnish real property.
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Required if requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds <u>and</u> the applicant has used or plans to use funds other than Federal appropriated funds for lobbying related to the proposed project.
Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019). Must include, in plain language: • Award purpose, • Activities to be performed, • Expected deliverables or outcomes, • Intended beneficiaries, Subrecipient activities (if known or specified at time of award)	Required from all applicants
DOI Research and Development (R&D) – Current and Pending (Other) Support Note: This form is available on the DOI website . Applicants must download the form and include the completed form as an application attachment.	Required for research projects.
DOI Research and Development (R&D) – Biographical Sketch Note: This form is available on the DOI website . Applicants must download the form and include the completed form as an application attachment.	Required for research projects.

Project Narrative

The project proposal must be no longer than 20 pages, with a typeface no smaller than 11-point, and have at least 1-inch margins on all sides. The 20-page limit includes all text, figures, and references, but does not include the Budget Narrative. If this section exceeds 20 pages, only the first 20 pages will be evaluated.

Application narrative requirements should include:

Title Page

The title page should provide a brief and descriptive title for the proposed work that indicates the nature of the project. Include the name and address of the applicant, and the name, address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the project manager.

Table of Contents

The table of contents should include all major sections of the project proposal.

Executive Summary

The executive summary should include:

- The date, applicant name, city, county, and state.
- In one paragraph, state the problem/motivation for the project and how the proposed work addresses it.
- In one paragraph, summarize the project. Specify the work proposed, including how funds will be used to accomplish specific project activities and briefly identify how the proposed project contributes to accomplishing the goals and objectives of this NOFO. Also include information on how project success will be measured and the potential impacts of a successful project.
- State the length of time and estimated completion date for the proposed project.
- Identify the proposed project location(s) and state if any work will be conducted at a federal facility or on federal land.

Project Location

The project location should provide specific information on the area in which the applicant will work, potentially including a map showing the geographic location and a brief narrative. For example: the {project} is located in {state and county} approximately {distance} miles {direction, e.g., northeast} of {nearest town} in {township, range, and section}. If selected for funding, Reclamation may request additional detail regarding the applicant's project location.

Motivation/Problem Statement

Describe the motivation for the proposed project or the problem to be addressed by the proposed project, including how the proposed approach or technology improves on current shortcomings. Include information on what is already known, either from previous research efforts or a literature review. Describe how the proposed work aligns with the objectives described in the *Program Goals and Evaluation Criterion G: Presidential and Department of Interior Priorities* sections.

Prior Work and Results

Describe previous research and/or technology development that supports the need for the proposed research project. Identify relevant experience of key project team members for the proposed work. Identify the current technology readiness level (TRL) of the proposed technology (using the TRL definitions provided in the Project Readiness evaluation criterion).

Technical Approach and Project Activities

Describe the technical approach and proposed research and testing activities to be conducted

under the project. Include enough detail on the proposed technology or approach to permit a comprehensive evaluation of the proposal. Identify potential challenges that may be faced throughout the proposed project activities, and mitigation strategies for these challenges. Describe in detail the tasks to be conducted, including the development of the final technical report and final presentation. For each task, describe planned activities and expected outcomes and milestones. Provide the location(s) of activities for each task, water type(s) to be tested, and system flow rate(s). As applicable, provide figures and/or calculations to represent a flow diagram, mass/energy balance, and/or similar ways to describe the proposed technology or approach, including process inputs and outputs demonstrating a knowledge of feed, product, and residual streams. Identify the TRL that can be achieved if the proposed project is implemented (using the TRL definitions provided in the Project Readiness evaluation criterion).

Work Plan and Schedule

Provide a work plan based on the technical approach and project activities. Identify any potential schedule risks and mitigation strategies for addressing these risks. The work plan should include a schedule showing individual tasks, relationships between tasks, and significant milestones. Clearly and concisely convey this schedule using a table, Gantt chart, project network diagram, or any other visual format. Time for final report preparation (using a Reclamation provided template) and final presentation should be included in the work plan. The final report will be posted publicly.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC) Plan

Identify the proposed QA/QC protocols to be used throughout the project, including but not limited to data checks, peer review, instrument calibration, etc.

Facilities and Equipment

Describe the facilities where the work will be performed. List the equipment that is available for use on the project and that which will be required for carrying out the proposed work. List and justify any special equipment that will need to be purchased and indicate the extent to which the work cannot be accomplished without it. Information on alternative sources considered for the equipment should also be included.

