

SOUTHEAST NEW ENGLAND PROGRAM

2022 Request for Applications to Develop and Implement a Model Responsible Management Entity (RME) in Southeast New England

Summary

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Region 1

Funding Opportunity Title: Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Model Responsible Management Entity (RME) Project

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-I-R1-SNEP-2022A

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.129

Important Dates:

Informational Webinar and EJScreen Overview	5/26/2022; 12:30 – 2:00pm EDT (recorded)
Deadline for submitting questions via email about the RFA	6/1/2022 11:59 Eastern Standard Time (EDT)
Closing Date and Application Deadline Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). (see Section IV for details)	On or before 6/17/2022 11:59 Eastern Standard Time (EDT)
Anticipated Applicant Notification	July 2022
Anticipated Announcement of Award.	September 2022

Information relating to the RFA process as well as Q&As will be provided at www.epa.gov/snep. An informational webinar is scheduled for 5/26/2022 from 12:30-2:00pm EDT at which applicants may ask questions and learn how to use the EJScreen tool. This informational webinar will be recorded, edited, and posted to the [SNEP website](#). Additionally, applicants can send questions to SEcoastalNE@epa.gov until 6/1/2022 at 11:59 EDT.

CONTENTS BY SECTION

- I. Funding Opportunity Description
- II. Award Information
- III. Eligibility Information
- IV. Application and Submission Information
- V. Application Review Information
- VI. Award Administration Information

- VII. Agency Contacts
- VIII. Other Information
- IX. Appendices

Section I Funding Opportunity Description

A) Background for the Southeast New England Program

The objective of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters." Despite continuing progress in achieving these goals, coastal ecosystems are recognized as particularly vulnerable to upstream pollution sources, fragmented management, and the impacts of climate change. The coastal watersheds of southeast New England are prime examples of this vulnerability. The economy and community health of this region are directly tied to its unique ecological systems, but these systems are currently impaired by excessive nutrients from wastewater and septic systems, by the legacies of past industrial uses, by shifting socio-economic patterns, and other factors. Traditionally, these problems have been addressed independently, separated by jurisdictions, institutional identities, and sometimes parochial interests. It has become clear, however, that the scope and scale of these environmental stressors calls urgently for a more holistic approach to protecting aquatic ecosystems and sustaining local communities. Created by Congress to take this approach, SNEP's and EPA's role as a partnership facilitator among multiple organizations is central to its mission to empower collective action in these areas, and its focus on the region's ecosystems offers an opportunity to address complex common issues while also working at the local scale to align restoration and management efforts more broadly to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency. SNEP's priorities and goals have been laid out in the [Southeast New England Program 2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#). This RFA is consistent with SNEP Goal 1: Resilient ecosystem of safe and healthy waters; SNEP Goal 2: Thriving watersheds and natural lands; Priority Action 2: Increase available solutions; and Priority Action 4: Demonstrate ways to address common challenges.

B) Problem Statement

SNEP's Five-Year Strategic Plan specifically includes priority actions to increase available solutions and demonstrate ways to address common challenges. Furthermore, the Plan identifies nutrient pollution from traditional septic systems as a significant challenge that continues to threaten coastal ecosystems throughout our region. Traditional septic systems are effective at treating some components of residential wastewater, such as bacteria, but are not designed specifically to remove nutrients, like nitrogen, during treatment. Additionally, as septic systems age, they can begin to leak their contents into nearby groundwater without proper treatment and contribute significantly to nitrogen pollution downstream. All this septic-born nitrogen can travel through groundwater and out to embayments where it can cause harmful algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen, and fish kills. These traditional septic systems are a dominant form of wastewater treatment in many parts of the SNEP region. The Cape Cod Commission estimates that 78% of all controllable nitrogen pollution on Cape Cod can be contributed to septic systems ([2015, Cape Cod Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan Update](#)). Similarly, the Narragansett Bay National Estuary Program estimates that 38% of the Narragansett Bay watershed is served by septic systems, with local utilization as high as 90% in some areas ([2017, State of the Bay Report](#)).

Such a large number of systems spread throughout the region presents a challenge for proper management. Operation and maintenance tasks can often be left to homeowners (with mixed results), older style systems can be allowed to remain by “grandfathering”, and without holistic oversight, aggregate contribution of individual systems to nitrogen load or the aggregate impact of climate change on decentralized wastewater treatment are not always considered. All of these have broad impact on our region’s ecosystems.

Many municipalities are working to phase out septic systems in favor of centralized wastewater treatment plants to address their wastewater borne nitrogen problems. However, this process can take decades to complete and is costly. Furthermore, there remain areas where sewerage is not possible due to physical, political, cultural, or monetary limitations, and where septic systems remain the only alternative.

For the areas that will remain reliant on septic systems but must still reduce their nitrogen pollution, innovative and alternative septic systems (I/A systems) have shown promise to help address these concerns. These systems are specifically designed to reduce nitrogen. There are numerous proprietary and non-proprietary I/A systems approved for use in the SNEP region as well as a handful of newer technologies that achieve better nitrogen reduction, but still require further evaluation. For these newer technologies, often called Enhanced I/A Systems (EIA), to meet general use requirements at the State level, a critical mass of systems must be installed in the field to demonstrate their effectiveness before they can be approved.

Even approved I/A systems, however, are not yet in widespread use in the SNEP region, due in part to their cost, lack of regulations mandating their use, concern and lack of information about performance, and their increased operation, maintenance and monitoring requirements. To alleviate some of these barriers, and to better manage traditional systems, EPA has developed a set of community based septic management models, the most comprehensive of which is called a Responsible Management Entity (RME). An RME can be defined as a legal entity responsible for providing various management services with the requisite managerial, financial, and technical capacity to ensure the long-term, cost-effective management of decentralized onsite or clustered wastewater treatment facilities in accordance with applicable regulations and performance criteria. In essence, an RME acts as a wastewater utility, but with many small treatment plants (i.e., individual septic systems) as opposed to one centralized treatment plant. Further, the creation and scale of an RME management may lower costs for individual homeowners and may alleviate the need for large one-time expenses to homeowners (i.e., system replacements) by collecting monthly fees, thus pooling risk.

C) Program Goals and Objectives

This RFA sets forth a competitive process to solicit and select up to two applicants in the SNEP geographic boundaries, one each in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, to develop an RME while simultaneously installing, monitoring, and operating/overseeing I/A septic systems (otherwise known as alternative and experimental (A/E)) in the area covered by the RME. The goal of this effort is to advance the adoption and installation of I/A septic systems by demonstrating the effectiveness of the comprehensive RME model to manage them. An additional goal is to install the best available I/A technologies (those consistently achieving below 12 mg/l-nitrogen in their effluent) in order to gather more information on their performance. These goals, and the

advancement of I/A septic use in general, have long been identified as a priority in New England and especially the area covered by the SNEP.

This RFA and subsequent awards are intended to support SNEP's goals and priorities as set forth in SNEP's five year strategic plan by funding up to two selected entities to establish an RME in Rhode Island and Massachusetts; and install a series of best available I/A septic systems that show strong promise of consistently achieving **below 12 mg/l-nitrogen** (systems achieving at or below this threshold are referred to as Enhanced I/A (EIA) systems; see appendix). Options for selecting entities and awarding funds could include:

- Funding a separate entity in each state to establish and manage an RME in its respective state (Two grants would be awarded)
- Funding a single entity to establish an RME in each state (two grants would be awarded, one for each state, and applicants would need to demonstrate their authority and administrative and fiscal capability, state knowledge, capacity, and resources to effectively manage both projects if both applications are selected)

Subject to the availability of appropriated funds and Agency priorities, the total estimated funding available for each award under this competitive opportunity is up to \$1,115,000 (\$1.15M) in federal funding, with a total project period of up to five (5) years. The total estimated funding for this competitive opportunity is up to \$2.3 million. We anticipate awarding up to two cooperative agreements (one in Rhode Island, one in Massachusetts) from this announcement, subject to availability of funds, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. We anticipate fully funding each award with up to \$1.15M. All actions under these awards must be accomplished within the five (5) year project period.

Proposed project areas must be located mainly within the SNEP region ([Regional Map](#)) and can include multiple coverage areas within the proposed state (Massachusetts or Rhode Island). The proposed RME area must exist entirely in one state or the other and must be mainly in the SNEP area. If small portions of the RME exist outside of the SNEP region due to town or watershed boundary considerations, the applicant should state as much and explain how the inclusion of non-SNEP areas will enhance their project.

EPA **does not** endorse any one septic system type; however, preference will be given to systems that have been well documented to effectively manage and reduce total nitrogen concentrations below 12 mg/L-N in this or comparable regions.

This funding opportunity is designed to develop and implement two (2) feasible RMEs that could serve as models for regional partners. RME design can vary provided that the design meets the criteria of either management model described above (**Figure 1**). I/A choice and RME design should prioritize regional transferability. Applicants should highlight how their approach might be transferrable to other similar environments in the SNEP region; and how the applicant proposes to continue or expand the RME following the completion of the grant period.

