

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Immediate Office

Funding Opportunity Title: Support to the National Tribal Water Council

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-OW-IO-23-01

Assistance Listing: 66.424, 66.436

Dates: The closing date and time for receipt of application submissions is **July 31, 2023 by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time (ET)**. Applications must be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.epa.gov/grants) no later than **11:59 PM ET July 31, 2023, in order to be considered for funding**. Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency contact identified in Section VII before **July 17, 2023**. Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at <https://www.epa.gov/tribalwater/request-applications-support-national-tribal-water-council>. Please note answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) are available at <https://www.epa.gov/tribalwater/request-applications-support-national-tribal-water-council>. EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs website prior to submitting a question.

COVID-19 Update: EPA is providing flexibilities to applicants experiencing challenges related to COVID-19. Please see the **Flexibilities Available to Organizations Impacted by COVID-19** clause in Section IV of [EPA's Solicitation Clauses](#).

Note to Applicants: Following EPA's evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s), including individual consultants, in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the Contracts and Subawards Provision found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. BACKGROUND

Currently, there are 574 distinct Indian tribal governments recognized as sovereign entities by the U.S. Government that use water resources for drinking, fishing and subsistence, transportation, ceremonial purposes, and more. Indian tribes are responsible for protecting and restoring thousands of square miles of rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands, as well as ground water. In addition, tribes living on or near the coast are largely dependent on coastal resources. Each tribe faces a set of challenges in protecting these resources and ensuring the health of their members and communities. Tribes have responsibilities and opportunities as environmental co-regulators under EPA statutes to play a major role in protecting the water resources vital to their existence, and many are seeking to develop comprehensive and effective water quality programs to improve and protect water quality on tribal lands.

To support and enhance tribal efforts, EPA's Office of Water has previously awarded cooperative agreements to establish and support a national council of tribal government representatives with technical expertise in tribal water programs that focus on water topics in Indian country consistent with the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), called the National Tribal Water Council (NTWC or the Council).

Over the last 17 years, the NTWC has operated to:

- Provide a unique platform to facilitate and enhance tribal participation, input, training, and information exchange among tribes, and operate as a network for tribes to build capacity to protect and restore water quality on tribal lands and increase tribal awareness on a wide variety of tribal water resource and watershed issues.
- Promote sharing of technical information and best management practices to improve and preserve water quality and provide adequate sanitation and safe drinking water in tribal communities.
- Identify and analyze high-priority, water-related issues, and actions from tribal perspectives.
- Encourage the development and enhancement of tribal water resource protection programs.
- Raise tribal water program issues to EPA and offer input on national water policy initiatives affecting tribes.

NTWC members are tribal government representatives with technical expertise in widely varied water programs, including ground and surface water protection, watershed management, water quality monitoring, water quality permitting, and the operation of wastewater facilities and drinking water systems. Members may also include other interested tribal representatives who are found to meet qualification requirements set by the [NTWC by-laws](#).

The membership of the Council supported by this cooperative agreement is expected to comprise 17 representatives from 17 federally recognized tribes or tribal organizations (i.e., one member to represent each of the 10 EPA Regions, and seven at-large members to represent additional tribes,

such as Alaska Native Villages and the Navajo Nation, consistent with the NTWC by-laws).

If requested, the Agency will provide the successful applicant with materials developed under previous cooperative agreements (i.e., materials developed with EPA funding as authorized by 2 CFR 200.315). For more information on the NTWC, please visit the National Tribal Water Council's website at: www.nau.edu/ntwc.

For the purposes of this announcement, the words "tribe" and its derivatives refer to Indian tribal entities identified as federally recognized by the United States Department of Interior, which includes tribes within the contiguous 48 states, and native entities within the state of Alaska (Alaska Native Villages and Alaska Tribes). The term "Indian country" means: (1) all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and including rights-of-way running throughout the reservation; (2) all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States, whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of the state; and (3) all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same.

B. PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

With this RFA, EPA is seeking applicants from eligible entities to conduct, coordinate, and promote the acceleration of research, studies, training, and demonstration projects that will support the participation of the NTWC and tribes to prevent, reduce, and eliminate pollution to waters and protect drinking water in Indian country. Applicants should describe an approach to maintain, support, and facilitate the operations of the NTWC, and assist in developing and completing projects in coordination with the NTWC related to protecting and restoring tribal water quality and providing wastewater sanitation under the CWA and protecting ground water and providing safe drinking water under the SDWA.

