

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Applications Due: **Friday, August 14, 2026**



Office of Water

Technical Assistance and Training for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-OW-OWM-26-01



Contents

1.	Basic Information	1
	A. Executive Summary	1
	B. Key Information	1
	C. Key Dates	2
	D. Funding Details	2
	E. Agency Contact Information	2
	F. Other Funding Considerations.....	3
2.	Eligibility.....	3
	A. Eligible Applicants.....	3
	(1) Other Eligibility Requirements.....	4
	B. Cost Sharing	4
3.	Program Description	5
	A. Purpose, Priorities, and Activities.....	5
	B. Program Goals and Objectives.....	18
	C. Statutory Authority	18
	D. Funding Type.....	19
4.	Application Contents and Format	19
	A. Application Forms	19
	B. Project Narrative Description.....	20
	C. Applicants Using Contractors.....	22
	D. Release Copies of Applications	23
	E. Coalition Coverage	23
	F. Other Program Specific Application Information	23
5.	Submission Requirements and Deadlines.....	24
	A. Submission Dates and Times	24
	B. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)	24
	C. Submission Instructions	24
	D. Technical Issues with Submission	25
	E. Intergovernmental Review	25
6.	Application Review Information.....	25
	A. Responsiveness Review	25
	B. Review Criteria.....	25
	C. Review and Selection Process.....	28
	Other Evaluation Factors	29
	D. Risk Review	29
7.	Award Notices.....	29
8.	Post-Award Requirements and Administration	30
	A. Administrative and National Policy Requirements	30

B. Reporting	30
C. Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting	30
9. Other Information.....	30
A. Additional Provisions for Applicants.....	30

1. Basic Information

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Office of Water

Technical Assistance and Training for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems

For more information visit our website [here](#).

A. Executive Summary

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is soliciting applications under the authority of the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 104(b)(8) to provide Technical Assistance and Training for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems. The program supports small, rural, and Tribal communities' efforts to identify water challenges, develop plans, build technical, financial, and managerial capacity, comply with CWA requirements, and access water infrastructure funding.

Through this Notice of Funding Opportunity under the Clean Water Act, EPA will achieve greater protection of public health and the environment through an increase in trained water sector personnel, access to funding and financing for wastewater treatment facilities, and Clean Water Act compliance. This action advances the Administration's priorities, including to Make America Healthy Again, by improving water quality and reducing exposure risks, and enabling responsible economic growth for small, rural, and tribal communities through improved wastewater infrastructure. In partnership with States, Tribes, and local governments and grounded in sound science and the law, EPA will deliver cleaner water, stronger infrastructure, and long-term environmental stewardship for all Americans.

The proposed activities support the Agency's [Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative](#)'s Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American. Priority Areas identified in this opportunity are:

- (1) Technical assistance and training for rural, small, and Tribal municipalities for planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funding for eligible projects and activities.
 - Technical assistance and training for rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater systems to help improve water quality and to achieve and maintain compliance.
- (2) Technical assistance and training focused specifically on Tribes for planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funding, to help improve water quality and achieve and maintain compliance, and/or to support emerging contaminants project development.
- (3) Information dissemination, technical assistance and training focused specifically on decentralized wastewater treatment systems to support planning, development and acquisition of financing.

B. Key Information:

Opportunity Number:

EPA-OW-OWM-26-01

Assistance Listing:

66.446

Announcement Type:

Initial

Funding Available:

\$25,500,000

Number of Awards:

6-12

Eligible entities for this grant program include nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education that can provide technical assistance and training to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, publicly owned wastewater treatment works, and decentralized wastewater treatment systems. Assisting systems with their technical, managerial, and financial capacity to achieve long-term compliance is a key priority for the Agency. Infrastructure construction projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting, or rehabilitating existing equipment are not eligible for funding under this announcement.

C. Key Dates:

July 13, 2026 2:00 pm ET	Webinar
August 14, 2026 11:59 pm ET	Application Submission Deadline
November 2026	Anticipated Notification of Selection
February 2027	Anticipated Award Notification

D. Funding Details:

It is anticipated that up to **12 awards** will be made under this announcement. The amount of funding is expected to be between \$1,000,000 and \$3,000,000 per award, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. Awards funded under this opportunity are expected to have a one-to-three year project period.

E. Agency Contact Information:

Further information, if needed, may be obtained from the EPA contact(s) indicated below.

Technical Contact:	Grace Persico; RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov
Eligibility Contact:	Grace Persico; RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov
Electronic Submissions Contact:	Grants.gov: support@grants.gov; 1-800-518-4726

Note to Applicants: In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1) and 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 any of the language or provisions in the announcement. In accordance with the Policy, EPA cannot 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. Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified above as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be clarified prior to submitting a proposal. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination.

Questions about this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified above by 11:59 PM Eastern Time, July 31, 2026 and written responses will be posted on [EPA's website](#). Please note answers to frequently asked questions

(FAQs), including relevant definitions, are available at [the same website](#). EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

F. Other Funding Considerations

Up to \$25,500,000 may be awarded under this NOFO, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, satisfactory performance of work, and other applicable considerations. Funding each year is not guaranteed. See the table below for anticipated funding levels by priority area.

Priority Area	# Of Awards Anticipated	Funding Range/Award	Funding Available
1. Acquisition of Finance/Funding	2-3 awards	\$1,000,000-\$3,000,000	\$7 million
2. Protect Water Quality and Compliance Assistance	2-4 awards	\$1,000,000-\$3,000,000	\$10 million
3. Tribal	1-3 awards	\$1,000,000-\$2,000,000	\$4.25 million
4. Decentralized	1-3 awards	\$1,000,000-\$2,000,000	\$4.25 million

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 was evaluated and selected for award to maintain the integrity of the competition and selection process.

Selection or award of funding under this NOFO is not a guarantee of future funding. EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

2. Eligibility

A. Eligible Applicants

Only these types of organizations may apply:

- [Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\)](#).
- [Nonprofit organizations](#).

Assistance under this program is available to public or private nonprofit organizations, subject to CWA 104(w), and the regulations at 2 CFR 200. Nonprofit organization, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, means any organization that: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the organization's operations. Note that 2 CFR Part 200 specifically excludes the following types of organizations from the definition of nonprofit organization because they

are separately defined in the regulation: (i) institutions of higher education - Institutions of Higher Education are defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001. Nonetheless, institutions of higher education who otherwise qualify as nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply as indicated in the Office of Management and Budget's July 2017 Frequent Questions on the Uniform Grant Guidance. Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in prohibited lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations and hospitals are not eligible.