While the effects of aging septic systems are realized more generally throughout the SNEP region, underserved communities are often those with limited access to resources to address these concerns (see Section 1.I). For this reason, this funding opportunity asks applicants to prioritize the inclusion of underserved communities in the selection of this proposed project area

provided that these areas also meet the qualifications described in Section IV; and prioritize the meaningful involvement of these underserved communities throughout the course of this project.

In general, the applicant should describe a strategy for the five (5) year project period to develop an initial plan design, establish an RME, install EIAs, and describe community training opportunities. Initial plans:

- should address specifically how EPA SNEP funding will be used; Should describe how the applicant will gain the necessary stakeholder buy-in to install EIAs and design and implement a successful RME. This may include homeowners, local officials and governments, state, tribal, or federal governments, regional planning agencies, industry, and/or academics;
- do not need to be comprehensive but should adequately address the goals of this RFA and should provide sufficient detail to describe proposed actions over the project period;
- should address how the applicant intends to leverage sources of funding and expertise from various organizations (if applicable), build partnerships, involve community members, and if appropriate, incorporate practices that promote multiple benefits of social and economic well-being;
- should detail how the RME will continue following the completion of this award, including plans to continue the operation of the RME, such as a transition to a fee-for-service model, incorporation into a municipality, or expansion to additional systems;
- should propose education and outreach efforts to inform homeowners and operators on the benefits and operation of the RME; should propose trainings for homeowners and operators on RME functionality, reporting, and operation;
- should describe the applicants administrative and fiscal capacity to manage and operate the proposed RME. As well as the legal authority to be utilized by the recipient or partners to manage and/or operate the RME; and
- should include how the recipient will utilize and capitalize on existing homeowner tax considerations of grants and loans for septic system upgrades. Tax considerations for RMEs and residential IAs vary by state. The applicant should demonstrate a working understanding of these considerations, and work within the framework of existing septic loan programs in [RI](#) and [MA](#).

The strongest applicants will be active in the proposed area with connections to other organizations working in the area, have established municipal buy-in for the development of a responsible management entity, and have expressed homeowner buy-in, support, and/or letters of interest.

D) Expected Outputs and Outcomes

For this RFA:

- The term “outcome” means the result, effect or consequence that will be achieved by carrying out an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within a grant funding period. ***For this RFA, “Desired Outcomes” describe the project metrics and conditions that we aim to achieve for the SNEP region that are found in the SNEP Strategic Plan. Efforts to***

achieve these outcomes will steer the actions necessary to meet specific targets; these outcomes include:

- waters that support native seagrasses and aquatic life, plentiful native fish and shellfish, and a variety of water-based recreation opportunities;
 - watersheds that provide essential ecological functions, species diversity, and protection from both human-based and naturally occurring environmental stressors, and healthy, connected natural lands support a variety and range of native plant and wildlife communities; and
 - communities that share robust water-based economies, strive to foster equity in health and economic outcomes, protect and provide access to natural lands, open spaces and parks, encourage local food sources, and are adapting for resilience to expected impacts of climate change.
- The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable over the term of the grant funding period. ***For this RFA, “Outputs (Actions)” are detailed activities that SNEP and our partners will undertake during to meet quantitative targets, work towards accomplishing desired outcomes, and ultimately achieve the SNEP 2050 regional vision and goals.***

Applicants should consider the following questions when developing output and outcome measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

- What are the measurable short term and longer-term results the projects funded will achieve?
- How will progress be measured in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes) and how will their proposed approach use resources effectively and efficiently?
- Are there ways to incorporate social and/or economic benefits as part of a broader environmental improvement effort?

E) Statutory Authorization for Award

The SNEP program is authorized by the Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2022. This authority allows EPA to award grants and cooperative agreements to carry out the SNEP, including planning, research, monitoring, outreach, and implementation projects within the SNEP geographic area.

Funding for this award will come from the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL), Public Law 117-58.

F) General Environmental Results and Strategic Plan Information

The activities to be funded under this solicitation support [EPA’s Draft FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#). Awards made under this solicitation will support 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 Watershed of the [Draft Plan](#); and will support [EPA-SNEP’s 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan](#). Awards will support Strategic

Plan Goal 1: Achieve a Resilient Ecosystem of Safe and Healthy Waters, and Goal 2: Ensure Thriving Watersheds and Natural Lands.

G) Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into The Solicitation

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

H) 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](#)

I) Inclusion of Environmental Justice Considerations

While applicants are free to propose any appropriate area in the SNEP region for RME implementation (see Section I.C.), applicants that include areas for RME coverage based on relevant environmental justice considerations will be scored higher (see Section V.B.).

Environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development,

implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies. Meaningful involvement means people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health; the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; community concerns will be considered in the decision making process; and decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected. For purposes of this competition and the evaluation of applications, “underserved communities” means people/communities of color, low income, tribal and indigenous populations, and other vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, and those with pre-existing medical conditions. Applicants should utilize [EPA’s Environmental Justice Screening Tool \(EJScreen\)](#) to determine the demographic considerations of their proposed areas and include a brief analysis that demonstrates consideration of EJ. See Section IV.C. for more information.

Section II – Award Information

A) Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards

EPA expects to award up to two (2) cooperative agreements for activities under this RFA: one for a project in Massachusetts, and one for a project in Rhode Island. The total estimated funding available for awards under this competitive opportunity is up to \$1,115,000 per award for a project period of up to five (5) years. Funding for each agreement is not to exceed \$1,115,000 total over five years. The total amount of funding competed under this opportunity is \$2,300,000. All funding decisions are subject to funding availability, quality of applications, and other applicable considerations.

B) Partial Funding Provision

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.

C) No Awards Provision

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no award under this announcement. EPA intends to make at least one award to the highest-ranking applicants in each state within the SNEP region. If there are no high-ranking applicants in a state, then EPA reserves the right to make no award in that state.

D) Additional Awards

EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, 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.

E) Funding Type

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 C.F.R. § 200.317 and 2 C.F.R. § 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.

F) Award Funding and Incremental/ Full Funding

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

Section III – Eligibility Information

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

A) Eligible Applicants

In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.129, assistance under this SNEP RFA is available to state, local, and tribal governments; institutions of higher education; nonprofit institutions and organizations; and interstate agencies. Private businesses, federal agencies, and individuals are not eligible to apply; however, they may work in partnership with eligible applicants on these projects.

For-profit organizations are not an eligible entity for this funding opportunity. Additionally, non-profit 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.

Consistent with the definition of *Nonprofit organization* at 2 C.F.R. § 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. Note that 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. While not considered to be a non-profit organization(s) as defined by 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA. 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. 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.

B) Cost Sharing, Match, and Leveraging

No matching funds are required under this competition. Although cost sharing/matching is not required as a condition of eligibility under this competition, under Section V of this announcement, EPA will evaluate proposals based on a leveraging criterion.

Leveraging is generally when an applicant proposes to provide its own additional funds/resources or those from third party sources to support or complement the project they are awarded under the competition which are above and beyond the EPA grant funds awarded. Any leveraged funds/resources, and their source, must be identified in the proposal (see Section IV of the announcement). Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

--**Voluntary cost share** is a form of leveraging. Voluntary cost sharing is when an applicant voluntarily proposes to legally commit to provide costs or contributions to support the project when a cost share is not required. Applicants who propose to use a voluntary cost share **must** include the costs or contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424. If an applicant proposes a voluntary cost share, the following apply:

- A voluntary cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations (2 C.F.R. § 200.306).
- A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
- 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.

- The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved project budget. If the proposed voluntary cost share does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 C.F.R. Part 200 or 1500.

--Other leveraged funding/resources that are not identified as a voluntary cost share. This form of leveraging may be met by funding from another federal grant, from an applicant's own resources, or resources from other third-party sources. This form of leveraging should not be included in the budget and the costs need not be eligible and allowable project costs under the EPA assistance agreement. While this form of leveraging should not be included in the budget, the grant workplan should include a statement indicating that the applicant is expected to produce the proposed leveraging consistent with the terms of the announcement and the applicant's proposal. If applicants propose to provide this form of leveraging, EPA expects them to make the effort to secure the leveraged resources described in their proposals. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 C.F.R. Part 200 or 1500.

C) Threshold Eligibility Criteria

Only proposals from eligible entities (see Section III.A above) that meet the following threshold eligibility criteria will be evaluated. 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.

- a. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
- b. 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.
- c. Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) system issues. 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 late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with SECoastalNE@epa.gov as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

d. Applicants must indicate that they have the authority and ability to work in their proposed project area.

e. Applicants must demonstrate that they have, or are working to get, the support of the municipality(ies) in which the Model RME would be located. This support may be in the form of an endorsement, commitment to participate in the project, match/cost share, or letter of support. If applicants do not currently have municipal support, the applicant must include a plan on how they will secure municipal support.

f. All I/A installations and the majority of the Model RME must be located within the SNEP boundary to be eligible to be considered for funding. A high-resolution map of the SNEP area is found in Appendix A and at <https://www.epa.gov/snep/background-information-southeast-new-england-program>

g. Ineligible activities: If an application 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.

f. Proposed Model RMEs must operate entirely in one state. Applicants who propose to work in both states must submit separate applications for each state. Applications that include both states will be considered ineligible.