The scope of this work includes the following project elements: (1) support the operation of the Council as a national forum and network for tribal water managers, and provide logistical support so that the Council may interact with each other, with tribes, and directly with EPA (including supporting NTWC member travel-related expenses (e.g., airfare, hotel, and federal rate per diem) for participation at meetings as identified in the cooperative agreement); (2) assist the NTWC to promote technical water program-focused information exchange and sharing of best management practices for addressing water quality and drinking water concerns to tribes and EPA; (3) assist the NTWC to conduct outreach activities to benefit tribes on water resource protection and restoration topics; and (4) conduct studies in coordination with the NTWC that identify and analyze high priority, water-related issues and actions from tribal perspectives related to the SDWA and the CWA.

As part of its application, the successful applicant is expected to describe the technical approach for accomplishing the project elements described below. The project elements listed below provide some detail on roles and responsibilities the successful applicant may be expected to assume in carrying out specific work objectives under the cooperative agreement. The

description below does not attempt to be comprehensive, and applicants are encouraged to identify additional project elements (i.e., not included in this announcement) that may contribute to their overall vision for project success in their applications. However, the project elements will be used during the application review process (as indicated in the ranking criteria in Section V.A), and thus may provide guidance as applicants decide what activities will be needed to successfully meet the objectives described in this announcement.

Project Element 1: Support Operation and Logistics of the NTWC

The successful applicant will support the operation of the Council and logistics of the Council's actions as a national forum for interactions with tribes and EPA. The components of this project element may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Propose updates to the NTWC by-laws as necessary to ensure effectiveness in achieving NTWC goals and objectives.
- b. Support NTWC membership in consultation with the NTWC and EPA. Conduct the process for filling NTWC vacancies pursuant to the adopted by-laws. Select new members of the NTWC as needed to ensure the Council will adequately receive individual input from tribes nationally. The recipient will make the final decisions regarding the composition of the NTWC membership using criteria agreed upon by the NTWC and the EPA Project Officer. It is anticipated that the existing Council membership will continue to serve the length of their terms according to the current by-laws.
- c. Assist NTWC with planning meetings and developing meeting agendas in consultation with the NTWC and the EPA Project Officer. Support two face-to-face NTWC-EPA meetings per year (one in the Spring in Washington, DC, and one in the Fall). Applicants should describe their approach for identifying proposed locations for the Fall meetings in their applications.
- d. Support NTWC travel by making travel arrangements and provide funding for necessary travel-related expenses (e.g., airfare, hotel, and federal rate per diem) for NTWC members for the biannual face-to-face NTWC/EPA meetings.
 - i. Applicants should include in their description how they propose to support face-to-face meetings under normal circumstances and how they will support virtual meetings if face-to-face meetings are not possible due to impacts related to still present COVID-19 conditions (e.g., under quarantine situations, if social distancing is required in your locale). Alternatives to face-to-face meetings due to such impacts may include switching from in-person formats to online only.
 - ii. Funds awarded under this announcement may also be used by the recipient to support NTWC member travel-related expenses (e.g., airfare, hotel, and federal rate per diem) for participation at meetings identified in the cooperative agreement work plan, including NTWC member representation at relevant conferences and meetings to conduct tribal outreach, identify and address high priority tribal interest areas and technical analysis, and seek tribal input on or help to disseminate the results of studies in water-related areas.
 - iii. NTWC travel to relevant conferences and meetings must be for the purpose of

- meeting the objectives of this project and acquiring knowledge that will be disseminated back to the NTWC and more broadly to tribal water professionals. The recipient will decide which NTWC members receive travel assistance to specific relevant events (for examples of relevant events, see Section I.B, Project Element 2).
- iv. Applicants may propose to use a portion of the assistance funds to defray transportation and subsistence expenses for non-federal attendees to attend meetings and conferences. The applicant is solely responsible for determining a methodology for selecting and funding reimbursement requests and providing a report on how participating non-federal attendees benefited from the meetings and conferences. EPA will not participate in the selection or approval of individuals who receive travel assistance.
 - e. Provide technical and logistical support for NTWC periodic videoconferences, bi-annual face-to-face meetings, and periodic conference calls. This support may include, for example, serving as a meeting facilitator and disseminating information to NTWC member representatives; developing agendas; negotiating hotel, conference space, and transportation rates; and broadly disseminating NTWC products to exchange and bring new information or perspectives on issues related to ground, surface, and drinking water quality. In their applications, applicants should specify the proposed frequency of the videoconferences and conference calls and describe their approach to establishing the agenda. Although the successful applicant will consult with EPA's Project Officer on the agenda for the calls, the final decision on the agenda for the calls will be made by the recipient and the NTWC.