Responses to Evaluation Criteria

(See Merit Review Section for additional details, including a detailed description of each criterion and points associated with each.)

The responses to evaluation criteria portion of your application should clearly describe how the proposed project addresses each criterion (in the order presented) to assist in the complete and accurate evaluation of your application. It is not necessary to repeat information provided in other sections of the proposal. Rather than repeating information, provide a reference to other sections of the proposal.

It is suggested that applicants copy and paste the evaluation criteria in the Merit Review Section: Evaluation Criteria into their applications to ensure that all necessary information is adequately addressed.

Budget Narrative

Applicants must describe and justify items and costs listed in their budget. The budget narrative must identify the following cost items: total estimated costs, non-Federal cost share, third-party contributions, and any pre-award costs. Total project cost is the sum of all allowable costs, including required and voluntary cost share and third-party contributions.

Budget items must be:

- Reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary
- Compliant with [2 CFR §200 Subpart E](#) cost principles

Indirect Costs: Applicants must indicate in their budget narrative how they will charge indirect costs, including the rate to be applied:

- De Minimis Rate: If eligible, state if your organization is opting to use the de minimis rate of up to 15% of total modified direct costs. Entities that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate (including provisional rate) may propose to use the de minimis rate. For more information, refer to [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#).
- Negotiated Rate: State if you will negotiate with your cognizant agency. If your organization has previously negotiated a rate, attach a copy of the most recently negotiated rate agreement (active or expired).

Data and Evaluation Costs: Applicant budgets may include costs related to data and evaluation as relevant per 2 CFR §200.455.

The budget narrative provides a written description of the costs included in each budget category on the SF-424A and how they were estimated. While the SF-424A gives the total cost for each category of the budget, the budget narrative gives the item by item breakdown for each category and shows the calculations used to derive the costs. The budget description serves two purposes: 1) it explains how the costs were estimated, and 2) it justifies the need for the cost. See Attachment A for Budget Narrative Guidance. Attachment B is a suggested format for capturing budget details to support the Narrative.

Pre-award costs (defined at [2 CFR 200.458](#)) are allowed, subject to Grant Officer approval. To be eligible, pre-award costs must be incurred after award selection. Pre-award costs are at the applicant's risk. Successful applicants may submit requests for approval of pre-award costs to the awarding Grant Officer.

Conflict of Interest and Unresolved Matters Disclosures:

If any actual or potential conflict of interest exists related to this project at the time of application, the applicant must provide sufficient information to support a program determination of significance per [2 CFR 1402.112](#). Refer to [2 CFR 200.112](#) Conflict of Interest and [2 CFR 200.113](#).

Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement:

Applicants must state in their application if the activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel proposed in this application overlap with those in any other Federal proposal or award or not. If no overlap exists, include a statement to that effect. If any overlap exists, provide:

- Activities: Description any overlapping activities.
- Costs: Description of any overlapping costs.
- Time: Description of any overlapping key personnel time.
- A copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity.
- Details on when any overlapping proposal was submitted, to whom, and the expected date of the funding decision.

Other Required Information

Letters of Commitment or Support

If applicable, applicants should include letters of commitment from third-party cost share sources. Letters of commitment should identify the amount of funding committed, the date the funds are available, time constraints on the availability of funds, and any other funding contingencies. Letters of support from interested stakeholders supporting the proposed project are encouraged, if applicable. Reclamation will not consider letters of support received after the application deadline for this NOFO in evaluating an applicant's proposed project. These letters do not count within the 20 page-maximum.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Address to Request Application Package

Grants.gov contains a complete application kit to submit a full application in response to this NOFO. Instructions for the Grants.gov application process are [available here](#). Contact Matt Stonebridge at bor-sha-fafoa@usbr.gov if you are unable to access the application materials electronically.

Proposals received after the application deadline will not be considered unless it can be determined that the delay was caused by Reclamation or that there were technical issues with [Grants.gov](#). To document a delay due to a technical issue in Grants.gov, you must furnish a Grants.gov helpdesk ticket number to the NOFO team that validates the delay. Difficulties related to an applicant's Grants.gov profile (e.g., incorrect organizational representative), uploading documents to Grants.gov, or an applicant's SAM.gov registration are not considered technical issues with the Grants.gov system.

Submission Dates and Times

Closing Date for Applications: 09/29/2026

Closing Date Explanation

Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 4PM, MT, on the listed application due date.