While these guidelines establish the minimum type size requirements, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application.

D) Encouraging Minority Serving Institutions to Compete

EPA recognizes that scientific, technical, engineering and mathematical (STEM) competence is essential to the Nation's future well-being in terms of national security and competitive economic advantage. For instance, the health and vitality of the economy is predicated, in part, on the availability of an adequate supply of scientists, technicians, engineers and mathematicians, to develop innovative technologies and solutions. In other words, this country must engage all available minds to address the challenges it faces. Minorities, women, and persons with disabilities historically have been under-represented in the STEM fields. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages

all eligible applicants including, women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to apply.

Section IV – Application and Submission Information

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

A) Narrative Proposal Requirements

Eligible applicants should submit, as part of their application package, narrative proposals organized by the following sections and addressing the content described within:

i. Site Selection and Justification

The applicant should provide ample background information on the proposed RME area, including history of nutrient impairments, septic system locations or densities if known, known or proposed sewerage plans, hydrologic assessments or known discharge points. The applicant should include any of their other ongoing work that this project might relate to, as well as a map of the proposed project area.

Site selection of Model RME and EIA installations should specifically target areas with known nitrogen impairments caused by septic systems. Proposals should include the presence or absence of downstream freshwater ponds and explain whether the proposed area has an existing sewerage plan. If a sewerage plan exists, the applicant should include the timeframe of the sewerage plan for the proposed area. Priority will be given for proposed areas in nitrogen-impaired waters and/or areas that cannot or will not be seweraged for at least 15-20 years (or longer). Additionally, the proposal should provide assurance of access to private land as necessary to conduct EIA installation and monitoring of EIA systems throughout the project.

The proposed Model RMEs must operate entirely in one state; applicants who propose to work in both states must establish a separate RME in each state, and must submit two proposals. RMEs must be located primarily in the SNEP area. If small portions of the proposed RME would exist outside of the SNEP region due to town or watershed boundary considerations, applicants must explain how the inclusion of non-SNEP areas will enhance their project.

While applicants are free to propose any appropriate area in the SNEP region for RME implementation, applicants that include areas for RME coverage based on environmental justice and underserved community issues will be scored higher (See Section V.B.). For purposes of this competition and the evaluation of applications, “underserved communities” means people/communities of color, low income, tribal and indigenous populations, and other vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, and those with pre-existing medical conditions. Applicants should utilize [EPA’s Environmental](#)

[Justice Screening Tool \(EJScreen\)](#) to determine the demographic considerations of their proposed areas and include a brief analysis that demonstrates consideration of EJ.

Environmental Justice Web-based Screening Tool - Applicants are encouraged, as appropriate, to include data from [EPA's EJScreen tool](#) (or other EJ-focused geospatial mapping tools) as part of their application to help characterize and describe the affected communities/populations and areas and address the environmental justice criterion in Section V. Data from other sources (e.g. studies, census, and third-party reports) should also be included to give a more complete picture of the impacted communities and populations. Instructions, resources, and tutorials on how to use EJSCREEN are included at the hyperlink above.

ii. Proposed Model RME Design, Installation, Management, and Longevity

For purposes of this RFA, EPA is focusing on the Type 4 and Type 5 management models described in Figure 1 and websites linked below because they offer the necessary oversight and scale to address the problems in the SNEP region. The proposed RME design must be consistent with either of these. Under these models, individual septic systems either remain owned by the homeowner and are maintained by the RME (Type 4) or the systems are entirely owned and maintained by the RME (Type 5). For more information, please reference EPA's [Handbook for Managing Onsite and Clustered \(Decentralized\) Wastewater Treatment Systems](#). For additional context, please reference the following EPA RME pilots for both [Type 4](#) and [Type 5](#) systems by using the corresponding hyperlinks.

Type 4 and Type 5 management structures were selected for this RFA because there is concern that Types 1 through 3 may not adequately address the operation and maintenance needs of I/A systems. Nor do they offer the oversight necessary for the scope and scale of the problem in our region.

Typical applications	Program description	Benefits	Limitations
4. Responsible Management Entity (RME) Operation			
◆ Areas of moderate to high environmental sensitivity where reliable and sustainable system operation and maintenance is required (sole-source aquifers, wellhead or source water protection zones, critical aquatic habitats, and outstanding value resource waters) ◆ Cluster systems	◆ System performance and monitoring requirements ◆ Professional O&M services through RME (public or private) ◆ Regulatory oversight by issuing operating or NPDES permits directly to RME (system ownership remains with property owner) ◆ Inventory of all systems ◆ Tracking system for operating permit and compliance monitoring	◆ O&M responsibility transferred from the system owner to a professional RME that holds the operating permit ◆ Problems identified before malfunctions occur ◆ Onsite treatment in more environmentally sensitive areas or for treatment of high-strength wastes ◆ One permit for a group of systems	◆ Enabling legislation might be necessary to allow RME to hold the operating permit for an individual system owner ◆ RME must have owner's approval for repairs; might be conflict if performance problems are identified and not corrected ◆ Need for easement/right of entry ◆ Need for oversight of RME by the regulatory authority
5. Responsible Management Entity (RME) Ownership Model			
◆ Areas of greatest environmental sensitivity, where reliable management is required. Includes sole source aquifers, wellhead or source water protection zones, critical aquatic habitats, and outstanding value resource waters ◆ Preferred management program for cluster systems serving multiple properties under different ownership	◆ Establishes system performance and monitoring requirements ◆ Professional management of all aspects of decentralized systems ◆ RMEs own or manage individual systems ◆ Trained and licensed professional owners/operators ◆ Regulatory oversight through NPDES or other permit ◆ Inventory of all systems ◆ Tracking of operating permit and compliance monitoring	◆ High level of oversight if system problems occur ◆ Model of central sewerage that reduces the risk of noncompliance ◆ Onsite treatment in environmentally sensitive areas ◆ Effective planning and watershed management ◆ Potential conflicts between the user and RME removed ◆ Greatest protection of environmental resources and homeowner investment	◆ Enabling legislation or formation of special district might be required ◆ Might require significant financial investment by RME for installation or purchase of existing systems or components ◆ Need for oversight of RME by the regulatory authority; might limit competition ◆ Homeowner associations may not have adequate authority

Figure 1: Description of EPA Type 4 and Type 5 management models for decentralized wastewater treatment systems. Image adapted from Chapter 4, Table 2 of EPA's [Handbook for Managing Onsite and Clustered \(Decentralized\) Wastewater Treatment Systems](#).

How the applicant plans to approach and establish an RME (or RMEs) is up to the applicant, but proposals must include the type and coverage of RMEs planned, their location and extent, and realistic expectations for achieving the goals of this RFA given funding/timing restrictions. In particular, the applicant will be expected to justify how the geographic extent/number of households served by the RMEs will be significant in achieving the goals of this RFA. Proposals that consider multi-municipal, county level, or watershed-based approaches will be scored higher than smaller-scale approaches. The applicant may propose to create multiple smaller RMEs under a larger umbrella framework or a single RME. Applications that emphasize an adaptive management approach will also be scored higher than those with a static approach. Applicants shall describe how they will evaluate the future EIA technologies that could be employed under the RME (i.e., how they will assess vendor performance claims).

The applicant must also identify the key stakeholders that have been, or will need to be, engaged to successfully establish an RME, as well as the timeline for RME establishment and how it will be enhanced, expanded, and/or maintained beyond the life of the grant, including if/how there are plans for the RME to become financially self-sufficient.

Applicants should describe their qualifications for establishing an RME and demonstrate their understanding of state-based legal and other requirements that may be involved with the establishment and operation of an RME (including operations, maintenance, and

monitoring requirements). Proposed RMEs should also include the formation of a technical advisory committee to inform the RME's design, operation, and management.

Applicants should describe the specific services the RME will provide, how and to whom they will be provided, and how the RME will become self-sufficient financially after the life of the grant. In addition to those properties where EIA systems are installed as part of the grant, RME coverage should also include all septic systems in the designated area.

Applicants should describe their knowledge of, and access to, additional funding sources to leverage resources under this RFA (MA and RI septic loan programs, HUD, etc.).