Project Element 2: Information Exchange

The successful applicant will assist the NTWC in promoting technical water-program focused information exchange and sharing of best management practices for addressing water quality and drinking water concerns to tribes and EPA. These efforts are intended to help create a broader understanding, among both tribal and non-tribal water professionals, and EPA, of the potential impacts of and solutions for existing and emerging water issues in Indian country. Information exchange may also promote educational opportunities for NTWC members. The components of this project element may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Facilitate NTWC involvement in relevant local and regional collaborative water protection efforts such as those covering the Great Lakes region, the Mississippi Basin and Gulf of Mexico, Puget Sound, the Everglades, and other Large Aquatic Ecosystems (See [EPA Learn About Water](#) for more information).
- b. Collaborate and help facilitate information exchange with other groups representing tribal interests in the federal/tribal co-regulator network including for example, the National Tribal Caucus, Regional Tribal Operations Committees, and other tribal organizations and committees, to promote networking and information exchange and to communicate national tribal water priorities. Support individual NTWC member's participation in tribal or EPA water program meetings and discussions to raise tribal issues, provide input, and exchange information.

- c. Support NTWC members in bringing new information or perspectives on water resource protection practices to tribes through formal presentations, informal discussions, and training sessions, including remote training mechanisms such as webinars. Assist NTWC with identifying the need for research, studies, training, and demonstration projects.
- d. Support learning opportunities to increase NTWC member knowledge on CWA and SDWA-related topics such as water quality monitoring technologies and sustainable drinking water treatment systems and stay current with emerging issues.
- e. Facilitate information exchange on water quality and drinking water topics with tribes and EPA through actions such as: (1) notifying tribes on high priority water issues and matters that may be appropriate for tribal consultation; (2) interacting directly with water professionals that have interests in tribal water resource protection issues at both the national and regional levels; (3) presenting specific water topics to a tribal audience to improve tribal understanding of water programs; (4) highlighting potential impacts of water issues in Indian country; (5) discussing/seeking input on tribal water studies; (6) providing water resource protection training; and (7) facilitating NTWC discussions with tribes on tribal compliance with the CWA and SDWA regulations governing water resources in a manner that is consistent with tribal sovereignty and tribal treaty rights.
- f. Help represent tribal perspectives on issues related to ground, surface, and drinking water quality.
- g. Provide technical analysis of water policy and regulatory actions.
- h. Seek non-consensus input from tribes and convey results of studies and best practices in Indian country.

Project Element 3: Outreach

The successful applicant will assist the NTWC to conduct outreach activities to benefit tribes on water resource protection and restoration topics. The components of this project element may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Determine the appropriate outreach or delivery of information mechanisms so that information can reach a broad tribal audience and facilitate the participation of interested tribes in EPA initiatives and actions. Examples include newsletters, information listservs, webinars, workshops, and forums or meetings open to general tribal participants.
- b. Disseminate information on priority topics relating to water quality and drinking water issues in Indian country through, for example, webinars
- c. Develop and maintain an updated website to foster communication where NTWC members and the public can obtain access to information about the NTWC, including research reports, studies, training course announcements, and the results of the NTWC meetings.
- d. Support the NTWC in outreach discussions with tribes, to obtain non-consensus tribal input on the development and implementation of national water policy initiatives, new regulations, strategic plans, or other identified priority actions identified by the NTWC that may impact tribes. Examples of identified priority actions could include water sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation plans.

Project Element 4: Studies

The successful applicant will conduct studies in support of, and in coordination with, the NTWC that identify and analyze high priority, water-related issues and actions from tribal perspectives related to the SDWA and CWA. The components of this project element may include, but are not limited to:

- a. To help guide its study support, in coordination with the NTWC, develop and maintain a list of high priority, tribal water-related program focus areas, issues, and actions related to the SDWA and CWA. In their applications, applicants should describe the frequency of the updates to this list and how they intend to distribute it.
- b. Provide support to NTWC members by conducting research and studies to prepare for meetings. Assist the NTWC to define training or study needs and solicit and obtain requested tribal technical assistance from EPA or other sources.
- c. Develop and disseminate research and studies on topics that are identified by the NTWC that are consistent with the CWA Section 104(b)(3) and SDWA Section 1442 authorities that would be of high benefit to tribes and/or help the NTWC prepare for meetings. In their applications, applicants may propose any subject areas that achieve the objectives described under this announcement.