(1) Other Eligibility Requirements

Applications must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered eligible:

1. Eligible activities include technical assistance and training only. Infrastructure construction projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting or rehabilitating existing equipment are not eligible for funding under this announcement.
2. An applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in Section 2 of this announcement at the time of application submission. Please see [Section 6](#) for additional threshold criteria.
3. Under this competition, only one application may be submitted for each Priority Area per applicant. If an applicant submits more than one application for a single Priority Area, EPA will contact them before the review process begins to determine which application(s) will be withdrawn. If the applicant is unable to communicate a decision within two business days of being contacted by the EPA, the EPA will accept the application received by Grants.gov first. Additional information regarding the one application per applicant requirement may be found in the [FAQ document](#)

Applications must address the requirements in the Priority Area for which they are applying, and all five project narrative components listed in Section 3.B.

B. Cost Sharing

Any cost share proposed by an applicant is voluntary. Applicants will not be scored or evaluated solely on the inclusion of voluntary committed cost share if they choose to propose it.

Voluntary committed cost sharing is a binding requirement of Federal award. Applicants who propose voluntary cost share must include the costs/contributions on the SF-424, SF-424A Budget Information form, and Budget Detail.

If an applicant proposes voluntary cost share the following apply:

1. A voluntary committed cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations ([2 CFR 200.306](#)).
2. A voluntary committed cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
3. The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.
4. The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved budget.

3. Program Description

A. Purpose, Priorities, and Activities

Purpose:

EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants for projects in four Priority Areas as discussed in further detail below. While EPA expects to make at least one award in each area, there is no guarantee that this will be done, and EPA may redistribute the awards per area based on the quality of applications received and other applicable considerations. The first Priority Area is to provide technical assistance and training to assist rural, small and Tribal municipalities with planning, developing, and acquiring funding/financing of eligible projects described in [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(c)] so that they can achieve and maintain compliance with the CWA and to build their financial and managerial capacity over the long term. The second Priority Area is to provide technical assistance and training to assist small, rural, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works or decentralized wastewater systems with improving water quality and achieving and maintaining compliance, ensuring sustained operations and maintenance over the long run. For the third Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications to provide technical assistance and training for Tribal communities to support them with planning and acquiring financing, and achieving and maintaining Clean Water Act Compliance. The fourth Priority Area is to provide technical assistance and training activities specifically and exclusively for decentralized systems to support them with planning and acquiring financing, and for technical, managerial, and financial capacity building.

Technical assistance and training activities provided to these systems, communities, and decentralized system owners should be made available nationally in rural and urban communities and to all personnel of these systems, including personnel of tribally owned and -operated systems. Eligible activities include technical assistance and training only. Infrastructure projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting or rehabilitating existing equipment, are not eligible for funding under this announcement.

The proposed activities support the Agency's Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative's Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American.

This program funds Clean Water technical assistance providers who will provide support to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities and governments to return to compliance and to secure financing and funding for their Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF) eligible projects, though applicants may support communities in applying for other financing and funding besides the CWSRF. The program supports these communities with protecting and maintaining water quality compliance while also tackling long-standing water quality and water infrastructure challenges.

Priority Areas: The EPA's Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) mission is to protect public health and the environment by supporting the Clean Water Act and related statutes. OWM promotes effective and responsible wastewater treatment, disposal, infrastructure, and management and by encouraging the protection and restoration of watersheds. Awards made through this funding opportunity will increase the ability of Americans to access clean and safe water and strengthen water infrastructure. Activities will ensure that wastewater facilities and systems can be operated in a safe and efficient manner. These efforts should aim for measurable results, clearly showing tangible benefits in communities.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity is being offered under Federal Assistance Listing 66.446.

Each narrative must address the following five sections.

- **1. Priority Areas:** Each application must explicitly identify and thoroughly address one and only one of the Priority Areas listed in Section 3.A.(1).
- **2. Geographic Area and Targeted Municipalities and Systems:** Applications should clearly describe the specific geographic scope of the proposed work (e.g., whether it will be regional, state-wide, multi-state, national or other as appropriate) and the rural, small and/or Tribal municipalities and treatment systems being targeted for technical assistance and training. The EPA seeks applications that provide both national and regional support to effectively address the program's objectives. Applicants should provide a rationale for the targeted geographic area and why they are well qualified and positioned to support municipalities and systems in this area. Applicants should describe factors to identify municipalities and/or systems that are in the greatest need of receiving information (e.g., permit violations, future permit limits, wastewater or decentralized infrastructure needs, etc.). The description should include the applicant's qualifications for working with such systems and any prior relevant experience.

If Tribally-owned treatment works or decentralized water systems are a focus of the proposed work, applicants should describe how they will reach out to those entities in the defined geographic area and how they will provide technical assistance and training to these systems. Applicants can either generally describe types of municipalities and systems they will support in their geographic area and/or they can provide the specific names of the municipalities, Tribes, and systems. Applicants should identify communities with which they have current or recent experience working within their targeted geographic area.

- **3. Technical Assistance and Training Approach:** Applicants should describe in detail their existing experience and proposed approach for providing technical assistance and training to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, treatment works and/or communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment systems in the targeted geographic area.

Applicants should describe a thorough and flexible approach that tailors the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience identified in the application. There should be a stronger emphasis on providing technical assistance aimed at helping regulated entities return to compliance, along with efforts to connect these entities to EPA funding programs and other financing options that address water quality and/or water infrastructure challenges. There should be a stronger focus on technical assistance than training within the proposed activities. The application should describe the applicant's proposed strategies to identify and work with rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, treatment works and/or communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment systems. The application should discuss how the applicant will use the most appropriate techniques to address the needs of rural, small and Tribal communities that have wastewater and/or decentralized system concerns. For example, different approaches may be appropriate for publicly owned treatment works versus decentralized wastewater treatment systems. Likewise, within the targeted

communities and defined geographic area, unique needs or issues may differ for audiences based on location, system-type, experience or level, or other factors.

Applicants should describe their relevant experience in providing technical assistance towards projects for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution, including specific examples relevant to the application priority area. Examples of relevant experience may include but are not limited to:

- Ability to engage with and provide technical assistance to rural, small and/or Tribal communities
- Wastewater treatment operation or construction, such as primary and secondary treatment, advanced treatment, sewer system, combined sewer overflow correction
- Onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment systems maintenance
- Sewer collection systems evaluation surveys
- Planning and assessment, such as feasibility studies, asset management, and capital improvement plans
- Project development, such as preparation of preliminary engineering reports and environmental reviews
- Applying for funding and financing, such as rates and revenue analysis and financial planning
- Program management support, such as bid support and domestic preference and Davis-Bacon assistance
- Other relevant CWSRF eligible projects as noted in [Clean Water State Revolving Fund Eligibilities](#).