Applicants may determine the timeline for establishing the proposed RME but will be expected to have an established and operational RME by the end of the grant period, with buy-in from stakeholders. A transition to a fee-for-service model would be appropriate either during or following the completion of this grant provided that program income is treated in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.307.

iii. **Proposed EIA Design, Installation, and Management**

In June 2021, EPA-SNEP hosted a [three-day workshop on I/A septic systems](#), at which regional experts convened to discuss the state of I/A system technology, the cost and benefits of various wastewater treatment approaches, and how best to bring a new generation of EIAs from piloting to widespread, general use approval. The outcomes of this workshop are [summarized here](#). Based on this workshop's recommendations, this RFA is intended to both (1) further EIA technology by funding their installation and monitoring to advance state general use approval; and (2) simultaneously fund the creation of responsible management entities to oversee the operation, maintenance, and monitoring of these and other septic systems in each state. While EPA-SNEP **does not** endorse any one I/A system design, proposed I/A systems for inclusion under this RFA must be listed on the pre-approved septic technologies lists for [Massachusetts](#) **and/or** [Rhode Island](#). EPA-SNEP will accept general-use approved, pilot-approved, and/or provisional-use approved systems for inclusion in this Program, however, **EPA-SNEP is specifically looking to fund the implementation of systems that have demonstrated consistent effluent levels below 12 mg/L-N (Enhanced I/A systems).**

The applicant should identify and describe in detail the number and type of EIA septic systems proposed for installation. Applicants that can demonstrate how the systems installed under this RFA will help bring a specific technology (or technologies) from pilot or provisional use to general use, will be scored higher. Pre-approved technology lists for [Massachusetts](#) and [Rhode Island](#) can be found by referencing the corresponding hyperlinks. Applications that focus on retrofits and replacements of existing standard septic systems, with preference to failing systems, will be scored higher, especially for areas that contribute to nitrogen-impaired waterbodies.

Because some of the I/A septic technologies that might be employed under this RFA are relatively new or in the testing phase, it is critical that applicants demonstrate how they will ensure homeowners not bear an undue burden should any system fail.

The exact type and number of EIAs to be installed under this RFA are to be determined by the applicant. The applicant should propose the type(s) of EIAs to be installed, their approval status, location (if known), and an estimate of how many systems are to be installed. The applicant shall demonstrate that their selected EIA technologies consistently achieve 12 mg/l-N or less in their effluent. This should be done with summary reports (or appropriate monitoring data) on the EIA, with preference to third party verification.

The applicant shall explain their proposed timeline for EIA system installation under this RFA. Ideally, systems will be installed early in the grant period, but at least one (1) year before the end of the grant period to allow for system monitoring (described in section *IV.A.iii.*).

The applicant shall describe their qualifications and experience regarding IA septic installations.

The applicant should avoid installing EIA systems in areas where downstream freshwater ponds, or other phosphorous sensitive areas, are the primary impairment worry.

Any EIAs installed with funding from this RFA must be installed within the proposed RME boundary. Generally, the RME is not limited to managing only the EIA systems implemented under this funding agreement; rather, all systems in the proposed area should be included in the RME structure.

iv. Partnerships and Leveraging

Partnerships: Community buy-in and municipal support are key to ensuring longevity of this Model RME. To ensure long-term success of the program, the applicant should describe:

- Proposed collaboration with project partners. The description should include how the applicant plans to closely engage local IA and RME system operators.
- Any established community and municipal support for the project via letters of support or commitment. If no support has yet been demonstrated, the applicant should include a plan for how they intend to secure municipal and community support, and how they can effectively perform the project without partners.
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all entities involved in the project.
- Information of how each partner will contribute to the project;
- Resources each partner brings to the project.
- How each partner has a vested interest in working with this partnership (other than just getting income from a sub-award or contract).
- How the applicant organization plans to sustain these relationships on into the future;

Leveraging: Demonstrate how you will coordinate the use of EPA funding with other Federal and/or non-Federal sources of funds/resources to leverage additional resources beyond the grant funds awarded to carry out the proposed project(s) and/or that EPA funding will complement activities relevant to the proposed project(s) carried out by the applicant with other sources of funds or resources. Describe the type and amount of leveraging proposed, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged funds/resources will play in the overall project. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award.

v. Programmatic Capabilities

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:

- whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;
- your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
- your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

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

vi. Cost Effectiveness

The applicant should demonstrate that the proposed project is cost-effective based on the following factors: organizational overhead; indirect cost; prudent cost allocation over the life of the award; organizational and partner resources brought to the effort; consistency with proposed budget detail; and ability to perform the duties within the operational range of budgets provided by SNEP.

vii. Monitoring, Tracking, and Measuring of Environmental and Programmatic Results

The applicant should describe in detail plans to perform monitoring and record keeping for installed I/A systems. To further EIA technologies in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, well-documented system operation, maintenance, and performance monitoring over the course of this grant period is critical.

In Massachusetts, I/A septic systems must meet the requirements of provisional use prior to their acceptance for general use. To meet these requirements, a minimum of 50 systems must be evaluated for at least 5 years; and 90% of installed systems must demonstrate performance that is at least equivalent to a conventional Title 5 system for a minimum of 3 years. “Provisional Use Approval typically occurs after a technology has been piloted successfully or has been proved to have satisfactory past performance over at least two years of general usage in one or more states outside Massachusetts. A system approved for Provisional Use can be installed in remedial situations or for new construction where a system in compliance with Title 5 could be built,” (MassDEP).¹

Rhode Island requirements for Alternative or Experimental systems are similar in that they require “at least four consecutive years of performance data per installation for no fewer than ten installations with quarterly data collection requirements at a minimum; and that the applicant demonstrates that the technology has been approved and utilized successfully for at least two (2) consecutive years in Rhode Island or another jurisdiction with no fewer than ten (10) installations in each jurisdiction,” (RI DEM).²

As such, any EIA systems installed under this RFA shall be monitored by the recipient in a way that will either contribute to the technology’s achievement of general-use approval, or for those already approved technologies, in a way that goes beyond basic monitoring to contribute to better understanding of the technology. Monitoring shall occur for the life of the grant. Ideally, monitoring done under this RFA will create data that could be accepted by both RI and MA, according to their regulations. By meeting the requirements of both states the applicant can maximize the likelihood of transferability across the SNEP region.

The applicant shall propose a monitoring strategy that includes at minimum the regulated and unregulated parameters/analytes to be measured, methodologies, monitoring frequency, estimated costs, and how monitoring data will be stored and made available. Applicants that plan to implement new and innovative monitoring methods (remote sensing, etc.) for EIAs in ways beyond the basic monitoring required by states will be scored more highly.

It should be noted that applicants are only required to monitor EIAs funded by this RFA (unless otherwise required by state or local regulations) as a part of their grant conditions. Of course, once the RME is operationalized that entity will be required to monitor all

¹ MassDEP. “Innovative Technologies and Title 5 Systems.” <https://www.mass.gov/guides/innovative-technology-and-title-5-systems>

² RI DEM. (2010). “Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems.” <https://risos-apa-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/DEM/6067.pdf>

septic systems in their jurisdiction according to their RME agreement and any applicable state or local regulations. This may include the advanced monitoring required of EIAs or regular preventative monitoring (i.e., measurements of sludge depth, ensuring leach fields are functioning properly, and ensuring timely pumping).

The applicant should describe plans to perform regular operation and maintenance for both installed I/A systems and the Model RME. The recipient will be responsible for regular operation and maintenance of the I/A systems installed during the course of this grant period, and for the regular operation and maintenance of systems incorporated into this RME but not installed under this grant.

To ensure future transferability of results, the applicant should describe how the recipient plans to track, store, and make publicly available system performance data; and identify the proposed SNEP environmental metrics to allow evaluation of outcomes resulting from the project (see Appendix E).

B) 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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. Part 200 and/or 2 C.F.R. Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 C.F.R. §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.

C) Environmental Justice Web-based Screening Tool

Applicants should, as appropriate, include data from EPA’s [EJScreen](#) tool (or other EJ-focused geospatial mapping tools) as part of their application to help characterize and describe the affected communities/populations and areas and address the environmental justice criterion in Section V. Data from other sources (e.g., studies, census, and third-

party reports) should also be included to give a more complete picture of the impacted communities and populations. Instructions, resources, and tutorials on how to use EJScreen are included at the hyperlink above.

D) [Grants.gov Instructions](#)

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

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

ii. Submission Instructions

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through Grants.gov, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then go to the "Organization Registration" link listed under the "Get Registered" section and follow the instructions. Please note, 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 submission deadline. Registration on Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and obtaining a UEI number assignment is FREE.

NEW – PLEASE READ: Existing and new SAM.gov registrants are assigned a free SAM-issued Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Applicants must use their UEI, not their DUNS number, when filling out forms in the package for this funding opportunity. Please see [RAIN-2021-G01](#) for information about EPA's implementation of the upcoming Government-wide transition from DUNS to UEI.

Applicants need to ensure that the 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 account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

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. If you encounter technical difficulties or the Apply button is grayed out please contact grants.gov for assistance at the grants.gov support center at support@grants.gov or 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. Please note: To apply through Grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit [Adobe Reader Compatibility Information on Grants.gov](#)

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](#) no later than 6/17/2022 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.

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below using the Grants.gov application package accessed using the instructions above.

Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
4. EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report
5. Budget Detail (Budget Narrative Attachment Form) – See Appendix D for information
6. Narrative Proposal (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in Section IV.A) of the announcement
7. Supporting Documents (Other Attachments Form)
 - a. Resumes or curriculum vitae of staff that will be working on the Pilot Watershed Program
 - b. Letters of commitment from any partners identified in the proposal in order to confirm their partnership.
 - c. Letters of support and commitment for all cities and town government in which the Pilot Watershed is located.
 - d. Confirmation (or process to confirm) access to private property by their owner(s) required to carry out monitoring of water, priority habitat and practices installed as part of the agreement.
 - e. List documenting past or ongoing federal and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements administer by the applicant, including documentation supporting grant performance and meeting of reporting requirements.

- f. Documents of non-profit status if appropriate.
- g. Verification of proposed sources of non-federal match to the application.

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 **Ian Dombroski**, at **617-918-1342**. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

iii. Technical Issues with Submission

- a. Once the application package has been completed, the "Submit" button should be enabled. If the "Submit" button is not active, please call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726. 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. Applicants should save the completed application package with two different file names before providing it to the AOR to avoid having to re-create the package should submission problems be experienced or a revised application needs to be submitted.
- b. Submitting the application. The application package must be transferred to Grants.gov by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the "submit" button of the application package. Your Internet browser will launch and a sign-in page will appear. **Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation.** The Grants.gov support desk operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except Federal Holidays.

A successful transfer will end with an on-screen acknowledgement. For documentation purposes, print or screen capture this acknowledgement. If a submission problem occurs, reboot the computer turning the power off may be necessary and re-attempt the submission.

Note: Grants.gov issues a "case number" upon a request for assistance.

- c. Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the application is submitted to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as

described below, are to be sent to **Ian Dombroski** with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact **Ian Dombroski** at **617-918-1342**. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.

If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. 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. Be sure to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact **Ian Dombroski** at **617-918-1342**.

- d. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, and you have already attempted to resolve the issue by contacting Grants.gov, send an email message to **Dombroski.Ian@epa.gov** prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the Grants.gov case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.

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

Section V Application Review Information

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

Evaluation Criteria and Process

A) Evaluation Process

After EPA reviews applications for threshold eligibility as described in Section III, eligible applications will be reviewed by a team of professionals from EPA with a

working knowledge of the technical and programmatic aspects needed to rigorously evaluate the proposals. All reviewers will sign a conflict-of-interest statement indicating there is no real, or perceived, conflict of interest.

B) Evaluation Criteria: Maximum Score 190 Points

Eligible applications will be evaluated and scored by reviewers using the criteria listed below. Each applicant may receive up to 190 points.

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Points out of 190</u>
Site Selection and Justification	Under this criterion, the reviewers will evaluate the application based on the extent and quality to which the applicant: a. Describes the location, unique resources, geographic extent (size) and justification of the geographic extent of the proposed RME (see Section IV.A). (3 pts.) b. Includes a map of the proposed RME coverage area. (1 pt.) c. Describes the current environmental conditions in the proposed area, including how an RME will benefit the local environment by increasing the effectiveness of existing septic systems and by installing new systems that substantially reduce nutrient loadings, and how those selections are realistic given funding/timing restrictions and how they contribute to achieving the goals of this RFA. (8 pts.) d. Describes how the proposed RME and EIA installations specifically target areas with known nitrogen impairments caused by septic systems. (5 pts) e. Links the proposed activities to EPA’s Draft FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (Section I.F.) and the SNEP Strategic Plan (Section I.F). (2 pts.) f. Demonstrates awareness of long-term plans for sewers or other treatment approaches. In particular, how proposals demonstrate how they will target installation and management of I/A systems for areas where centralized treatment is unlikely or determined to be unfeasible for the next 15-20 years (or longer). (2 pts.) g. Includes a multi-municipal, county level, or watershed-based approach. (4 pts.)	35

h. Includes consideration of underserved communities. Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate how the project will address the disproportionate and adverse (see below) human health, environmental, climate-related and other cumulative impacts, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the underserved communities described in Section I of the solicitation. As part of this evaluation, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the project:

- i. benefits the underserved communities including those that have experienced a lack of resources or other impediments to addressing the impacts identified above that affect their community (5 pts.) and;
- ii. addresses engagement with these communities, especially local residents in these communities who will be affected by the project, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, project planning, and performance of the project. (5 pts.)

Disproportionate and adverse environmental, human health, climate-related and other cumulative impacts, as well the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, may result when greater pollution burdens and/or consequences, and the impact of them, are more likely to affect or have affected the underserved communities described in this solicitation. The impacts may result from various factors including but not limited to being a function of historical trends and policy decisions. Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards (due to causes such as age, chronic medical conditions, lack of health care access, or limited access to quality nutrition); unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status (for example, subsistence

	fishing or farming); cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes (due to causes such as lack of or ineffective language access programs, lack of programs to make processes accessible to persons with disabilities, inability to access traditional communication channels, or limited capacity to access technical and legal resources); and degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation.	
Proposed RME Design, Installation, Management, and Longevity	Under this criterion, the reviewers will evaluate the application based on the extent and quality to which the applicant: a. Describes the specific services the RME will provide, how and to whom they will be provided (6 pts.) b. Describes how/if the RME will become financially self-sufficient after the life of the grant. (6 pts.) c. Demonstrates municipal support for RME. If applicants do not currently have municipal support, the applicant describes how they will secure municipal support. (3 pts.) d. Demonstrates a rough timeline to implement and operate the proposed RME by the end of the grant period. (3 pts.) e. Emphasizes and outlines an adaptive management approach (2 pts.)	20
Proposed EIA Design, Installation, and Management	Under this criterion, the reviewers will evaluate the application based on the extent and quality to which the applicant: a. Describes how they will evaluate future EIA technologies that could be employed under the RME (i.e., how they will handle vendor performance claims). (6 pts.) b. Demonstrates how the systems installed under this RFA will help bring a specific technology (or technologies) from pilot or provisional use to general use (2 pts.) c. Prioritizes retrofits and/or replacement of existing standard septic systems, with preference to failing systems (2 pts.) d. Includes designated areas that contribute to nitrogen-impaired waterbodies. (1 pt.)	25

	e. Demonstrates that their selected EIA technologies consistently achieve 12 mg/l-N or less in their effluent. This should be done with summary reports (or appropriate monitoring data) on the EIA, with preference to third party verification. (6 pts.) f. Describes a timeline for EIA system installation in which systems will be installed early in the grant period, but at least one (1) year before the end of the grant period to allow for system monitoring (described in Section IV.A.vii.). (4 pts.) g. Emphasizes and outlines an adaptive management approach. (4 pts.)	
Partnerships & Leveraging	Under this criterion, the reviewers will evaluate the application based on the extent and quality to which the applicant: a. Provides a clear and concise description of how the proposed project promotes collaboration with partners from multiple stakeholder groups, such as industry, NGOs, academia, municipal, state, federal, or tribal government, etc., to develop and implement solutions that will address issues at the watershed scale (Section IV.A.iv). (2 pts.) b. The description includes the following: planned roles of each partner listed on the Project Summary; information of how each partner will contribute to the project; resources each partner brings to the project; how the partner has a vested interest in working with this partnership (other than just getting income from a sub-award or contract); how the applicant organization plans to sustain these relationships on into the future; and clear roles and responsibilities for each entity involved in the project (Section IV.A.iv.). (8 pts.) c. The quality of the letters of commitment submitted with the application. The letters should explain the partners' role in the project, what resources (funding, in-kind, technical assistance, etc.) they are bringing to the effort, and their interest in the project and community. If no letters are submitted, then the applicant will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate that they can effectively perform the project without partners (Section IV.A.iv.). (3 pts.) d. Leveraging. Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent they demonstrate: (i)	15

	how they will coordinate the use of EPA funding with other Federal and/or non-Federal sources of funds/resources to leverage additional resources beyond the grant funds awarded to carry out the proposed project(s) and/or (ii) that EPA funding will complement activities relevant to the proposed project(s) carried out by the applicant with other sources of funds or resources. Applicants will also be evaluated based on the type and amount of leveraging proposed, how the applicant will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. (2 pts.) <i>NOTE: Partnerships and collaboration with other interested stakeholders in performance of the project are integral to the success of this program. If an applicant does not demonstrate such partnerships or collaboration, they must be able to convincingly demonstrate in their application how they can effectively perform the project without any partners or collaboration. Given the nature of this program, failure to demonstrate effective partnerships or collaboration with other stakeholders will likely adversely impact the applicant's scoring under this criterion and render the application less competitive than others that include partnerships and collaboration. If an application has no commitment letters and does not demonstrate how the applicant can effectively perform the project without partners or collaboration, they will receive a zero for this criterion.</i>	
Programmatic Capabilities	Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on their programmatic capability to successfully perform the proposed activity taking into account the applicant's: a. Past performance in successfully completing federal- and non-federally-funded assistance agreements (including federal grants and cooperative agreements, but not federal contracts) within the last five years (applicants should include no more than five, preferably EPA agreements). Successful completion of federally funded assistance agreements also includes the applicant organization's history of meeting reporting requirements and submission of acceptable final technical reports under those agreements. (3 pts.)	35