Submission Instructions

Apply Through Grants.gov

To apply through [Grants.gov](#), please follow the instructions in the [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#). Before applying, ensure that at least one person at your organization is registered and

has the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only the AOR can submit the application. If you need more users, they must create their own Grants.gov account. Follow these steps below to apply:

- *Create a Workspace:* Creating a workspace allows you to complete it online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- *Complete a Workspace:* Invite participants to the workspace so you can collaborate on the application. Required applications forms are included in the Grants.gov Funding Opportunity Package and can be completed in the Workspace, unless noted otherwise in the Required Forms table above. Check for errors before submission.
- *Submit a Workspace:* An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab
- *Track a Workspace Submission:* After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application.

The system generates a date and time stamp and sends it to the applicant's AOR via email as proof of submission. Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks. Do not encrypt, zip, or password-protect any files. Only registered individuals in SAM as both a user and an AOR can submit applications. Please allow 30 days to register in Grants.gov.

Application System Technical Support: For Grants.gov technical registration and submission, downloading forms, and application packages, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or by email at Support@grants.gov.

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Eligibility Review

During the eligibility review, the application is checked for timely submission, completed packages (see [Application Documents](#) above) and alignment with the requirements of this announcement. The Federal agency may remove an application if it does not pass the eligibility review.

The DWPR Program will review applications to ensure that projects are eligible as described in the Eligibility Section.

The Grants Officer will remove an application if it does not include:

- Completed SF-424 and SF-424A forms
- SAM.gov registration, with a valid UEI (unless an exemption at 2 CFR 25.110 applies, see below)
- A project narrative
- A budget narrative

If an applicant selected for funding hasn't finished their SAM.gov registration (see [2 CFR 25.200](#) and [2 CFR 25.110](#)) when the federal agency is ready to make an award, we may decide that the applicant is ineligible for the award and choose to grant it to someone else. Please refer [2 CFR 25.205](#) for more information.

Prior to making an award, the DOI checks the anticipated recipient and their key project personnel against the current list of prohibited or restricted persons or entities in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Exclusions database. We are prohibited from making an award if a recipient or any key personnel are found ineligible, prohibited, restricted, or otherwise excluded from receiving or participating in an award, as their ineligibility condition applies to this program.

If removed from consideration for ineligibility, the Federal agency will notify the applicant in writing.

Merit Review

An Application Review Committee (ARC), made up of experts in relevant disciplines, will review the technical merit of the application, based on the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation Criteria: Scoring Summary	Maximum Points
A. Non-Federal cost share	25
B. Impact of the proposed research	20
C. Project readiness	15
D. Familiarity in the field of work	10
E. Team qualifications	5
F. Schedule/workplan and QA/QC	5
G. Presidential and Department of Interior Priorities	20
Total	100

Evaluation Criterion A: Non-Federal Cost Share (25 points)

Non-Federal cost share points will be awarded for voluntarily committed non-Federal cost share. A breakdown of these points by percentage of cost share for the total cost of the project is below.

Note: projects selected for award will have reported cost-share amounts verified. If reported cost share is found to be ineligible, there may be impacts to the award. Accordingly, please ensure reported cost share amounts are accurate and eligible. See Cost Sharing Requirement Section for guidance.

Project Non-Federal Cost Share Percentage	Points
0%	0
1% - 4%	2
5% - 10%	5

11% - 20%	10
21-35%	15
36-49%	20
>= 50%	25

Evaluation Criterion B: Impact of the proposed research (20 points):

Describe the impact of the proposed work on the field of water treatment, including technical, economic, and environmental considerations. Impacts can be measured by the potential for future adoption, broad applicability of the solution, the severity of the problem being addressed, novelty of approach, and the likelihood of project success.

Evaluation Criterion C: Project Readiness (15 points)

Describe prior research on the proposed technology or approach and how this prior work supports the need for the proposed project. Information such as a process flow diagram, mass and energy balances, and data from previous testing will help support the need for the proposed project. As applicable, provide the location of the proposed testing, water type(s) to be tested, and system flow rate.

Using the definitions below, briefly identify what technology readiness level (TRL) the proposed technology is currently at, and what technology readiness level will be achieved if the proposed project is implemented. This funding opportunity is targeting technologies that are currently at TRLs 1-6, but technologies at other TRLs will also be considered if sufficient justification is provided.