The applicant should identify and use existing publicly available technical assistance and training materials for the rural, small, and Tribal communities in their geographic area to build on proven best practices and to increase efficiencies of grant funds awarded. The applicant should take into consideration how state and local regulations and policies impact the accessibility of financing/funding or the implementation of national standards in the targeted geographic area.

Technical assistance and training approaches identified in the application may take different forms, including face-to-face and on-site technical assistance or training, or remote training. The applicant should disseminate information to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities and municipalities that meet the affordability criteria established under [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(i)(2)] by the State in which the municipality is located with respect to planning, design, construction, and operation of publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems. Face-to-face training may include but is not limited to classroom training, workshops, system site visits and circuit-riders to provide on-site technical assistance to individual systems. Remote technical assistance and training which may include but is not limited to webcasts, video conferencing, hotlines, online courses, and other forms of distance learning.

Applicants should indicate in their applications an estimate as to what portion of the technical assistance and training would be on-site face-to-face and what portion would be remote. There should be a stronger emphasis on providing technical assistance aimed at

helping regulated entities return to compliance, along with efforts to connect these entities to EPA funding programs and other financing options that address water quality and/or water infrastructure challenges. No applications should be limited to training only.

The applicant should provide an estimate of the number of technical assistance and training activities throughout the project period, as well as the types of technical assistance and training activities that are projected to be offered within the geographic area based on the specific need(s) in the area. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible (e.g., 5 site visits to conduct a wastewater needs assessment; 10 operation and maintenance trainings for Tribal communities; etc.).

- **4. Consultation and Coordination with State, Territorial and Tribal Governments:** Consultation and communication with the appropriate state, territory, local, and/or Tribal government authorities is required.

Communication with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), other funding sources as applicable, and/or the territory or Tribal funding authorities is required for applications that address planning, development, and acquisition of financing. Applications must include a description of the process to notify CWSRF programs and/or Tribal and territorial funding authorities. The CWSRF state contacts can be found at [State CWSRF Program Contacts](#).

Likewise, the applications must include a description of the process to communicate with the appropriate regulatory authority (such as the state or territorial primacy agency or EPA regional direct implementation coordinator) in each state, Tribe, or territory in which the assistance is to be provided. The EPA issues all National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories (except the U.S. Virgin Islands), and on most federal and Tribal lands. Other states have been delegated authority by the EPA to issue their own permits. Applicants should describe a plan to regularly communicate with their local state and/or EPA regional NPDES program; further details may be found at [NPDES permits](#).

Applicants must indicate how they will:

- (i) notify the state, territory, or the EPA to identify communities, municipalities, Tribal governments, and systems in greatest need of assistance; and
- (ii) keep those agencies informed regarding the implementation and outcome of technical assistance and training activities.

Routine and regular communication with the EPA regional and state decentralized wastewater treatment system contacts is required when decentralized systems are supported. For a list of decentralized wastewater treatment system EPA regional contacts and State contacts, please visit: [Contact Us About Septic Systems](#).

Applications should also include a discussion of how the applicant will report on and disseminate results, effective compliance strategies and resources developed (such as tools, videos, and training materials) where the project is conducted and to entities similarly situated to those served by the project.

- **5. Partnerships:** Applicants are not required to identify partnerships but effective partnerships with other technical assistance providers and experienced professionals or organizations may be important for the success of projects. Applicants should identify

appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project and include a clear description of the roles of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components/tasks. If you choose not to partner, applications will be evaluated based on how the applicant demonstrates their ability to reach their objectives without the use of partners.

(1) Priority Areas

Priority Area 1 - Acquisition of Financing/Funding: Technical assistance and training for rural, small, and Tribal municipalities for planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funding for eligible projects and activities.

The goals of the technical assistance and training activities under this priority area are to assist rural, small and Tribal municipalities with planning, developing, and acquiring funding/financing of eligible projects described in [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(c)]. These activities should happen in consultation with states as appropriate. Providing technical assistance to obtain funding/financing can ultimately help communities or regulated entities protect water quality and/or comply with CWA requirements, while also tackling long-standing water quality and water infrastructure challenges. These efforts should aim for measurable results, clearly showing tangible benefits in communities.

Applications under Priority Area 1 should explicitly describe the approach to provide technical assistance to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities to acquire funding/financing. Applicants should specifically describe their approach to increase the number of applications submitted for funding through their technical assistance and training activities. Applicants must state their defined geographic area and describe the process of consultation with the state, Tribes, or territories to identify priorities and targeted communities for technical assistance and training in the defined geographic area.

Rural, small, and Tribal wastewater systems often common face financial challenges in maintaining their infrastructure and meeting compliance requirements. These challenges include but are not limited to: (1) lack of adequate revenue or access to financing; (2) aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance yielding more emergency repairs; (3) lack of planning for infrastructure upgrades or the ability to respond to and recover from natural disasters (e.g., floods or tornadoes); and (4) difficulty meeting existing or new regulatory requirements and affording appropriate treatment technologies. As a result, some systems may experience frequent or long-term compliance challenges, while others may be in compliance now but lack the financial and funding capacity to maintain compliance.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to help communities build their technical, managerial and financial capacity to address current compliance needs and to achieve long-term sustainability of their infrastructure. Technical capacity refers to the physical infrastructure of the system, including, but not limited to, the adequacy of the system's infrastructure (i.e., treatment, pumping, and collection) and the ability of system personnel to adequately operate and maintain the system and to apply necessary technical knowledge (e.g., certified operators). Managerial capacity refers to the management structure and practices of the system, including, but not limited to, ownership accountability, staffing and organization, and effective linkages and communication with customers and regulatory agencies. Financial capacity refers to the financial resources of the community, including, but not limited to, revenue sufficiency, user rate-setting,

rate collection, non-payment shut-off policies, creditworthiness, fiscal controls, operational budgeting, and planning.

Technical assistance and training for the planning, development, and acquisition of financing can assist the communities to access funding for the range of projects and activities that are described under the CWSRF program. However, applicants may support communities in applying for other financing and funding besides the CWSRF. Table 1 below provides a summary of eligible technical assistance activities to assist municipalities for acquisition of financing and funding. [A more detailed description of CWSRF eligible activities is available.](#) The applicant can provide any of the types of technical assistance described below as best meets the needs of the community in the targeted geographic area.