	b. Extent and quality to which they adequately documented and/or reported on their progress in achieving the expected results (e.g., outcomes and outputs) under federal agency assistance agreements performed within the last five years, and if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately documented and/or reported why not, and internally developed proper corrective actions. (2 pts.) c. Organizational experience and staff expertise, including: i. Relevant staff technical expertise/qualifications, knowledge, and resources, or the ability to obtain experience and qualified staff, to successfully achieve the environmental goals for their proposed application; and (15 pts.) ii. Relevant organizational and administrative capacity, experiences, travel capabilities (e.g., ability to conduct site visits, meet with partners, and perform oversight to successfully administer the execution and management of this award), and technical and outreach expertise to accomplish the proposed plan of work successfully. (15 pts.) <i>NOTE: In evaluating applicants under items a. and b. of this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including Agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance, they must indicate this in the proposal and will receive a neutral score for these items. A neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points. If the applicant does not provide any response for these items, they will receive a score of zero for these subfactors.</i>	
Cost Effectiveness	Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the degree to which it is cost-effective, considering the following factors: organizational overhead; indirect cost; prudent cost allocation over the life of the award; organizational and partner resources brought to the effort; consistency with proposed budget detail; and ability to perform the duties	5

	within the operational range of budgets provided by SNEP. (5 pts.)	
Monitoring, Tracking and Measuring of Environmental and Programmatic Results	Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the degree to which it demonstrates the applicant's ability to: a. Provide consistent monitoring of EIA technology in a way that will either contribute to the technology's achievement of general-use approval, or for those already approved technologies, in a way that goes beyond basic monitoring to contribute to better understanding of the technology throughout the life of the grant. Ideally, monitoring done under this RFA will create data that could be accepted by both RI and MA, according to their regulations. (5 pts.) b. Implement a monitoring strategy that includes how the applicant plans to 1) identify the parameters/analytes to be measured, 2) monitoring methodologies, 3) monitoring frequency, 4) estimated costs, and 5) whether or not each parameter/analyte is required by regulation. (5 pts.) c. Develop a plan to track, store, and make publicly available monitoring performance data. (5 pts.) d. Monitor EIAs in new and innovative ways (remote sensing, etc.) beyond just the basic monitoring required by states. (2 pts.) e. Develop a timeline for RME establishment and how it will be enhanced, expanded, and/or maintained beyond the life of the award. (4 pts.) f. Identify specific environmental results that will be targeted by the activities proposed under this award, including co-benefits if appropriate. (4 pts.) g. Track and measure their progress in achieving environmental results, including milestones for the tasks being proposed and for achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes described in Section IV.A.vii. including cobenefits if appropriate (5 pts.) h. Track, store, and make publicly available system performance data. (5 pts.)	35
Transferability of Results	Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the degree to which the application includes an adequate plan to: a. Gather and develop information to support and communicate lessons learned from the proposed	15

	activities, including being available to present results as a demonstration project both during and after the life of the award. (6 pts.) b. Document and distribute results in a timely manner, including information materials and recommendations to key partners in the SNEP region and other appropriate audiences upon completion of the award. (4 pts.) c. Share and disseminate their implementation and monitoring plan and approach to serve as a model for other group/areas to learn from. (5 pts.)	
Timely Expenditure of Funds	Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on: The approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that award grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner, and before the end of the project period. (5 pts.)	5

C) Review and Selection Process

Eligible proposals will be evaluated and ranked using the criteria stated in Section V.B above by a panel of reviewers from EPA with a working knowledge of the technical and programmatic aspects needed to rigorously evaluate these proposals. The review team will then forward their rankings and evaluation to the selection official for final selections.

In making the final funding decision, the selection official will first consider funding an application in each of the two SNEP region states (Rhode Island and Massachusetts).

If no applications or only low-quality applications are received from either state, the selection official will consider the highest scoring remaining applications regardless of state. However, EPA retains the right to make no awards in either state.

In the case that applications have the same score or are closely scored the selection official will consider the following other factors: proposed EIA technologies, and programmatic goals and priorities.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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

A) Award Notification

We anticipate notification to successful applicants will be made via telephone or electronic or postal mail by July 30, 2022. 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 the EPA Region 1 Grants Management Office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer 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 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 (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.

B) Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Federal Requirements: An applicant selected for federal funding may need to adjust their application forms prior to award (see Appendix C for the list of required materials). We reserve the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final cooperative agreement amount and work plan content prior to award consistent with agency policies.

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs (IDCs) may be budgeted and charged by recipients of Federal assistance agreements in accordance with [2 C.F.R. Part 200](#). EPA's [Indirect Cost Policy for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) (IDC Policy) implements the Federal regulations, and the following applies to all EPA assistance agreements, unless there are [statutory or regulatory limits on IDCs](#).

In order for an assistance agreement recipient to use EPA funding for indirect costs, the IDC category of the recipient's assistance agreement award budget must include an amount for IDCs and at least one of the following must apply:

- With the exception of "exempt" agencies and Institutions of Higher Education as noted below, all recipients must have one of the following current (not expired) IDC rates, including IDC rates that have been extended by the cognizant agency:
 - Provisional;
 - Final;
 - Fixed rate with carry-forward;
 - Predetermined;
 - 10% de minimis rate authorized by 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f); and
 - EPA-approved use of one of the following:
 - 10% de minimis as detailed in section 6.3 of the IDC Policy; or
 - Expired fixed rate with carry-forward as detailed in section 6.4.a. of the IDC Policy.
- "Exempt" state or local governmental departments or agencies are agencies that receive up to and including \$35,000,000 in Federal funding per the department or agency's fiscal year, and must have an IDC rate application developed in accordance with [2 C.F.R. Part 200 Appendix VII](#), with documentation maintained and available for audit.

- Institutions of Higher Education must use the IDC rate in place at the time of award for the life of the assistance agreement (unless the rate was provisional at time of award, in which case the rate will change once it becomes final). As provided by [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Appendix III\(C\)\(7\)](#), the term “life of the assistance agreement”, means each competitive segment of the project. Additional information is available in the regulation.

IDCs incurred during any period of the assistance agreement that are not covered by the provisions above are not allowable costs, and must not be drawn down by the recipient. Recipients may budget for IDCs pending approval of their IDC rate by the cognizant Federal agency or an exception granted by EPA under section 6.3 or 6.4 of the IDC Policy. However, recipients may not draw down IDCs until their rate is approved or EPA grants an exception.

The IDC Policy does not govern indirect rates for subrecipients or recipient procurement contractors under EPA assistance agreements. Pass-through entities are required to comply with [2 C.F.R. § 200.331\(a\)\(4\)](#) when establishing indirect cost rates for subawards.

See the [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information.

Incurred Costs: Funding eligibility ends on the date specified in the award. The time expended and costs incurred in either the development of the proposal or the final assistance application, or in any subsequent discussions or negotiations prior to the award, are neither reimbursable nor recognizable as part of the recipient’s cost share.

Allowable Costs: EPA project officers and grant specialists have been provided guidance on determining the allowability and reasonableness of certain cost items under assistance agreements. The guidance indicates that the use of EPA grant funds for evening banquets, evening receptions or for light refreshments and meals at meetings, conferences, training workshops, and outreach activities (events) must be justified by the assistance recipient, identified in the budget detail, must be allowable under the OMB Cost Principles (2 C.F.R. Part 200 Subpart E), and approved by the EPA Award Official. Further, EPA will not approve the use of grant funds for any portion of an event where alcohol is served, purchased, or otherwise available even if grant funds are not used to purchase the alcohol.

EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans: In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 1500.12, projects that include the generation or use of environmental data are required to submit a Quality Management Plan (QMP) or Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

The QMP must document quality assurance policies and practices that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet program objectives. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R-2: EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans (refer to <https://www.epa.gov/quality/epa-qar-2-epa-requirements-quality->

[management-plans](#), Chapter 2). The recipient's QMP should be reviewed and updated annually as needed. The QMP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 45 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation.

The recipient must develop and implement quality assurance and quality control procedures, specifications and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives. The QAPP is the document that provides comprehensive details about the quality assurance/quality control requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure that project objectives are met. The QAPP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R-5: EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans. The QAPP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 30 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation. Requirements for QAPPs can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/quality/guidance-quality-assurance-project-plans-epa-qag-5>.

C) Reporting

Semi-annual reports via email to the Project Officer will be required as a condition of this award. The reports must be Microsoft Office Suite (i.e., Word, Excel) format. Semi-annual reports should include information on expenditures, project progress, outreach, collaborative efforts, and any other information that will inform the Project Officer of the nature of the recipient's work. The specific format of these progress reports will be agreed upon by the recipient and Project Officer at the outset of the grant.