TRL	Definition
1	Basic principles observed and reported
2	Technology concept and/or application formulated
3	Analytical and experimental critical function and/or characteristic proof of concept
4	Component and/or system validation in laboratory environment
5	Laboratory scale, similar system validation in relevant environment
6	Pilot-scale system validation in relevant environment
7	Full-scale system demonstrated in relevant environment
8	Actual system completed and qualified through test and demonstration
9	Actual system operated over the full range of expected conditions

Evaluation Criterion D: Familiarity in the field of work (10 Points)

Demonstrate familiarity with current technology and approaches in the field of work. Clearly state the problem being solved and how the proposed approach differs from current solutions. Describe potential challenges that may be faced throughout the proposed project and mitigation strategies for these challenges.

Evaluation Criterion E: Team Qualifications (5 points)

Describe the qualifications, capabilities, and experience of the proposed Project Manager and other key personnel who are critical to achievement of the proposed objectives.

Evaluation Criterion F: Schedule/Workplan and QA/QC (5 points)

Provide a schedule with tasks and milestones that concisely summarizes the elements of the proposed work and relationships between tasks. It is suggested that applications use a Gantt chart or similar visual depiction of this information. Provide information on quality assurance and quality control practices that will be employed to ensure the technical and scientific integrity of the work. Points will be awarded based on (1) the quality and feasibility of the proposed schedule/workplan and (2) the extent to which appropriate QA/QC measures are included.

Evaluation Criterion G: Presidential and Department of Interior Priorities (20 points)

Up to **20 points** may be awarded based on the extent that the project demonstrably:

- advances the Trump Administration's priorities, including E.O. 14154: Unleashing American Energy, justifies alignment with priorities and requirements in E.O. 14332: Improving Oversight in Federal Grantmaking;
- includes primary project elements that develop, demonstrate, and or implement artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that advance the Trump Administration and Department of Interior's priorities for AI, including OMB M-25-21 Accelerating the Use of AI through Innovation, Governance, and Public Trust; S.O. 3444: Leading Interior's Path to Artificial Intelligence Transformation;
- aligns with Secretary Burgum's strategic objectives, including those identified in S.O.s 3417: Addressing the National Energy Emergency, 3418 Unleashing American Energy, 3419 Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis;
- aligns with goals and objectives in the U.S. Department of the Interior FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan; and
- supports water management and enhanced operational flexibility in Reclamation States, with priority given to the Colorado River Basin, which is experiencing long-term drought conditions.

Please address only those priorities that are applicable to your project. **All priorities will be given equal consideration.** A project will not necessarily receive more points simply because multiple priorities are addressed. Points will be allocated based on the degree to which the project supports, advances, or otherwise demonstrates an enhancement of one or more of the priorities identified, and whether the connection to the stated priority (or priorities) is (are) well supported.

The Program will review eligibility and verify it meets the objective of the NOFO before

applications are sent to the ARC. During the ARC review, Reclamation may contact applicants to request clarifications to the information provided, if necessary.

Review and Selection Process

This program reviews proposed budgets to ensure:

- figures are correct
- estimated costs are necessary and reasonable and clearly linked to project narratives
- avoid obviously unallowable costs
- identify costs requiring prior approval
- ensure indirect cost rates are applied correctly
- confirm cost sharing requirements are reflected in the budget.

This program reviews applications for potential overlap or duplication between the proposed project and any other funded or proposed project. Depending on the circumstances, DOI may choose to not make an award.

Initial Review: Prior to conducting the comprehensive merit review, an initial review will be performed to determine whether: (1) the applicant is eligible for an award; (2) the information required by the NOFO has been submitted; (3) all mandatory requirements of the NOFO are satisfied; (4) the proposed project is responsive to the program objectives of the NOFO (program determination); and (5) the proposed project is in compliance with all applicable executive and secretary orders, including the President’s executive order on Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing as well as the executive order and Secretary order on Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History. If an applicant fails to meet the requirements or objectives of the NOFO, or does not provide sufficient information for review, the applicant will be considered nonresponsive and eliminated from further review.

After the merit review, Reclamation conducts a “red-flag” review of top-ranking applications. During this review, Reclamation identifies any reasons a project would not be feasible or advisable, including environmental or cultural compliance, permitting, legal, financial, performance or other concerns. After the red-flag review, Reclamation conducts a “managerial review” of top-ranking applications. The managerial review prioritizes applications for selection based on the objectives of the NOFO. The review of applications will follow the requirements of E.O. 14332, such as ensuring review by senior appointees, and that selections demonstrably advance the President’s policy priorities consistent with applicable law. Geographic dispersion, project types, applicant types, previous award history, and applicant success in implementing Gold Standard Science (E.O. 14303) may be considered during the review. Selections are finalized once all reviews are complete, and all applicants are notified.