Table 1 Planning, Development and Acquisition of Financing/Funding	
Technical assistance can be provided to rural, small, and Tribal communities for the planning, developing, and acquisition of financing/funding:	
1	for the construction of publicly owned treatment works.
2	for the construction, repair, or replacement of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that treat municipal wastewater or domestic sewage.
3	for the implementation of nonpoint source management program plans established under Clean Water Act Section 319 .
4	for the development or implementation of Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans established under CWA Section 320 .
5	for measures to manage, reduce, treat, or recapture stormwater or subsurface drainage water.
6	for measures to reduce the demand for publicly owned treatment works capacity through water conservation, efficiency, or reuse.
7	for watershed projects meeting the criteria in CWA Section 122 .
8	for measures to increase energy efficiency for publicly owned treatment works.
9	for projects for reusing or recycling wastewater, stormwater, or subsurface drainage water.
10	for measures to increase the security of publicly owned treatment works.

Examples of eligible Priority Area 1 activities include but are not limited to:

- Provide technical assistance and training regarding a project’s (or projects’) inclusion on state Intended Use Plans (IUPs) for the CWSRF program, or funding from other funding programs, and support with funding application submission.
- Provide technical assistance to publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems by conducting analyses on the potential benefits of partnerships and collaboration with other systems.
- Provide technical assistance and training to improve the knowledge and skill competency of wastewater system personnel in the areas of managerial and financial capacity.
- Provide technical assistance and training on planning, design, and project development activities with the intention of receiving funding applications. This includes development of preliminary engineering reports, facilities plans and specifications.

- Provide technical assistance to municipalities to find available financing for water harvesting and water reuse, water audits, and water conservation plans reasonably expected to result in a capital project.
- Provide technical assistance to municipalities to find available financing for stormwater infrastructure projects, including infrastructure that use filtration, infiltration, and evapotranspiration to treat and soak up rainwater where it falls and support with funding application submission.
- Provide training sessions for managers and board members in asset management, fiscal planning, communicating effectively with system customers, and other sustainable management topics.
- Provide technical assistance and training to develop financial assessments and rate analyses.
- Provide technical assistance and training on workforce development.

The EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 1 must address Section 4.B. Project Narrative Components. All eligible applications under Priority Area 1 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6 including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 1 is addressed.

Priority Area 2 - Protect Water Quality and Compliance Assistance: Technical assistance and training for rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater systems to help improve water quality and to achieve and maintain compliance.

The goals of the technical assistance and training activities under this priority area are to assist small, rural, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works or decentralized wastewater systems with improving water quality and achieving and maintaining compliance, ensuring sustained operations and maintenance over the long run. The proposed activities should focus on providing technical assistance that emphasizes helping regulated entities achieve compliance and stay there, while also tackling long-standing water quality and water infrastructure challenges. These efforts should aim for measurable results, clearly showing tangible benefits in communities.

Rural, small, and Tribal wastewater systems often face common challenges including: (1) a lack of expertise to assess current operations and identify short- and long-term opportunities for improvement; (2) frequent turnover of operations personnel; (3) personnel who lack necessary technical, financial or managerial skills; (4) limited rate bases; (5) aging infrastructure; (6) lack of knowledge of existing or new regulatory and permit requirements; and (7) lack of knowledge of newer techniques to reduce discharges, assess and improve operations, and analyze infrastructure alternatives to meet wastewater quality goals.

For this Priority Area, applicants should describe their proposed approach for providing technical assistance and training for personnel who operate or manage small, rural, and Tribal systems (including decision makers such as trustees, board members, or system owners). Applicants should also describe how they intend to strengthen the technical, financial, and managerial capacity of personnel and enable them to comply with the regulatory requirements applicable to their system. Technical capacity refers to the physical infrastructure of the system, including, but not limited to the adequacy of the system's infrastructure (i.e., treatment, pumping, and

collection) and the ability of system personnel to adequately operate and maintain the system and to apply necessary technical knowledge (e.g., certified operators). Managerial capacity refers to the management structure and practices of the system, including, but not limited to, ownership accountability, staffing and organization, and effective linkages and communication with customers and regulatory agencies. Financial capacity refers to the financial resources of the community, including, but not limited to, revenue sufficiency, user rate-setting, rate collection, non-payment shut-off policies, creditworthiness, fiscal controls, operational budgeting, and planning.

Applicants must state their defined geographic area and should describe the process of consultation with relevant parties to identify priorities and targeted communities for technical assistance and training in the defined geographic area and for identifying the communities most in need of technical assistance and training

Examples of eligible Priority Area 2 activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide on-site technical assistance or training to diagnose and trouble-shoot system operational and compliance-related problems and identify solutions.
- Provide training to decision makers and board members on CWA requirements and their responsibilities.
- Provide technical assistance/training to improve operation and maintenance performance at local facilities or local lagoon facilities (e.g., assessment of the system's overall strengths and areas for improvement, asset management, energy management, extreme weather, natural hazard and security risk assessment and risk mitigation, rate design, communications with local officials, effective utility management, and training on nutrient removal technology).
- Provide training on reviewing existing operation and maintenance plans, practices, and resources (i.e. financial, workforce, etc.) and develop improvement recommendations to ensure those plans enable municipalities to maintain compliance with the Clean Water Act.
- Provide technical assistance by supporting the development of asset management plans, which support compliance by optimizing resource allocation, improving system reliability, and enhancing decision-making through preventive maintenance and data-driven strategies.
- Provide training on operator certification and continuing education units (CEUs). Applicants should describe how they will obtain state approval for CEU credits for their training courses.
- Provide technical assistance to decentralized systems on forming Responsible Management Entities (RMEs) developing long-term business plan(s).
- Provide one-to-one technical assistance and/or develop a regular schedule of visits or circuit rider program to rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoons facing non-compliance issues.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 2 must address Section 4.B Project Narrative Components. All

eligible applications under Priority Area 2 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6 including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 2 is addressed.

Priority Area 3 - Tribal:

Technical assistance and training focused specifically on Tribes for planning, developing and acquisition of financing/funding, to help improve water quality and achieve and maintain compliance, and/or to support emerging contaminants project development.

While the other Priority Areas in this announcement include Tribes, the goal of the technical assistance and training activities under this priority area specifically and exclusively targets Tribal needs to support them with planning and acquiring financing, and achieving and maintaining Clean Water Act Compliance.

The EPA is committed to (1) upholding the United States' trust responsibility to federally recognized¹ American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages and (2) supporting Tribal nations as they protect and steward their waters.