Upon completion of the grant period the recipient will also need to submit a final report to the Project Officer no later than 120 days after the end of the grant period. The nature and format of this final report will be agreed upon by the recipient and Project Officer during the final year of the grant.

D) Combining Applications Into One Award

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

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact SNEP via email at SECoastalNE@epa.gov. All questions must be received in writing via email with the reference line referring to this RFA (RE: RFA EPA-I-R1-SNEP-2022A) by **6/1/2022**. All questions and answers will be posted on <http://www.epa.gov/snep>. In addition, information about the informational webinars will also be posted on this same website.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

In developing the proposal, the applicant may find the following documents helpful:

- Southeast New England Program Website <https://www.epa.gov/snep>

- EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans <https://www.epa.gov/quality>
- EPA Strategic Plan <http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>
- Please visit the EPA Grants website (<http://www.epa.gov/grants>) for questions about grant issues such as costs or eligibility.
- SNEP 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan: <https://www.epa.gov/snep/snep-strategic-plan>

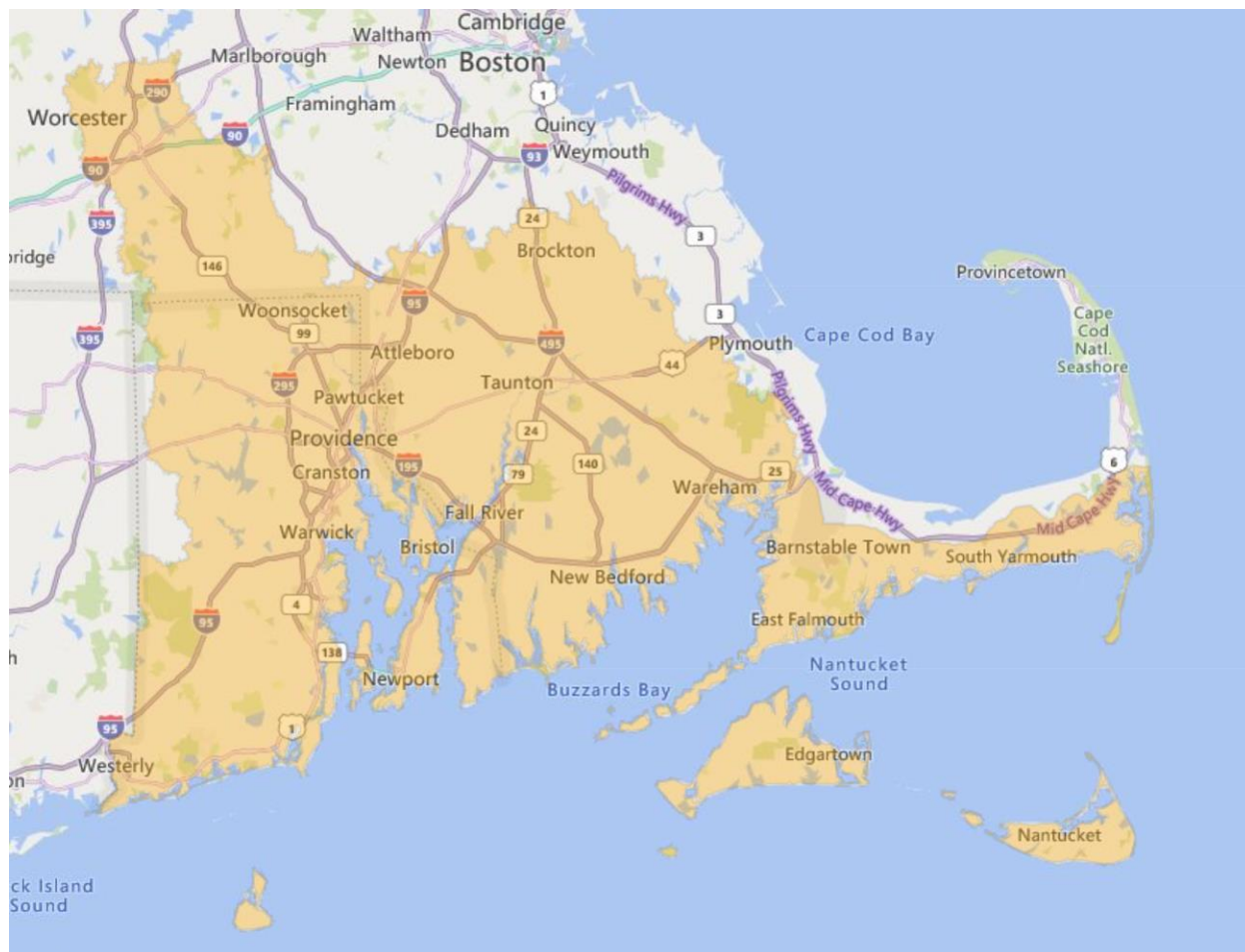
APPENDIX A. Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this RFA:

- The “applicant” refers to the organization submitting an application.
- “We” refers to EPA.
- “SNEP” refers to the Southeast New England Program.
- “SNEP geographic boundaries” refers to the area within Massachusetts and Rhode Island that includes the south-facing coastal watersheds between Westerly, Rhode Island and Chatham, Massachusetts, the watersheds of the Narragansett Bay and Buzzards Bay National Estuary Programs (NEPs), and the offshore islands of Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket, Elizabeth Islands (Town of Gosnold, MA), and Block Island (Town of New Shoreham, RI). Projects must occur within this geographic area to be eligible to be considered for funding. A high-resolution map of the SNEP area is found in Appendix A and at <https://www.epa.gov/snep/background-information-southeast-new-england-program>
- “Watershed” refers to the direct surface water drainage/runoff and/or ground water recharge area to a receiving water.
- “Shall” means “must”.
- “Innovative/Alternative Septic System (I/A Septic System)” refers to both Innovative/Alternative Septic Systems (Massachusetts) and Alternative and Experimental, A/E, Septic Systems (Rhode Island). This term encompasses any system that incorporates enhanced wastewater treatment to achieve better effluent quality, and in the case of this RFA, specifically to achieve nitrogen reduction.
- “Enhanced I/A Septic Systems (EIA Systems)” refers to those best available I/A systems that consistently achieve below 12 mg/l-nitrogen in their effluent.
- “General Use Approval” refers to an I/A septic system that has undergone state testing to show that it provides a level of environmental protection at least equivalent to a standard septic system and has shown consistent nitrogen reduction to below state standards (currently 19/mg/l-nitrogen). In the case of this RFA “General Use Approval” will refer to both “General Use Approval” (Massachusetts) and “Class One” systems (Rhode Island).
- “Responsible Management Entity” or “RME” refers to a legal entity responsible for providing various management services with the requisite managerial authority and financial and technical capacity to ensure the long-term, cost-effective management of decentralized onsite or clustered wastewater treatment facilities in accordance with applicable regulations and performance criteria.
- “Downstream” refers to waters connected to a receiving body both/or by downstream surface flow or down gradient groundwater flow.
- “Environmental Justice (EJ)” is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies. Meaningful involvement means people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment

and/or health; the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process; and decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

§APPENDIX B. SNEP Map



The SNEP geographic region includes land areas in Massachusetts and Rhode Island including the south-facing coastal watersheds between Westerly, Rhode Island and Chatham, Massachusetts, the watersheds of the Narragansett Bay and Buzzards Bay National Estuary Programs (NEPs), and offshore islands of Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, Elizabeth Islands (Town of Gosnold, Mass) and Block Islands (Town of New Shoreham, RI). An interactive map can be found at <https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=596401a1439e48a8a02ce9473b453c41>.

APPENDIX C. Checklist of Required Materials and Description of Application Content

Please note checklist is for application preparation purposes only, please do not submit.

Required Materials (as outlined in Section IV.A)

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. Narrative Proposal (Project Narrative Attachment Form)
6. Budget Detail (Budget Narrative Attachment Form) – See Appendix D for information
7. Support Materials (Other Attachment Form)
 - a. Resumes or curriculum vitae of staff that will be working on the Pilot Watershed Program
 - b. Letters of commitment from any partners identified in the proposal in order to confirm their partnership.
 - c. Letters of support and commitment for all cities and town government in which the Pilot Watershed is located.
 - d. Confirmation (or process to confirm) access to private property by their owner(s) required to carry out monitoring of water, priority habitat and practices installed as part of the agreement.
 - e. List documenting past or ongoing federal and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements administer by the applicant, including documentation supporting grant performance and meeting of reporting requirements.
 - f. Documents of non-profit status if appropriate.
 - g. Verification of proposed sources of non-federal match to the application.