Overall Vision for Success

As part of its application, the successful applicant is also expected to describe their overall vision for successfully accomplishing the project to support the NTWC. Factors to consider may include, but are not limited to: (1) how the applicant will work with tribal representatives and provide appropriate techniques and formats to ensure tribal perspectives and a diverse tribal council and views; (2) how the applicant will keep the NTWC, tribes, and the EPA Project Officer informed throughout the project to meet the specific needs of the Council and EPA; and (3) how the applicant defines success for the project, and how the applicant will measure project success.

Transfer of Results

The applicant should also include a discussion of how the applicant will transfer results of the project, including resources developed (such as webinars and training materials) throughout Indian country and to interested stakeholders.

C. EPA'S STRATEGIC PLAN AND ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

The activities to be funded under this solicitation support the FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan, available at <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>. Awards made under this solicitation will support Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities; Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure; and Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds of the [Strategic Plan](#).

All proposed activities must address EPA's Strategic Plan priorities and include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate

how the project will contribute to the overall protection and management of tribal water resource programs.

Environmental results are a way to gauge a project's performance and are described in terms of outputs and outcomes. Expected environmental outputs (or deliverables) refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

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

- Increased outreach efforts and two-way dialogue among tribes, and between tribes and EPA.
- Number of tribes notified on NTWC activities, such as high priority issues and matters appropriate for tribal consultation regarding SWDA and CWA water programs.
- Number of tribes participating in intertribal communication tools and/or venues such as webinars, websites, conference calls, etc.
- Completion of information sharing activities involving the NTWC and tribes that improves the quality of interactions among tribes, and between tribes and EPA on tribal water program issues. Completion of studies to improve tribal knowledge and capacity to protect and restore water resources.
- Number of communication activities performed under the assistance agreement that increase opportunities for tribes to engage on water issues and increase knowledge and understanding of tribes (such as newsletters; webinars; electronic outreach; or participation in meetings, workshops, etc. that are open to general tribal participation).

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

- Increased participation and information exchange among tribes, and between tribes and EPA involved in various aspects of water programs.
- Improved understanding by tribal water managers and technicians of best practices and water protection and management strategies for tribes leading to increased compliance at tribally operated facilities, enhanced tribal water protection programs or actions, and more overall effective protection of human health and the environment in Indian country and Alaska Native Villages.
- Increased number of tribes implementing water quality programs leading to cleaner water.
- Increased tribal cooperation with state governments in watershed protection and monitoring efforts, based on increased knowledge and understanding of water programs and issues and common goals for achieving clean water and protecting community health.

As part of the Project Narrative, an applicant will be required to describe how the applicant's activities will link to outcomes to the Agency's Strategic Plan. Additional information regarding

EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of outputs and outcomes can be found at: [EPA's Policy for Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).

D. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The statutory authority for this announcement is CWA Section 104(b)(3) and SDWA Section 1442(c)(3). Section 104(b)(3) of the CWA restricts the use of these assistance agreements to the following: conducting or promoting the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. Section 1442(c)(3) of the SDWA authorizes EPA to make grants for technical assistance, and training involving the public health aspects of providing safe drinking water. Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement.

E. MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS

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

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

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

F. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR APPLICANTS INCORPORATED INTO THE SOLICITATION

Additional provisions that apply to Sections III, IV, V, and VI of this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These provisions are important for applying to this solicitation and applicants must review them when preparing

applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact listed in this solicitation (in Section VII) to obtain the provisions.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. AMOUNT OF FUNDING

The total amount of expected funding available under this announcement is approximately \$1,610,500, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. EPA anticipates that one award will be made under this announcement. The anticipated project period for the award is five years. EPA anticipates that the award will be funded incrementally at \$322,100 per year, depending on Agency priorities, funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

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

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

B. TYPE OF FUNDING

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

- Close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- Collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- In accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, review of proposed procurement;
- Approving qualifications of key personnel (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).