Due to a variety of factors, Tribal communities are more likely than other populations in the United States to lack access to adequate wastewater services. To ensure success, Tribal water infrastructure programs need resources and support to build technical, managerial, and financial capacity of their wastewater systems.

Applicants must state their defined geographic area and describe the process of coordination with Tribes, the Indian Health Service, and EPA Regions for technical assistance and training in the defined geographic area.

Examples of eligible Priority Area 3 activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Provide training on Clean Water Indian Set Aside, Indian Health Service, CWSRF and other Tribal specific funding information.
- Perform on-site technical assistance or trainings that focus on improving performance (e.g., training on nutrient removal technologies, asset management, development of maintenance schedules, rate structures, extreme weather, natural hazards, security risk assessment and risk mitigation, energy efficiency opportunities, and assessments of proper management of small publicly owned treatment works).
- Provide technical assistance for publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment system personnel in the areas of technical, managerial, and financial capacity.
- Provide operator technical assistance and training on Clean Water Act compliance.
- Provide technical assistance via creation of preliminary engineering evaluations to assess topics such as wastewater treatment, storage, conveyance systems, and identify low-cost alternative analyses, innovative technologies and management techniques.
- Provide training on reviewing existing operation and maintenance plans, practices, and

¹ In 1994, Congress enacted Public Law 103-454, the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (108 Stat. 4791, 4792), which formally established three ways in which an Indian group may become federally recognized: (1) by Act of Congress, (2) by the administrative procedures under 25 C.F.R. Part 83, or (3) by decision of a United States court. See <https://www.bia.gov/faqs/how-federal-recognition-status-conferred>

resources (i.e. financial, workforce, etc.) and develop improvement recommendations to ensure those plans enable municipalities to maintain compliance with the Clean Water Act.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 3 must address Section 4.B Project Narrative Components. All eligible applications under Priority Area 3 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6 including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 3 is addressed.

**Priority Area 4 - Decentralized Systems:
Information Dissemination, Technical Assistance and Training focused specifically on decentralized wastewater treatment systems to support planning, development and acquisition of financing.**

While the other Priority Areas in this announcement encourage interested applicants to support decentralized systems in their defined geographic area, the goals of the technical assistance and training activities of this priority area specifically and exclusively targets decentralized community needs to support them with planning and acquiring financing, and for technical, managerial, and financial capacity building. Applicants should ensure that organizations develop long-term operation and maintenance plans enabling systems to operate as designed during the planned life of the infrastructure.

Decentralized wastewater treatment systems such as septic or small community cluster systems, are used to treat and dispose of small volumes of wastewater onsite, usually from houses and businesses located in suburban and rural locations not served by a centralized public sewer system. Septic systems treat wastewater from household plumbing fixtures (e.g., toilet, shower, laundry, etc.) through both natural and technological processes. Decentralized wastewater treatment systems may face significant maintenance and management challenges, ultimately impacting human and environmental health. Many of these issues fall into several categories: (1) lack of information on system location, performance, age, maintenance history; (2) improper design or siting; (3) lack of owner knowledge of proper preventative maintenance techniques; (4) lack of long-term management; and (5) lack of owner/service provider knowledge of advanced treatment and dispersal technologies.

Approximately one in five households in the United States depend on individual onsite or small community cluster systems (decentralized wastewater treatment systems) to treat their wastewater. Homeowners face many challenges in maintaining their wastewater treatment and commonly have difficulty obtaining the assistance needed to keep their systems in good working order. These challenges often include lack of information about resources and a need for technical assistance on:

- Decentralized wastewater treatment system ownership, system construction, operation, maintenance, and/or testing;
- Local and state health regulations;
- Local water quality and quantity concerns; and/or
- Emergency contacts and procedures.

Applicants must state their defined geographic area and describe the process of consultation with the state, Tribes, or territories and local decentralized regulatory entities to identify priorities and targeted communities for technical assistance and training in the defined geographic area,

Examples of Priority Area 4 activities include but are not limited to:

- Provide training on accessing funds for communities with decentralized wastewater system projects, specifically on getting onto state CWSRF IUPs.
- Provide communities support with project planning, siting, and design.
- Provide technical assistance and training to communities in establishing RMEs and supporting their long-term viability. Information can be found at [Using Responsible Management Entity](#) and the [Handbook for Managing Onsite and Clustered Systems](#).
- Provide training to leaders, service providers, and regulatory officials to assist in consideration of funding access/mechanisms, construction alternatives, highlighting the importance of maintenance and management, and to facilitate a properly trained workforce (e.g., certification of installers and operators).
 - Develop and/or provide information, technical assistance, and training to organizations that work with decentralized wastewater system owners (e.g., county public health offices).

The EPA also encourages applicants to propose additional types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this NOFO.

All applications under Priority Area 4 must address Section 4.B Project Narrative Components. All eligible applications under Priority Area 4 will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6 including how well and thoroughly Priority Area 4 is addressed.

(2) Environmental Results

Applicants are required to describe how funding will help EPA achieve outputs and outcomes under Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American, in their responses to the criteria in Section 6. Outputs and outcomes specific to each project will be identified as deliverables in the negotiated workplan if the application is selected for award. Recipients will be expected to report progress toward the attainment of expected project outputs and outcomes during the project performance period. Outputs and outcomes are defined as follows:

Outputs are an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided over time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during the project period. The expected outputs for the grants awarded under these guidelines may include but are not limited to:

Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 1 Acquisition of Financing may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased number of municipalities receiving support with applying for CWSRF funding and other sources of funding to improve and/or maintain compliance with the CWA.
- Increased number of rural, small, and/or Tribal municipalities; lagoons and/or decentralized wastewater projects are added to state IUPs.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoon wastewater treatment systems accessing infrastructure funding and technical assistance sources.
- Increased number of systems with on-site facility assessments and subsequent improvement

recommendations for funding consideration.

- Increased number of municipalities and systems receive engineering support for pre-project development, including development of reports for required funding applications.
- Increased number of rural, small and Tribal operators receiving technical assistance and training in financial and managerial capacity concepts and practices.

Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 2 Protect Water Quality and Compliance Assistance may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased number of systems achieving compliance with CWA requirements.
- Increased number of systems' personnel with skills to conduct diagnostic and troubleshooting analyses to determine factors affecting performance and compliance with NPDES permits.
- Increased number of systems with ability and resources to assess steps to mitigate extreme weather events, natural hazards, and security risks.
- Increased number of systems with updated operations and maintenance manuals.
- Increased number of system managers and operators receiving technical assistance and training in:
 - Regulatory requirements,
 - Basic wastewater system operations,
 - Asset management,
 - Extreme weather and natural hazard risk assessment and planning,
 - Effective utility management, and
 - Advanced treatment and process issues.
- Increased number of municipalities with training on decentralized RMEs.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that have been inventoried, inspected, or have maintenance schedules or manuals for new or upgraded systems.

Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 3 Tribal may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased number of Tribal wastewater systems' personnel with diagnostic and troubleshooting skills determine factors affecting performance and CWA compliance.
- Increased number of Tribal system managers and operators receiving technical assistance and training in:
 - Regulatory requirements,
 - Financial assistance (via both loan and grant programs),
 - Managerial capacity concepts and practices,
 - Wastewater system operations,
 - Asset management,
 - Risk assessment and planning,
 - Effective utility management, and
 - Advanced treatment and process issues.
- Increased number of Tribal decentralized wastewater treatment systems that have been inventoried, inspected, or have maintenance schedules or manuals for new or upgraded systems.
- Increased number of Tribal projects achieving Tier 1 (Ready to Fund) or Tier 2 (Engineering

Assessed) status.

Examples of anticipated outputs for Priority Area 4 Decentralized may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased number of municipalities receiving technical assistance to apply for and access funding for decentralized wastewater treatment system construction.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater projects/communities on the state CWSRF IUPs.
- Increased number of municipalities with training and knowledge of available infrastructure funding and financing resources for decentralized systems.
- Increased number of municipalities and systems that receive engineering support for pre-project development for decentralized systems.
- Increased number of municipalities' personnel with understanding and skills to develop competitive proposals for available funding and financing resources for decentralized systems.

Outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out the activities under the grant and may gauge a project's performance. Outcomes may be environmental, structural, health-related, or programmatic; must be qualitative or quantitative; and may not necessarily be achievable during the project period. EPA anticipates the following potential outcomes from the projects awarded under this announcement:

Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 1: Planning, Developing, and Acquisition of Financing/Funding, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities awarded financing and funds for clean water protections.
- Increased number of people in rural, small, and Tribal communities with enduring clean water infrastructure solutions.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems participating in water system partnerships, such as shared wastewater treatment and operators, restructuring, physical and/or managerial consolidation, or other collaboration or partnership actions with other systems.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal communities with lagoon wastewater treatment systems receiving infrastructure funding.

Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 2: Protect Water Quality and Achieve Clean, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned wastewater treatment systems and/or lagoon systems in compliance with CWA regulations.
- Fewer public health-related or public nuisance-related complaints or violations associated with malfunctioning decentralized wastewater treatment systems.
- Increased number of rural, small, and Tribal publicly owned treatment works that have improved their resiliency, developed infrastructure designed to perform and reduce negative impacts in extreme weather events and natural hazards.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that are managed under RMEs.

Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 3: Tribal, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased number of Tribal communities awarded adequate financing and funds for clean water protections.
- Increased number of wastewater (sewer) projects on the Indian Health Service’s Sanitation Deficiency System lists.
- Increased number of people in Tribal communities with enduring clean water infrastructure solutions.
- Increased number of Tribal publicly owned wastewater treatment systems in compliance with CWA regulations or making substantial progress toward compliance.
- Fewer public health-related or public nuisance-related complaints or violations associated with malfunctioning Tribal decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

Examples of anticipated outcomes for Priority Area 4: Decentralized, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased number of communities successfully accessing financing and funds for decentralized wastewater projects eligible under the CWSRF.
- Increased number of decentralized wastewater treatment systems that are managed under RMEs.
- Increased number of community leaders, service providers, and regulatory officials with the ability to assist homeowners to access funding for their decentralized systems and educate them on the importance of maintenance, management, etc.
- Increased number of private homeowners with well-performing decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

B. Program Goals and Objectives

The activities to be funded under this funding announcement support Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American. All applications must be for projects that support that pillar.

As part of the Project Narrative, an applicant will be required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to [support Pillar 1](#) and to the goals of: (i) assisting rural, small, and Tribal municipalities to access financing/funding; and/or (ii) enabling small publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment systems to achieve and maintain compliance with the CWA. In addition, applicants will have to describe their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes. Additional information regarding the EPA’s discussion of environmental results in terms of “outputs” and “outcomes” can be found at [Linking Assistance Agreements to Environmental Results](#) (see [EPA Order 5700.7A1](#), Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements).

C. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for the funds anticipated to be distributed under this announcement is Section 104(b)(8) of the Clean Water Act as codified by 33 U.S.C. § 1254, which authorizes the EPA to award grants:

“(1) to provide technical assistance to rural, small, and tribal municipalities for the

purpose of assisting, in consultation with the State in which the assistance is provided, such municipalities and tribal governments in the planning, developing, and acquisition of financing for eligible projects and activities described in [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(c)];

(2) to provide technical assistance and training for rural, small, and tribal publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems to enable such treatment works and systems to protect water quality and achieve and maintain compliance with the requirements of [the Clean Water Act]; and

(3) to disseminate information to rural, small, and tribal municipalities and municipalities that meet the affordability criteria established under [33 U.S.C. Section 1383(i)(2)] by the State in which the municipality is located with respect to planning, design, construction, and operation of publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems.”

D. Funding Type

It is anticipated that cooperative agreements will be funded under this funding opportunity.

Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work supported. Although the 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 proposed procurement;
- approving qualifications of key personnel (the EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and
- review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

The 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.

4. Application Contents and Format

A. Application Forms

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 Attachment Form: use this to submit your Project Narrative

Optional Documents:

6. Other Attachments Form- Biographical Sketches
7. Other Attachments Form- Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement, if applicable.

Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.

The Project Narrative must include the sections described in Section 4B of this announcement. The Project Narrative is limited to no more than twenty (20) typewritten, single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the cover page and executive summary. Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative. Do not use a “double column” (aka newspaper) format. Do not include more than one application in any file. Additional pages beyond the 20-page limit will not be considered. Please note that supporting materials, which are limited to biographical sketches and full resumes as described below, are not considered part of the Project Narrative and are not included within the page limit.