Risk Review

Prior to making an award, the applicant will be assessed for their level of risk per [2 CFR 200.206](#). This assessment includes the applicant's financial management capabilities, project delivery experience, staffing resources, past award performance, administration and reporting compliance records, and overall project complexity and potential for challenges. If an award will be made, special conditions may be applied to the award corresponding to the assessed risk. For awards over the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$350,000), a review of the applicant's

eligibility and financial integrity information in the applicant's SAM.gov records will also be performed per [2 CFR 200.206](#).

The program also assesses financial management capabilities, project delivery experience, staffing resources, past performance, administration and reporting compliance records, and overall project complexity and potential challenges.

A Reclamation Grants Officer conducts a detailed budget analysis and a business evaluation and responsibility determination. During this evaluation, the Reclamation Grants Officer will consider several factors, such as:

- Allowability, allocability, and reasonableness of proposed costs
- Financial strength and stability of the applicant
- Past performance, including satisfactory compliance with all terms and conditions of previous awards, such as environmental compliance, reporting requirements, and audit compliance
- Adequacy of personnel practices, procurement procedures, and accounting policies and procedures.

AWARD NOTICES

Notices of Federal Award are sent electronically via GrantSolutions or e-mail. These notices outline the terms, conditions, and payment instructions per [2 CFR 200.211](#). The Notice of Federal Award signed by an authorized Grants Officer is the legal instrument obligating financial assistance to a recipient. Any other prior notice is not an authorization to begin work. If the program allows pre-award costs per [2 CFR 200.458](#), beginning performance before receiving a Notice of Federal Award is at the applicant's own risk.

Anticipated Project Start Date: 07/01/2027

Anticipated Project End Date: 06/30/2030

Reclamation anticipates contacting potential award recipients and unsuccessful applicants in February 2027, subject to the timing and amount of final appropriations. Reclamation will contact award recipients individually to discuss the time frame for the completion of their agreement. A webinar may be held for successful applicants following their notice of selection to review next steps and pre-Financial Assistance Agreement procedures.

Reclamation may post successful applications on a Reclamation website, after necessary redactions, in consultation with the successful applicant.

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and National Policy Requirements

For award administration and national policy requirements, see the [DOI General Terms and Conditions](#). Infrastructure projects require the use of American iron, steel, manufacture products, and construction materials per [2 CFR 184](#).

Public Access to Federally Funded Research

Projects selected for funding are required to make any resulting scholarly publications and

associated data freely available without latency, in accessible formats. In support of making scholarly publications and the supporting data resulting from Federally funded research publicly accessible without an embargo on their free and public release, researchers can include reasonable costs associated with submission, curation, and management of publications and data, public access fees, and special handling instructions in research budgets. Scholarly publications always include peer-reviewed research articles or final manuscripts published in scholarly journals, and may include peer-reviewed book chapters, editorials, and peer-reviewed conference proceedings published in other scholarly outlets that result from Federally funded research. Research data that are outside of this scope include data from secondary sources, partner data not funded by the Department of the Interior, data having sensitive characteristics, and data having restrictions on sharing.

Automated Standard Application for Payments Registration

All recipients must be registered with and willing to process all payments through the Department of Treasury Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system. All recipients with active financial assistance agreements with Reclamation must be enrolled in ASAP under the appropriate Agency Location Code(s) and UEI Number prior to the award of funds. If a recipient has multiple UEI numbers, they must separately enroll within ASAP for each unique UEI Number and/or Agency. If your entity is currently enrolled in the ASAP system with an agency other than Reclamation, you must enroll specifically with Reclamation in order to process payments. All of the information on the enrollment process for recipients, will be sent to you by ASAP staff if selected for award.

Approvals and Permits

Recipients shall adhere to Federal, State, Territorial, Tribal, and local laws, regulations, and codes, as applicable, and shall obtain all required approvals and permits. Recipients shall also coordinate and obtain approvals from site owners and operators.

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

The recipient must comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local environmental, cultural, and paleontological resource laws and regulations. Data collections supporting compliance efforts must follow separate compliance procedures. All projects will require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) before any ground-disturbing activity may begin.

Recipients are prohibited from any ground-disturbing activities (e.g., biological or water quality surveys, grading, clearing, excavation, and other preliminary or construction activities) on a project before environmental and cultural resources compliance is complete. A recipient that proceeds before environmental and cultural resources compliance is complete risks forfeiting funding. The Grant Officer will issue a Notice to Proceed that explicitly authorizes work to proceed once environmental and cultural resource compliance is complete.

Official Resolution

Prior to award, the recipient must provide an official resolution adopted by the organization's governing body, or, for state government entities, an official authorized to commit the recipient

to the financial and legal obligations of the financial assistance award. The official resolution verifies:

- The identity of the official with legal authority to enter into an agreement
- The board of directors, governing body, or appropriate official who has reviewed and supports the application submitted
- That the organization will work with Reclamation to meet established deadlines

Geospatial Data

If you receive financial assistance from the Department of the Interior (DOI), recipient must follow these rules for geospatial data:

Follow Federal Standards: All geospatial data you collect or create must meet the standards set by the Federal Geospatial Data Committee (FGDC) or the Department of the Interior. This is required by the Geospatial Data Act of 2018, which is part of Public Law 115-254, specifically in Subtitle F (Geospatial Data), sections 751-759C (codified at [43 U.S.C. §§ 2801–2811](#)).

Include Metadata: Your Geographic Information Systems (GIS) files must include complete metadata. Metadata is information that describes the data, such as where it came from, how accurate it is, and how it should be used. This is to ensure that anyone using the data understands its context and quality.

Check for Existing Data: Before you start collecting new geospatial data, you need to check GeoPlatform.gov. This is to see if there is already existing geospatial data from federal, state, local, or private sources that can meet your needs and is available for free. If such data is available, you should use it instead of gathering new data.

These rules help ensure that geospatial data is reliable, high-quality, and that resources are used efficiently.

Intangible Property

Title to intangible property acquired under this agreement vests upon acquisition with the Recipient, however Reclamation reserves the right to obtain, publish, reproduce, or otherwise use and authorize others to use for Federal purposes in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200.315](#).

Real Property

Real property, equipment, and intangible property that is acquired or improved with a Federal award must be held in trust by the recipient as trustee for the beneficiaries of the project or program under which the property was acquired or improved, per [2 CFR §200.316](#). Title to real property acquired or improved under a Federal award will vest upon acquisition in the recipient. Except as otherwise provided by Federal statutes or by the Federal awarding agency, real property will be used for the originally authorized purpose as long as needed for that purpose, during which time the recipient must not dispose of or encumber its title or other interests. When real property is no longer needed for the originally authorized purpose, the recipient must obtain disposition instructions from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Please note that any application submitted for funding under this NOFO may be subjected to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request (5 U.S.C. §552, as amended by P.L. No. 110-175),

and as a result, may be made publicly available.

In response to a FOIA request for research data relating to published research findings produced under a Federal award that were used by the Federal Government in developing an agency action that has the force and effect of law, the Federal awarding agency must request, and the recipient must provide, within a reasonable time, the research data so that they can be made available to the public through the procedures established under the FOIA.

Reporting

The recipient's Notice of Award will detail all reporting requirements, including frequency, due dates, and instructions for requesting extensions. In general, but not limited to, recipients must:

- Submit Federal Financial reports and Program Performance reports.
- Use the [Federal Financial Report \(SF-425\) form](#) for financial reporting,
- Monitor award activities and report on program performance per [2 CFR 200.329](#),
- Promptly notify the awarding program in writing of any issues, delays, or conditions impairing award objectives per [2 CFR 200.329\(e\)](#),
- Disclose any conflicts of interest related to their award that arise during the award period per [2 CFR 1402.112](#),
- Report on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest per [2 CFR 200.330](#), and
- Report all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award per [2 CFR 200.113](#).
- Report any matters related to recipient integrity and performance to SAM.gov per [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).
- If the Federal share of the award is more than \$100,000 and the recipient makes or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection to the award, disclose those activities using the Disclosure of Lobbying (SF-LLL) form per [43 CFR 18.100](#).
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) and 2 CFR 170 requires certain recipients to report information on executive compensation, and information on all sub-awards, subcontracts and consortiums equal to or over \$30,000 to SAM.gov.

Recipients will use a provided template and provide their final report in a Microsoft Word document. Recipients will address review comments from Reclamation in a timely manner for Reclamation to publish. Note that final project reports are public documents and will be made available on Reclamation's website.

- Recipients of Reclamation awards must include the following information in performance reports:
 - a comparison of actual accomplishments to the milestones established by the financial assistance agreement for the period,
 - the reasons why the project did not meet established milestones, if applicable,
 - the status of milestones not met from the previous reporting period, if applicable,
 - whether the project is on schedule and within the original cost estimate, and

- any additional pertinent information or issues related to the status of the project.

Other Information