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

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

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

States, local governments, federally recognized Indian tribes, intertribal consortia, territories, possessions of the U.S. (including the District of Columbia), public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, and public or private nonprofit institutions are eligible to apply.¹

For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply. Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

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

B. COST SHARING/MATCH REQUIREMENTS

No cost share or match is required.

C. THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

These are requirements that, if not met by the time of application package submission, will result in elimination of the application from consideration for funding. All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III.A, B, and C to be considered eligible. Only applications that meet all of these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of the announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

¹ Consistent with the definition of *nonprofit organization* at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible. Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status; such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law. Additionally, nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

1. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III.A of this announcement at the time of application submission.
2. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.C.2 with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.C.2, Project Narrative, establishes a 15-page, single-spaced Project Narrative page limit that does not include the cover page. If a double-spaced Project Narrative is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 15 single-spaced (30 page double-spaced) page limit; excess pages will not be reviewed. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size requirements, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font and size, for use in this application.
3. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) as stated in Section IV of this solicitation (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this solicitation. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this solicitation to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and to email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.
4. Applications submitted outside of Grants.gov will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov). An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) because they did not timely or properly register in [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a submission outside of [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).
5. **Ineligible activities:** If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

A. FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

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

Applicants must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the

remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined [here](#). Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in section c. *Technical Issues with Submission* below.

b. Submission Instructions

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

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov](#)² to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

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

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

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

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

2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the [Grants.gov Applicant Registration](#) instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point

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

of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov. Please review the [Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles](#) and [Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

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

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

3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

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

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

4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization’s AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](#) no later than **July 31, 2023 11:59 PM ET**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Please note that successful submission of your application through Grants.gov does not

necessarily mean your application is eligible for award. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

c. Technical Issues with Submission

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

1. Contact the Grants.gov Support Center **before** the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3. Send an email with EPA-OW-IO-23-01 in the subject line to tribalwater@epa.gov **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:
 - a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
 - b. Description of the issue
 - c. The entire application package in PDF format.

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

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

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

d. Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

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

Optional Documents: (Not counted as part of the page limit.)

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

- Other Attachment Form – Letters of Commitment, if applicable.
- Other Attachments Form – Biographical sketches of major project managers, support staff members, or other major project participants for the proposed projects.

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

B. CONTENT OF APPLICATION PACKAGE SUBMISSION

Applicants should read the following section very carefully and address all requirements. A complete application package *must* include the following documents described below.

a. Application Materials

The following documents are required under this solicitation:

1. Mandatory Documents:

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

2. Optional Documents: (Not counted as part of the page limit.)

- **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable).** See [EPA's Indirect Cost Guidance](#) for additional information.
- **Letter of Commitment.** Submit letters of commitment, if applicable.
- **Biographical Sketches for Key Personnel:** Submit a biographical sketch of each project manager for the proposed project. Provide the names, phone numbers, business address, and e-mail address, for proposed principal investigator(s) and key associates. Describe the qualifications, experience, and availability of these personnel to perform the work. Annotated resumes (not to exceed one page each) outlining education, work history, and knowledge/expertise of the individual as it relates to managing the proposed project, must be submitted for each major project manager, support staff member or other major participant. Full resumes may be included as an appendix to the main application package.

b. Project Narrative

The Project Narrative is limited to no more than fifteen (15) typewritten single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the executive summary, but not including the cover page. Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the project narrative. **Additional pages beyond the 15-page limit will not be considered.** If a double-spaced Project Narrative is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 15 single-spaced (30 page double-spaced) page limit; excess pages will not be reviewed.

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.

1. Cover Page (not included in 15-page limit) including:
 - Project Title
 - Applicant Information:
 - Applicant Name
 - Address
 - Key personnel and contact information (i.e., phone number and e-mail address)
 - Total Project Cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested and any non-federal cost share/match)
2. Executive Summary (included in 15-page limit): Provide a brief summary (should not exceed one page) of the application. This should include a brief description of the proposed project and the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.