B. Project Narrative Description

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

- **Cover Page** (included in the page limit):
 - a. Project title;
 - b. Name of applicant;
 - c. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number);
 - d. Total project cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested and the total project cost).
 - e. The Priority Area addressed in the application. (If an applicant submits an application covering more than one Priority Area, it will be rejected.); and
 - f. The Geographic Scope of the Project
- **Executive Summary:** Provide a brief summary of the proposed project (should not exceed one page). This should include a brief description of the proposed project and the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.
- **Workplan:** The workplan must address the following sections and align with the review criteria in Section 6B, for a more detailed description of each section please refer to Section 3A of this NOFO.
 - a. Priority Area
 - b. Geographic Area and targeted municipalities and systems
 - c. Technical Assistance and training approach. Including overall approach, applicant ability and resources to provide services in your chosen geographic area, and approach for community identification.
 - d. Consultation and coordination with states, territories, and Tribal governments
 - e. Partnerships

- **Environmental Results and Measuring Progress:** Stated Objective/Link to EPA's Pillars - List the objective of the project and the linkage to support Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American
 - a. **Results of Activities (Outputs)** - Describe the anticipated products/results which are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project and describe an approach for tracking and reporting your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s); (examples of outputs can be found in Section 3.A.(2). of this announcement).
 - b. **Projected Environmental Improvement (Outcomes)** - List the anticipated environmental improvements that will be accomplished because of the project. These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment or public health which are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s); (examples of outcomes can be found in Section 3.A.(2). of this announcement).

- **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period (up to three years). The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks, number of technical assistance and training activities projected to be completed per quarter, and a timeframe for completing tasks and an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.

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

Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs and total costs. All subawardee funding should be in the "other" cost category. Describe itemized costs in enough detail for the EPA to determine the allowability of costs for each project component/task, as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs. Please see the EPA's [Budget Development Guidance](#) for additional information on preparing budget narratives, including a sample budget (Appendix 2), and the [Indirect Cost Guidance](#). [Please also reference the EPA's training modules on how to develop a budget.](#)

- **Programmatic Capability/Experience:**
 - a. **Organizational Experience** - Provide a brief description of your organization and experience related to the proposed project, including relevant examples, and your organization's infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
 - b. **Staff Expertise/Qualifications** - Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their experience/expertise/qualifications, knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state and local regulations and policies relevant to the selected priority

area. Some proposed activities may require applicants to have adequately licensed staff with the expertise necessary to provide services under this funding opportunity. For these, key personnel (and any proposed subcontractors) should hold appropriate, current professional licenses or certifications (e.g., Professional Engineer, certified operator) in good standing and relevant to the proposed activities. Include an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (based on 2,080 hours per year/FTE). A biographical sketch must be submitted for each major project manager, support staff member or other major project participant. Biographical sketches are not counted in the page limit. Full resumes may be included as an appendix to the application narrative and are not counted in the page limit.

- **Past Performance:** Briefly describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably the EPA agreements). Please describe:
 - a. Whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
 - b. Your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including submitting acceptable final technical reports.
 - c. How you documented and/or reported on whether you were making progress towards achieving the expected results (i.e., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If you were not making progress, please indicate whether, and how, you documented why not.

In evaluating an applicant's past performance, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from the EPA files and/or from current and prior federal agency grantors/cooperative agreements (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, please indicate this in the application, and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section 6.B. (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). Failure to provide any programmatic past performance or reporting information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, may result in a zero score for these factors (see also Section 6.B).

Note: The applicant should also provide in the Project Narrative any additional information, to the extent not already addressed above, that addresses the selection criteria in Section 6.B.

C. Applicants Using Contractors

Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the [procurement provisions](#) of the regulations at 2 CFR Part 200.

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. If an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application, it does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements.

The EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subrecipients and/or named contractor(s) during the application evaluation process unless the applicant provides documentation that it has complied with these requirements.

For additional guidance, applicants should review [EPA's Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#), [EPA's Subaward Policy](#), and [EPA's Subaward Policy Frequent Questions](#). The EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500, as well as the requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.321 and 40 CFR Part 33 Subpart C.

D. Release Copies of Applications

EPA recommends that applicants do not include confidential business information (CBI) in applications. However, if CBI is included, it will be treated in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B. Applicants must clearly indicate which portion(s) of their application they are claiming as CBI. EPA will evaluate such claims in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2. If no claim of confidentiality is made, information may be made available to the public by EPA without further notice to the applicant. See 40 CFR 2.203(a), 41 Fed. Reg. 36,907.

E. Coalition Coverage

A coalition is formed when two or more eligible applicants coordinate to submit a single application. Coalitions must identify which single eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will receive subawards from the recipient (the "pass-through entity"). The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to the EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in [2 CFR 200.1](#) and comply with the [EPA's Subaward Policy](#).

F. Other Program Specific Application Information

Quality Assurance/Quality Control: Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) (not included in the page limit):

Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) requirements are 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. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process. The 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 the EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. Contact the Agency Contact (See Section 1.E, above, for Agency Contact information) for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff person.

Successful applicants must ensure all water quality data generated in accordance with an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), 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. More information about WQX and WQXweb, including tutorials, can be found at the [EPA's Water Quality Data website](#).

5. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

A. Submission Dates and Times

Select date Letter of Intent or Preapplication Materials Deadline

Select date 11:59 pm ET Application Submission Deadline

Select date **Add local time** Application Submission Deadline (Local Time)

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

B. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. SAM.gov will provide a UEI for your organization, which is required to apply for grants using Grants.gov. To register, go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for the information you will need to register. Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements before applying for the award.

SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. [Begin that process today.](#)

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](#). You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Please visit [How to Register to Apply for Grants](#) for additional information.

C. Submission Instructions

You must submit your application through Grants.gov. See Section 5.B. above for information on getting registered.

Important tips:

- 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.
- See the Quick Start Guide for Applicants for instructions on how to submit.
- Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks.
- Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files.
- Your application must be submitted by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance.
- If you receive an error or the 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.
- See Grants.gov Errors for information on other Grants.gov errors.

- The UEI listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM.gov account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

D. 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:

- Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
- Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
- Send an email with Funding Opportunity Number (FON): **EPA-OW-OWM-26-01** in the subject line to RuralSmallTribalNOFO@epa.gov before the application deadline time and date and must include the following:
 - Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
 - Description of the issue
 - The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, the 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.

E. Intergovernmental Review

The application is not subject to Intergovernmental Review.

6. Application Review Information

A. Responsiveness Review

Applications must meet the eligibility requirements described in [Section 2](#) to be evaluated. Applicants not meeting these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will be notified within 15 calendar days of the determination.

- Applications must adhere to the page limit requirements. Any pages over the limit(s) in [Section 4](#) will not be reviewed.
- Initial applications must be submitted *on or before* the application deadline through Grants.gov or through limited circumstances as expressed in [Section 5](#). The EPA will not evaluate applications that are not submitted on time.
- *Technical difficulties applying:* Applicants having technical difficulties applying must contact the Grants.gov hotline at 1-800-518-4726 *and* then must email a PDF of the full application to the EPA contact listed in [Section 1](#). The submission must be received prior to the application deadline for consideration.