Recommended Format for Proposal Narratives

Proposal narratives must be no longer than 15 numbered pages (“Pages” refers to one side of a single-spaced, typed page, i.e., a double-sided page equals two pages) 8.5x11 inches, single spaced, font size no smaller than 10pt) and must address the evaluation criteria in Section V.B. The first page should include applicant contact information and the proposal’s title. The 12 pages do not include the Support Materials listed above or, the budget detail/narrative, the SF-424, SF-424A, Key Contacts Form, or EPA Form 4700-4. The application should include the following information:

- Site Selection and Justification
 - Map of proposed RME(s) and proposed EIA installation sites
 - Written justification that describes the locations of underserved populations, and whether those communities will be meaningfully engaged or impacted by the proposed RFA.
- Proposed RME Design, Installation, Management, and Longevity
- Proposed EIA Design, Installation, and Management
- Partnerships & Leveraging

- Programmatic Capability
- Cost Effectiveness
- Monitoring, Tracking and Measuring of Environmental and Programmatic Results
- Transferability of Results
- Timely Expenditure of Funds

APPENDIX D. General Budget Development Guidance

Please use the following link for guidance on budget development:

<https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02>.

Sample Budget Detail/Narrative, in the following document contains a sample budget the applicant might find useful: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-05/documents/applicant-budget-development-guidance.pdf>

APPENDIX E. Proposed SNEP Project Metrics

Please note these metrics are still under development and are meant for reference purpose only. Final metrics to be tracked by the applicant will be determined after awards are made.

SNEP Project-Level Metrics --to be added as reporting requirements as applicable to the project's purpose			
Problem to Be Addressed	Project Activity	Metric	Additional Guidance
Education and Awareness			
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Conduct targeted outreach to raise public awareness of issues	# people targeted by education efforts	Provide # people educated about land use impacts on water quality, habitat and/or community sustainability. In NOTES section: describe the type of participants e.g., general public, farmers, students, teachers, etc. as well as the type of outreach conducted (Newsletter, Social Media Posts, Local News Segment etc.). Please also note if outreach was targeted specifically at marginalized, underserved, or environmental justice communities. If the exact number of people is not known, provide an estimate.
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Conduct targeted outreach to raise public awareness	# people demonstrating a minimum level of knowledge or attitude	Provide # people targeted that are demonstrating a minimum level of knowledge or attitude. In NOTES section: describe specific method to document improvement in knowledge, attitudes or skills e.g., signed pledge, increase in

			knowledge based on pre and post testing after information about topic provided etc. If you are not able to measure and document results do not use this metric
Capacity Building and Training			
Increase Implementation Success: Municipalities, Tribes and NGOs	Increase local implementation	# of municipalities, tribes, and NGOs that go on to successfully implement projects/policies after assistance from the Network.	Enter # municipalities, tribes, or NGOs that have received technical assistance and then implemented new projects or policies.
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Municipalities, Tribes and NGOs	Increase direct technical assistance to cities and towns, tribes and NGOs	# of municipalities, tribes, and NGOs that receive direct community assistance.	Enter # municipalities, tribes, or NGOs that have received technical assistance
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Municipalities	Provide technical assistance to cities and towns	# of municipalities in the SNEP region that have engaged with the SNEP Network through direct assistance or training.	Enter # municipalities that have received technical assistance or training from the SNEP Network
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Municipalities, Tribes and NGOs	Increase training opportunities for cities and towns, tribes and NGOs	# of professional development opportunities made available to municipalities, tribes, and NGOs.	Enter # professional development opportunities, noting those with professional accreditation or continuing education credit, as applicable.
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Municipalities, Tribes and NGOs	Provide peer-to-peer training	# of peer-to-peer exchanges to share successful approaches to addressing regional challenges.	Enter # peer-to-peer exchanges
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Municipalities, Tribes and NGOs	Increase knowledge of best management practices	# of municipalities, tribes, and NGOs receiving training, outreach and education to share and promote best practices across southeast New England.	Enter # municipalities, tribes, or NGOs that received direct assistance and/or training on selection and use of best management practices.

Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Financing	Increase understanding of financing options	# of enhanced training opportunities made available to municipalities, tribes, and NGOs on traditional and innovative financing for environmental projects.	Enter # enhanced training opportunities provided about financing options
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Financing	Increase development of financing plans	# of municipalities and tribes that, with Network assistance, complete a finance plan including analysis of needs and priorities as well as potential funding mechanisms.	Enter # municipalities and tribes that received SNEP Network assistance and completed a finance plan.
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Stormwater	Increase knowledge of new stormwater practices	# of enhanced training opportunities made available to municipalities, tribes, and NGOs on innovative stormwater practices.	Enter # enhanced training opportunities focused on stormwater
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Nature-based Solutions	Increased planning to use nature-based stormwater practices	# of municipalities and tribes that, with Network assistance, update and incorporate nature-based stormwater management programs and/or site plans	Enter # municipalities and tribes that received SNEP Network assistance to update and incorporate nature-based stormwater practices in their stormwater management plans and/or site plans.
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Nature-based Solutions	Adoption of holistic planning regulations	# of municipalities and tribes that adopt low impact development, open space, or green infrastructure ordinances.	Enter # municipalities and tribes that have adopted new open space, or green infrastructure ordinances.
Increase Direct Assistance and Training: Nature-based Solutions	Increased knowledge and use of holistic planning	# of municipalities and tribes that complete Bylaw Review Tool/Low Impact Development Checklist trainings and/or use the Bylaw Review Tool/ Low Impact Development Checklist.	Enter # municipalities and tribes using these SNEP Network tools.
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Provide training to the public or stakeholders	% people demonstrating a minimum level of knowledge, attitudes or skills after a training/event/workshop/webinar etc.	Provide % people targeted that are demonstrating a minimum level of knowledge, attitude, or skill. In NOTES section: describe specific method to document improvement in knowledge, attitudes or skills e.g., signed pledge, increase in

			knowledge based on pre and post testing after information about topic provided etc. If you are not able to measure and document results do not use this metric
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Educate local government entities	# government entities participating	Provide # of different government entities participating in project activities. A participating entity could be a county, municipal or tribal board or department. In NOTES section: describe specific government entities participating e.g. Barnstable County Health Department, Falmouth Department of Public Work, etc.
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Educate the public	# workshops, webinars, stakeholder meetings	Enter # workshops, webinars, stakeholder meetings held. In NOTES section: provide a short description of the type/content of event
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Engage volunteers	# volunteers participating	Enter # volunteers participating in the project. In NOTES section: provide a short description of the type of volunteer and the type of volunteer engagement
Lack of Awareness: Land Use Impacts on Environment and/or Sustainability	Increase partner collaboration	# partner organizations on the project	Enter # partner organizations engaged in the project
Nutrient, Sediment and Bacteria Reduction			

Degraded Water Quality: Onsite Wastewater Systems	Manage onsite wastewater systems to reduce nitrogen	# onsite wastewater treatment systems providing improved nutrient reduction (ex. innovative/alternative septic systems, composting toilets, etc.)	Enter # and type of improved onsite wastewater treatment. Examples include innovative/alternative nitrogen reduction septic systems, composting, packaging, incinerating, and urine diverting toilets installed.
Degraded Water Quality: Onsite Wastewater Systems	Manage onsite wastewater systems to reduce nitrogen	# pounds reduced nitrogen load from improved onsite wastewater systems (pounds/year)	Enter estimated # pounds of nitrogen per year that is no longer discharged to surface water or groundwater through use of onsite wastewater system (innovative/alternative nitrogen reduction septic system, composting, packaging, incinerating, and urine diverting toilets installed).
Community Sustainability			
Overburdened Communities: Technical Assistance and Funding	Provide technical assistance and funding to over-burdened and under-served areas	# of environmental justice communities receiving SNEP assistance.	Enter # communities that have received SNEP assistance through a direct award from EPA, the Network or SWIG.
Monitoring and Research to Track Results and Inform Management			
Research new methods or tools: Applied Research Studies	Study new technologies, models, methods, or approaches	# applied research studies completed with findings reported to management	Enter # applied research studies completed with findings reported to SNEP managers and stakeholders. In NOTES section: describe the focus of the study, the SNEP-regional entities who will use the studies, and how the information will be used to inform management of Southeast New England or support the activities of key stakeholders such as citizen scientists

Share Project Benefits: Fiscal Wellbeing	Determine ecosystem services achieved by projects	# projects that include valuation of project's contribution to ecosystem services	Enter # projects that include ecosystem service valuation. Note: indicate if the valuation is of environmental, social, and/or economic change in value.
Track Environmental Change: Direct Work and Track Results	Monitor to track change in environmental condition	# monitoring programs	Enter # monitoring programs established or underway. In NOTES section: describe the type and scope of monitoring conducted e.g., parameter(s).
Leveraged Funding			
Demonstrate Program Benefit: Fiscal Commitment	Leverage funding	\$ funding leveraged (including match, over-match, and non-match eligible leveraged funds)	Enter \$ amount of total project value above that provided by EPA/SNEP
Develop, Test and Evaluate Priority Innovative Technologies			
Degraded Water Quality: Wastewater	Increase use of IA septic systems	# towns that include use of nitrogen-reducing IA onsite septic systems as means to reduce their nitrogen impacts.	Enter # towns that have new IA nitrogen- reducing septic systems installed.