3. Work Plan (included in the 15-page limit): The work plan must address the following elements:

a. Support to National Tribal Water Council

Describe the technical approach you will use to provide support to the NTWC to enhance expertise, communication, and coordination among tribes, the NTWC, and EPA for water programs. The work plan should also describe the roles and responsibilities of the applicant in carrying out the project elements. Specifically, describe how you will accomplish the four project elements described in Section I.B. Project Description, including how you will:

- i. Support the operation of the Council as a national forum and network for tribal water managers and provide logistical support so that the Council may interact with each other, with tribes, and directly with EPA. If travel assistance is to be provided for NTWC members, describe the process for selecting attendees who may receive travel assistance;
- ii. Assist the NTWC to promote technical water program-focused information exchange and sharing of best management practices for addressing water quality and drinking water concerns to tribes and EPA;
- iii. Assist the NTWC to conduct outreach activities to benefit tribes on water resource protection and restoration topics; and
- iv. Conduct studies in coordination with the NTWC that identify and analyze high priority, water-related issues and actions from tribal perspectives related to the SDWA and CWA.

- b. Overall Vision for Success:** Describe your overall vision for successfully accomplishing the project to support the NTWC. Factors to consider may include but are not limited to: (1) how you will work with tribal representatives and provide appropriate techniques and formats to ensure tribal perspectives, and a diverse tribal council and views; (2) how you will keep the NTWC, tribes, and the EPA Project Officer informed throughout the project to meet the specific needs of the Council and EPA; and (3) how you define success and how you will measure success.

- c. Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule that covers each year of the total five-year project period. The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks and an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.

- d. Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project task/component. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF424A such as “other” and “contractual.”

- i. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total cost. All subgrant funding should be located in the “other” cost category. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of costs for each project component/task as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs. If applicable, the budget narrative for the travel cost category must include travel costs for the applicant’s employees. The budget narrative for reimbursement at the federal per diem rate to pay for travel costs of NTWC members to attend meetings should be placed in the “other” direct costs category. There is general guidance available to applicants when preparing proposed budgets which can be found on the Agency’s [General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#) webpage and training on [how to develop a budget](#).
- e. **Transfer of Results:** Provide a brief description of how you will transfer the results of the project throughout Indian country and to interested stakeholders (see also Section I.B).
- f. **Environmental Results and Measuring Progress:**
 - i. Stated Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan - List the objective of the project and the linkage to the EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities; Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure and Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds (see Section I.C).
 - ii. Results of Activities (Outputs) - Describe the anticipated products/results that are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project and describe an approach for tracking and reporting your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s). (Examples of outputs can be found in Section I.C).
 - iii. Anticipated Environmental Improvement (Outcomes) - Describe the environmental improvements to be accomplished as a result of the project. These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment that are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s). (Examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.C).
- g. **Programmatic Capability/Specialized Experience:**
 - i. Organizational Experience - Provide a brief description of your organization and experience related to the proposed project, and the organization’s infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
 - ii. Staff Expertise/Qualifications - Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their experience, expertise, qualifications, and knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. Include an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (based on 2,080

hours per year/FTE). Describe prior experiences with interacting with tribal agencies responsible for environmental protection, particularly in relation to water programs. Include a description of prior experience: (1) working on human health and environmental issues related to water under the CWA and SDWA; (2) working with senior managers at EPA, preferably associated with water resource protection programs; and (3) demonstrated experience and ability to engage with tribal environmental professionals (preferably on water-related issues) such that the applicant has maintained relationships with tribes and demonstrates successful outcomes as a result of that work. If you choose to identify any partner organizations who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants) please refer to Section I.F before doing so as EPA will not consider their qualifications unless you select them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. 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 Project Narrative and are not counted in the page limit.

h. Past Performance:

Submit a list of federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe:

- i. Whether and how you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;
- ii. Your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports; and
- iii. Your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not).

In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors. (A neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any responses to these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

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

If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.A Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) of this announcement for additional information).

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

C. COALITION COVERAGE

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient (the “pass-through entity”). Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with EPA’s Subaward Policy. The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332, subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a “partner” or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications submitted electronically through Grants.gov must be submitted by **11:59 PM ET July 31, 2023**. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

A. SELECTION CRITERIA

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

Maximum Points per Criterion	Criterion
30 points total	Criterion 1: Support to National Tribal Water Council Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality of their technical approach for how the applicant will accomplish the four project elements described in Section I.B <u>Program Goals and Objectives:</u> a) Support the operation of the Council as a national forum and network for tribal water managers, and provide logistical support so that the Council may interact with each other, with tribes, and directly with EPA; (10 points) b) Assist the NTWC to promote technical water program-focused information exchange and sharing of best management practices for addressing water quality and drinking water concerns to tribes and EPA; (10 points) c) Assist the NTWC to conduct outreach activities to benefit tribes on water resource protection and restoration topics; and (5 points) d) Conduct studies in coordination with the NTWC that identify and analyze high priority, water-related issues and actions from tribal perspectives related to the SDWA and the CWA. (5 points)
10 points total	Criterion 2: Overall Vision for Success Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant provides an overall vision for success of the project supporting the National Tribal Water Council, taking into account the following factors: a) How the applicant will work with tribal representatives and provide appropriate techniques and formats to ensure tribal perspectives and a diverse tribal council and views. (4 points) b) How the applicant will keep the NTWC, tribes, and the EPA Project Officer informed throughout the project to meet the specific needs of the Council and EPA. (3 points) c) How the applicant will measure the success of the project. (3 points)
15 points total	Criterion 3: Milestone Schedule, Detailed Budget, and Transfer of Results Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criterion:

	a) Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (7 points) b) Reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget narrative and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. (5 points) c) A description of how the applicant will transfer the results of the project throughout Indian country and to interested stakeholders. (3 points)
10 points total	Criterion 4: Environmental Results and Measuring Progress Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on each of the following sub-criterion: a) Environmental Results: The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the ability to identify and articulate anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes and how the outcomes are linked to EPA's Strategic Plan. (5 points) b) Measuring Progress: The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving expected outputs and outcomes (examples of outcomes and outputs can be found in Section I.C of this announcement). (5 points)
20 points total	Criterion 5: Programmatic Capability/Specialized Experience Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the applicant's: a) Organizational experience related to the proposed project and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project. (5 points) b) Staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including experience: (1) Working on human health and environmental issues, preferably related to water under the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. (5 points) (2) Working with senior managers in EPA, preferably associated with water resource protection programs. (5 points)

	(3) Working with tribal governments and tribal representatives. Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant demonstrates they have relevant experience working with tribes (preferably on water-related issues), have maintained relationships with tribes, and had successful outcomes as a result of that work. (5 points)
15 points total	Criterion 6: Past Performance Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project, taking into account their: a) Past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) within the last three years (no more than five, and preferably EPA agreements). (5 points) b) History of meeting reporting requirements under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five, and preferably EPA agreements) and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements. (5 points) c) The extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not. (5 points) Note: In evaluating applicants under a), b), and c) above, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including Agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the application and will receive a neutral score for the factor. (For items a - c 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.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

All applications received via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the submission deadline will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

A panel(s) comprised of EPA staff will review eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. and will develop a ranking list of the applications based on the scores received. The ranking list will be provided to the Selection Official who makes final funding decision. In making the final funding decision, the Selection Official will consider the application score and may also take into account programmatic priorities.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

A. AWARD NOTIFICATION

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

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

1. Components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component;
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment;
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule; and
5. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

C. REPORTING

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved.

Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted quarterly and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 120 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the work plan consistent with 2 CFR 200 and 1500, and 40 CFR Part 45, as appropriate.

Additionally, if travel assistance is provided to NTWC members, the recipient will be required to provide a report on how participating attendees benefited from the meetings.

D. DISPUTES

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at [Dispute Resolution Procedures](#). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement.

VII. AGENCY CONTACT

Note to Applicants: In accordance with EPA's Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants or discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to written questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement. Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified in Section VII as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be resolved 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 RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified below before **July 17, 2023**. Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at: <https://www.epa.gov/tribalwater/request-applications-support-national-tribal-water-council>. EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

Agency Contact:

Bob Rose

E-mail: tribalwater@epa.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL (QA/QC)

Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements may apply to these grants (see 2 CFR 1500.12). QA/QC requirements apply to the collections 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. EPA can assist successful applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the applicant is encouraged to work with EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. See Section VII for Agency Contact information for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff.

If water quality data is generated, successful applicants must ensure all water quality data generated in accordance with an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan, either directly or by subaward, are transmitted into the Agency's Water Quality Exchange (WQX) data system (formerly known as STORET) annually or by project completion. More information about WQX and WQXweb, including tutorials, can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/storage-and-retrieval-and-water-quality-exchange>.

B. DATA SHARING

All recipients of these assistance agreements may be required to share any data generated through this funding agreement as a defined deliverable in the final work plan.