B. Review Criteria

All applications and workplans should align their proposed tasks with the criteria listed

below.	
Points	Evaluation Criteria
(50 points)	<p>1) Priority Area Technical Assistance and Training Approach</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing their chosen Priority Area (Section 3.A.(1).) and other Project Narrative Components described in Section 4.B. There should be a stronger focus on technical assistance than training within the proposed activities. In conducting this evaluation, applicants will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. their overall approach to addressing the Priority Area technical assistance and training requirements, including techniques and resources proposed to address the specific needs of the target audience identified in the application. (20 points) ii. its ability (including examples) and resources to provide technical assistance and training, including an emphasis on direct, on-site technical assistance, in the geographic scope defined in the proposal, and rationale for that geographic scope. (10 points) iii. their approach to identifying and reaching out to municipalities and/or systems that are in the greatest need of receiving assistance (e.g., permit violations, future permit limits, infrastructure needs, etc.). (10 points) iv. an effective process for consultation with the appropriate financing and/or regulatory authority in each state, Tribe, or territory prior to initiating technical assistance and training activities, and for keeping these authorities informed regarding the implementation and outcome of technical assistance and training activities. (5 points) v. a plan for partnership with other technical assistance providers or organizations in performing the project to implement the proposed project effectively and efficiently and that will result in a greater positive environmental impact from the applicant's project. Applicants that do not plan on collaborating with other groups in project performance will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such collaboration. (5 points)

<p>(10 points)</p>	<p>2) Environmental Results and Measuring Progress</p> <p>Applications and their workplans will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American described in Section 3.B. of this announcement. (5 points) ii. A sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section 3.A.2. of this announcement). (5 points)
<p>(10 points)</p>	<p>3) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, number of technical assistance and training activities projected to be completed per quarter, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (5 points) ii. The reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project narrative component/task. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are cost effective, reasonable, and allowable, including consideration of indirect/administrative costs. (5 points)
<p>(20 points)</p>	<p>4) Programmatic Capability/Experience</p> <p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Experience and examples with providing the specific Technical Assistance and Training activities required based on the Priority Area to which the applicant is applying. (10 points) ii. Organizational experience, including relevant examples, related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project. (5 points) iii. Staff expertise/qualifications/professional licensing, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state and local regulations and policies relevant to the technical assistance or training. (5 points)

(10 points)	<p>5) Past Performance</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 4.B. of the funding opportunity (5 points) (ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 4.B. of the funding opportunity 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 (5 points) <p>Note: The EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant under items (i) and (ii) of this criterion and may consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). 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 (items i and ii above—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.</p>
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Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capability to successfully perform the project as described in [Section 3](#) of this funding opportunity.

Only eligible entities whose applications meet the threshold criteria in [Section 2](#) of this announcement will be evaluated. **Applicants should explicitly address these criteria as part of their application package submittal in the project narrative.** Each application will be rated using a point system. Applications will be evaluated based on a total of 100 possible points.

C. Review and Selection Process

All applications will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section 2.A.1 of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

Panels comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications by each Priority Area based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section 6.B. Four separate ranking lists, one per Priority Area, will be developed based on the panel evaluations. The ranking list for each Priority Area will be provided to the Selection Official(s) who make(s) the final funding decisions.

As noted above, while the EPA intends to make awards in each Priority Area it reserves the right not to do so and to redistribute the number of awards per area.

New Recipient Set-Aside: To increase the number of grantees advancing improvements in technical assistance and training to rural, small, and Tribal municipalities, publicly owned wastewater treatment works, and decentralized wastewater treatment systems for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution, the EPA will reserve a portion of available funds for eligible applicants that have not received a Technical Assistance and Training for Rural, Small and Tribal Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Systems for Clean Water Act Prevention, Reduction, and Elimination of Pollution CWA 104(b)(8) award from EPA (see also Section V.B).

The EPA expects to select at least two new recipients for these funds. The actual number of projects awarded under the set-aside for applicants that have not received CWA 104(b)(8) awards from EPA may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, the EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number of awards under the set-aside.

Other Evaluation Factors

Final funding decisions will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decisions, the selection official may also consider the following factors: for each Priority Area, the Selection Official(s) will consider the application score/ranking and may also consider geographic distribution of funds and programmatic priorities such as ensuring that small systems receive technical assistance and training that facilitates compliance with important federal and state regulations.

D. Risk Review

The EPA will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov., when doing the risk review as required by [2 CFR 200.206](#).

7. Award Notices

The EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made by the Office of Wastewater Management. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by Grants Management and Business Operations Division. Selection does not guarantee an award will be made. Statutory authorization, funding, or other issues during the award process may affect the ability of the EPA to make an award. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms, which must be approved by the EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

8. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

A. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The recipient and any sub-recipient must comply with the applicable [General Terms and Conditions](#). These terms and conditions are in addition to the assurances and certifications made as part of the award, terms and conditions, and restrictions reflected on the official assistance award document.

Awards issued as a result of this funding opportunity are subject to the requirements of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; Title [2 CFR Part 200](#) and [2 CFR Part 1500](#).

B. Reporting

[EPA's General Terms and Conditions](#) in the Notice of Award will have information on performance and financial reports, including:

- How often you will report.
- Any required form or formatting.
- How to submit them.

C. Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires:

- Data entry at SAM.gov for all subawards and subcontracts issued for \$30,000 or more.
- Reporting executive compensation for both recipient and subaward organizations.

9. Other Information

A. Additional Provisions for Applicants

Additional provisions that apply this funding opportunity and/or awards made under this funding opportunity, can be found at [EPA NOFO Clauses](#). If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact to obtain the provisions.

Termination:

Consistent with 2 CFR 200.340, EPA may terminate awards made under this NOFO in part or its entirety:

(a) If a recipient or subrecipient fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the award, including statutory or regulatory requirements;

(b) With the consent of the recipient when both the recipient and the EPA agree upon the termination conditions, which include the effective date and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated;

(c) If a recipient sends the EPA a written notification of the reasons for such termination, the effective date, and in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated; however, if the EPA determines that the remaining portion of the Federal award will not accomplish the purposes for which the Federal award was made, the EPA may terminate the award in its entirety; or

(d) Pursuant to the terms and conditions specified in the Federal award.

(e) By the EPA or pass-through entity to the extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities.