

Bureau of Reclamation

Notice of Funding Opportunity

WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects

Funding Opportunity Number

R26AS00017

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BASIC INFORMATION

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: R26AS00017

Assistance Listing Number(s): 15.507

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$60,000,000

Expected Number of Awards: 30

Award Ceiling: \$3,000,000

Award Floor: \$50,000

This NOFO will allocate up to \$60 million in available funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Public Law 117-58. All entities may request up to \$3 million in Federal funds for projects that can be completed within 3 years of award. Total project cost (including both Federal funding request and non-Federal cost share) should not exceed \$6 million.

Cost Sharing Required?

Yes

Closing Date Explanation

This funding opportunity will have two application deadlines. The first application period will close Wednesday, September 9th, 2026, and the second application period will close Wednesday, September 8th, 2027.

Wednesday, September 9th, 2026, 4:00pm MDT

And Wednesday, September 8th, 2027, 4:00pm MDT

U.S. states and local governments may be required under [Executive Order 12372](#), [Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs](#) to submit their application to their State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. For more information, see the [Intergovernmental Review SPOC List](#).

Have Questions?

For questions regarding applicant and project eligibility or application content, contact the Program Coordinator, Katherine Tucker, ktucker@usbr.gov, (303) 445-2586.

For questions regarding application submission, contact the funding opportunity team at bor-sha-fafoa@usbr.gov.

Please include the funding opportunity number R26AS00017 in the subject line of any email correspondence.

Executive Summary

The objective of the WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects funding opportunity is to invite eligible entities to apply for funding to implement projects per the authorizing language referenced above that benefit water resource management for multiple uses, including water conservation and efficiency projects, water infrastructure improvements, and river and watershed restoration. Projects that balance numerous community interests (agriculture, recreation, fisheries, power, etc.), were developed collaboratively, and provide significant watershed benefits will be prioritized under this funding opportunity.

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

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

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

Additional Information on Eligibility

Applicants eligible to receive an award under this funding opportunity are described below.

Category A Applicants

- States, Tribes, irrigation districts, and water districts;
- State, regional, or local authorities, the members of which include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority; and
- Other organizations with water or power delivery authority.

Category A applicants must be located in the Western United States or Territories as identified in the Reclamation Act of June 17, 1902, as amended and supplemented; specifically: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Category B Applicants:

Nonprofit conservation organizations that are acting in partnership with, and with the agreement of an entity described in Category A.

All Category B applicants must be located in the United States, or the specific Territories identified above under Category A Applicants. Applicants applying under this category should include a letter of support or other documentation demonstrating that they are acting in partnership with and with the agreement of the Category A entity. Reclamation may request additional information to verify that the applicant meets this requirement.

Category C Applicants:

Watershed groups as defined in the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Section 6001(6).

All Category C applicants must be located in the United States, or the specific Territories identified above under Category A Applicants.

To be eligible, the watershed group must:

1. Be a grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues within the relevant watershed;
2. Capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources in the watershed;
3. Make decisions on a consensus basis; and
4. Represent a diverse group of stakeholders representing different water use sectors, including hydroelectric producers; livestock grazing; timber production; land development; recreation or tourism; irrigated agriculture; the environment; municipal water supplies; private property owners; Federal, state and local governments; Tribes; and disadvantaged communities.

Applications submitted by watershed groups will be ranked separately from all other applications.

A watershed group is eligible to apply for 50-percent cost-shared funding without a Category A partner but must have a Category A partner to be eligible for 75-percent Federal funding. Watershed groups requesting 75-percent Federal funding should include a letter of support or other documentation demonstrating that they are acting in partnership with and with the agreement of the Category A entity. Reclamation may request additional information regarding whether an applicant meets the definition of a watershed group during the application review process.

Ineligible Applicants

Those not eligible to apply to include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Federal Governmental entities
- Individuals
- Institutes of higher education

Cost Sharing Requirement

Cost Sharing Required?

Yes

Generally, a 25 percent non-Federal cost share is required at the time of award. A watershed group is eligible to apply for 50-percent cost-shared funding without a Category A partner but must have a Category A partner to be eligible for 75-percent Federal funding. Watershed groups requesting 75-percent Federal funding should include a letter of support or other documentation demonstrating that they are acting in partnership with and with the agreement of the Category A entity.

For applicants seeking a 25% cost-share, if the total project cost is \$4 million, the minimum amount of non-Federal cost share would be \$1 million. All cost-share contributions must be from a non-Federal source and meet the requirements of 2 CFR 200.306.

Example Project Funding Breakdown:

Total Project Costs	\$4,000,000
<u>Minimum required cost share-25%</u>	<u> </u> x 25%
Applicant share of project costs	\$1,000,000
Federal share	\$3,000,000

Note: This cost-sharing requirement is not applicable to American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands.¹

¹See Public Law 95-134, Title V, § 501 (1977) (codified at 48 U.S.C. 1469a), as amended by Public Law 96-205, Title V, § 601

GET READY TO APPLY

Required System Registrations

Unique Entity Identifier and SAM.gov Registration

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

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

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

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

GRANTS.GOV

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

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Goals

- Through WaterSMART, Reclamation leverages Federal and non-Federal funding to work cooperatively with States, Tribes, and local entities as they plan for and implement actions to increase water supply reliability through investments in existing infrastructure and attention to local water conflicts.

The objective of the WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects funding opportunity is to invite eligible entities to apply for funding to implement projects consistent with the authorizing statute, that benefit water resource management for multiple uses, including water conservation and efficiency projects, water infrastructure improvements, and river and watershed restoration projects. Projects that balance numerous community interests (agriculture, recreation, fisheries, power, etc.), were developed collaboratively, and provide significant watershed benefits are prioritized under this funding opportunity. Eligible projects include those that improve the timing or quantity of available water for the benefit of watershed health; improve water quality and temperature; or improve conditions and outcomes for fish and wildlife.

Program Description

The WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects funding opportunity supports projects that are collaboratively developed, provide benefits to multiple sectors, and result in an improvement to fish and wildlife habitat.

Projects at an advanced stage of design and engineering (generally 60% final design and above) are prioritized under the [merit review criteria](#). A 60% design level could include technical study and design documentation supporting the preferred alternative in sufficient detail to be able to obtain the necessary permits and estimated funding required for project implementation.

Applicants with a project at only a conceptual level of design should consider applying for funding under the WaterSMART Planning and Project Design or WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program funding opportunities.

Certified Local Governments are encouraged to prioritize projects in support of the celebration of America's 250th birthday (America250). This may include, but is not limited to, preservation planning, interpretation, public engagement, and rehabilitation projects that recognize and honor the nation's founding, history, and cultural heritage.

Funding Amounts and Period of Performance. Category A and Category B applicants may request up to \$3 million in Federal funds for projects that can be completed within 3 years of award.

Category C applicants (watershed groups) can request up to \$3 million in funding for activities to be performed within 3 years of award, with no more than \$1 million to be available per year. Each year, Reclamation must determine whether a recipient has made sufficient progress on their

project to justify additional funding. Reclamation will review the required semi-annual performance reports to make this determination.

Geographical Limitation. All components of the project should be geographically linked (i.e., occurring within the same watershed). In general, if you are seeking funding for multiple project components, and the components are interrelated or closely related, you should combine these in one application. However, if the projects are only loosely related, you should submit them as separate applications. Applications that do not conform to this limitation may be removed from consideration.

Construction Start Date Limitation. Proposed projects should not have an estimated construction start date that is prior to 12 months after selections are announced. Selections for the first application period are anticipated to be announced in March 2027 and selections for the second application period are anticipated to be announced in March 2028. Applications for projects that do not conform to this limitation may be removed from consideration.

Monitoring Requirements. Projects that are intended to improve streamflows or aquatic habitat, and that are requesting \$500,000 or more in Federal funding, must include information about plans to monitor the benefits of the project. In your response to Sub-criterion A.4. Project Monitoring, please describe the plan to monitor improved streamflows or aquatic habitat benefits over a five-year period once the project has been completed. Provide detail on the steps to be taken to carry out the plan.

Projects Occurring on Private Land. If all or part of the proposed project involves facilities or land that is owned by an individual or entity other than the applicant or Category A partner (if applicable), a letter from the land/facility owner consenting to the project should also be included in the application package.

Multiple Applications. Multiple applications for funding may be submitted for consideration under this funding opportunity, provided that the project scopes are not duplicative. Category A entities are limited to a total of \$3,000,000 in Federal funding per Application Period through this NOFO. Category B applicants may be considered for multiple awards up to a total of \$9,000,000 per Application Period, if the Category A partners are different for each project selected.

Eligible Project Activities

Reclamation will provide funding for on-the-ground projects that benefit water resource management for multiple uses, including water conservation and efficiency projects, water infrastructure improvements, and river and watershed restoration projects. Projects may include one or more of the following activities:

Water Supply Reliability: Activities to increase the volume of available water, reduce water loss, or better track and manage water, all with the purpose of increasing supply reliability for multiple uses. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Canal Lining or Piping
- Irrigation Flow Measurements

- Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) automation

Note: *Water supply reliability actions must be coupled with a means of ensuring that the conserved water will be made available for beneficial instream use. This could include a formal mechanism to commit conserved water to instream flows (e.g., instream water right), a seasonal agreement to modify use at certain times of the year, or other types of assurances (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding between applicable water right holders and stakeholders).*

Applicants with a water supply reliability project that does not have beneficial instream use as a primary purpose and/ or is not coupled with a formal mechanism to benefit instream uses should consider applying under the WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grants or Drought Resiliency Projects funding opportunities.

Strategic Water Management: Water management changes or infrastructure improvements that will improve water supply reliability and provide in-stream benefits. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Point of diversion changes to increase in-stream water supplies in critical reaches
- Treating return flows to improve water quality
- Water storage to improve streamflow
- Improving the timing or volume of available flows at particular locations

Restoration: Activities to restore or improve in-stream habitat or adjacent riparian areas for the benefit of multiple system users, including fish and wildlife. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Restoration of aquatic, riparian, or floodplain habitat
- Restoration of lateral floodplain and/or wetland connectivity with a river channel
- Implementation of beaver dam analogs, post-assisted log structures, wetland construction for treatment of irrigation water or stormwater flows
- Water quality or temperature improvement actions

Monitoring Plans: Eligible activities include but are not limited to, development of a monitoring program, pre-construction monitoring to track baseline conditions, installation of monitoring equipment and up to twelve months post-construction monitoring to assess the success of the project and project outcomes. However, the costs for these activities shall not exceed 25 percent of the total project costs. Please note that long-term (i.e., more than twelve months) post-construction monitoring is considered normal operation and maintenance, and the costs are the responsibility of the applicant. However, a plan to monitor project outcomes for five years is required for projects that are intended to improve streamflow or aquatic habitat conditions.

Project Specific Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach: Outreach and engagement regarding final planning and construction processes with a diverse group of stakeholders such as municipal, agricultural, or recreational interest groups, environmental non-profits, landowners, Tribes, and state and local water management entities.

Invasives Species Treatment: Activities to remove invasive vegetation and/or removal of non-native or invasive fish species. Removal of non-native/ invasive species must be directly linked to watershed health. Treatment is limited to once per geographic footprint. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Treatment and removal of invasive vegetation (Tamarisk, Russian Olive, etc.)
- Electro-fishing or other means of removing non-native/ invasive fish
- Installation of barrier fencing or buffer vegetation

Please note: Projects that include removal of invasive vegetation must include revegetation with native species at the removal site OR must provide a clear explanation of why revegetation is not necessary for the specific ecosystem in which the project is located. Projects that include removal of non-native or invasive fish species must include measures to prevent reintroduction (e.g., fencing, fish barrier). We encourage applicants considering a project that includes removal of invasive species reach out the Program Coordinator identified in the [Have Questions](#) section above.

Fisheries Management: Activities to restore or improve fish passage, or benefit the general health of fisheries, including commercial, recreational, and Tribally important fisheries. These may include but are not limited to:

- Fish passage installations or modifications
- Fish ramp or ladder projects
- Removal of non-native fish or installation of exclusion infrastructure
- Fish habitat improvements (i.e. gravel augmentation for spawning habitat, etc.)

Forest Management: Forest management activities to protect water resources. Projects must have a clear nexus to water resources or water resources management. Reclamation can only provide funding for forest management activities one time per geographic footprint; additional treatments are considered operations and maintenance and are not eligible (see Section C.5.1. Operations, Maintenance, and Replacement). Eligible activities include:

- **Fuels Management** – Fuels management to reduce the risk of severe wildland fire, through mechanical and/or chemical treatments.
- **Post-Wildland Fire Restoration** – Post-wildland fire restoration activities, including measures to stabilize soil, reduce erosion, and remove post-fire sedimentation; invasive species removal; planting and seeding native vegetation; forest stabilization; and reforestation. Projects that include removal of post-wildland fire sediment must also (1) implement revegetation/reforestation and erosion control techniques to reduce future sedimentation and (2) complete habitat restoration in any river or reservoir from which sediment is removed.

Ineligible Project Activities

Project activities that are not eligible for funding under this funding opportunity include, but are not limited to:

Operations, Maintenance, and Replacement. In accordance with Section 9504 of Secure Water Act, activities that are considered normal operations, maintenance, and replacement (OM&R) are not eligible for funding. OM&R is described as system improvements that replace or repair existing infrastructure or function without providing increased efficiency or effectiveness over the expected life of the improvement.

On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Improvements. On-farm irrigation efficiency improvements are ineligible. Applicants interested in on-farm improvements should contact the U.S.

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to investigate opportunities for Federal assistance. For more information on NRCS programs, including application deadlines and a description of available funding, please contact your local NRCS office or see www.nrcs.usda.gov for further contact information in your area. This does not preclude projects located on private land. Some project components may occur on private land, including on agricultural land, if they are part of a project with broader benefits to watershed health.

New Conveyance Infrastructure for Municipal or Agricultural Water Delivery. The construction of new conveyance to allow for the distribution of additional or new water supplies for municipal or agricultural use is ineligible.

Water & Land Purchases and Easements. Activities for the purchase or lease of water or land or to acquire an easement (other than a construction easement) are ineligible. Applicants seeking funding to purchase water in a drought emergency should request emergency drought assistance under Reclamation's Drought Response Program.

Pilot Projects. Pilot studies to evaluate technical capability, economic feasibility, or viability for full-scale implementation or to test an unproven material or technology are ineligible.

Building Construction. The construction of a building (e.g., a building to house administrative staff or to promote public awareness of water conservation) is ineligible.

Removal and Prevention of Non-Fish Taxa, including Removal of Invasive Species. Activities to remove or prevent the invasion or spread of invasive mussel species and other taxa (with the exception of invasive fish species) are ineligible. Reclamation provides funding for invasive mussel projects under Reclamation's Integrated Pest Management and Invasive Species Program. Please contact Heidi McMaster, at hmcmaster@usbr.gov, for additional information.

Activities Subject to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and Mine Remediation Projects. Activities that are required to comply with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), are ineligible. In general, mine remediation activities are not eligible for funding. However, some low-risk activities may be determined to be eligible under certain conditions. If your project includes remediation or restoration work in or around a mine site, please contact the Program Coordinator identified in the [Have Questions](#) section above.

General Training, Education, and Outreach Activities. General education activities, general stakeholder outreach and the implementation of citizen science training programs are not eligible under this NOFO.

Projects Receiving Other Federal Financial Assistance. Proposals for projects or activities that are funded under another Federal Financial Assistance agreement are ineligible. General staff training is also ineligible as a direct project activity.

For more information regarding WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resource Projects, including information on previously funded projects and applications, visit <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/ewrp/index.html>.

Legislative Authority

Section 9504(a) of the Secure Water Act, Subtitle F of Title IX of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law (P.L.) 111-11 (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 10364), as amended; Section 6002 of the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Subtitle A of Title VI of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, P.L. 111-11 (16 1015); and Section 40907 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58.

Type of Award

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

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

Awards will be made through a grant or cooperative agreement, depending on the project. This may include collaboration or participation in the management of the project and/or review, input, and approval during implementation of the project.

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application Content and Format

Pre-Application Requirements

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

Application Documents

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

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance Note: For applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Representative's signature (or electronic equivalent) on the Application for Federal Assistance form also represents their certification of the statements in Appendix A to 43 CFR 18-Certification Regarding Lobbying	Required from all applicants

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs	Required for construction and non-construction projects
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Required if requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds <u>and</u> the applicant has used or plans to use funds other than Federal appropriated funds for lobbying related to the proposed project.
Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019). Must include, in plain language: • Award purpose, • Activities to be performed, • Expected deliverables or outcomes, • Intended beneficiaries, Subrecipient activities (if known or specified at time of award)	Required from all applicants

SF-424A Budget Information

Reclamation uses the SF-424A for both construction and non-construction programs. The SF-424A should be fully filled out, including both the costs that will be paid with Federal funds and those that will be paid with the non-Federal funds. In Section D of the SF-424A – Forecasted Cash Needs, applicants do not have to project cash needs by quarter. Instead, include all costs in the first quarter of the first year and enter “0” in all other fields of Section E – Budget Estimates of Federal Funds Needed for Balance of the Project.

Project Abstract Summary

Failure to include a Project Abstract Summary will not result in removal of the proposal from consideration by Reclamation.

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative, including responses to the Merit Review Criteria shall be limited to a maximum of 30 consecutively numbered pages. If this section exceeds 30 pages, only the first 30 pages will be evaluated. **The full application, including all attachments, should not exceed 100 pages. If the application exceeds 100 pages, only the first 100 pages will be considered in the merit review.**

The font should be at least 12 points in size and easily readable. Page size must be 8½ by 11 inches, including charts, maps, and drawings. Margins should be standard 1-inch margins. Oversized pages will not be accepted.

The Project Narrative should include the components described below. Applicants should only describe the work that is reflected in the budget - do not include activities that are already complete or will be completed in a future phase.

Title Page: Provide a brief, informative, and descriptive title for the proposed work that indicates the nature of the project. Include the name and address of the applicant, and the name and address, e-mail address, and telephone of the Project Manager.

Table of Contents: List all major sections of the proposal in the table of contents.

Executive Summary: The executive summary should include:

- The date, applicant name, city, county, and state.
- Please indicate whether you are a Category A, B, or C applicant. If you are a Category B or C applicant, please identify the Category A partner and briefly explain how you are acting in partnership.
- A short paragraph project summary that provides the location of the project, a brief description of the work that will be carried out, any partners involved, expected benefits, how those benefits relate to the water management issues you plan to address, and what planning document and objective the project supports. This information will be used to create a summary of your project for Reclamation's website if the project is selected for funding.

Example: *Trout Unlimited and the Middle Colorado Agriculture Collaborative will upgrade, relocate, or combine six diversion structures to remove instream barriers to fish passage in the Elk Creek west of Glenwood Springs, Colorado. These upgrades will open approximately five miles of aquatic habitat in Elk Creek to fish passage. The project is also anticipated to improve stream morphology, increase instream flows, and benefit irrigators by increasing the operational capabilities of the diversions and reducing transmission losses of vital irrigation water. This project supports the goals of the 2020 Middle Colorado Integrated Water Management Plan, which was developed in collaboration with the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Basin Roundtable, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the GarPit Conservation District, and the Middle Colorado Watershed Council.*

- State the length of time and estimated completion date for the proposed project (month/year). Note: Proposed projects should not have an estimated construction start date that is prior to 12 months after the submission deadline for the application period.
- Whether or not the proposed project is located on a Federal facility.
- Whether or not the proposed project is located in a river basin that is adversely impacted by a Reclamation water project.
- Whether or not the proposed project is for the purpose of meeting existing environmental mitigation or compliance obligations under Federal or state law. If so, identify the mitigation or compliance requirement and how the proposed grant project will meet this requirement.

Project Location: Provide detailed information on the proposed project location or project area including a map showing the geographic location. For example, [project name] is located in [state and county] approximately [distance] miles [direction, e.g., northeast] of [nearest town]. The project latitude is [##°##'N] and longitude is [###°##'W].

Technical Project Description: Provide a comprehensive description of the technical aspects of your project, including the scope of work to be accomplished and the approach for the on-the-ground project. This description should provide detailed information about the project materials and equipment including what is currently installed and a description of the upgrade being made. Include in your description the necessary site preparation, removal of materials, motorized and rotating equipment required for installation, site laydown and mobilization areas, and areas impacted by construction. This section provides an opportunity for the applicant to provide a clear description of the technical nature and installation process of the project and to address any aspect of the project that reviewers may need additional information to understand. Please identify if any buildings, structures, or features associated with the project are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (over 50 years of age).

Please do not include your project schedule and milestones here; that information is requested in response to the Merit Review Criterion D—Readiness to Proceed. In addition, please avoid discussion of the benefits of the project, which are also requested in response to merit review criteria. This section is solely intended to provide an understanding of the technical aspects of the project.

Merit Review Criteria: “The Merit Review Criteria” section provides a detailed description of each criterion and sub-criterion and points associated with each. The merit review criteria portion of the application should thoroughly address each criterion and sub-criterion in the order presented to assist in the complete and accurate merit review of the proposal.

Applicants are encouraged to copy and paste the [Merit Review Criteria](#) into their applications to ensure that all necessary information is adequately addressed.

Letters of Support: Attach all letters of support from interested stakeholders at the end of your application. Letters received after the application deadline will not be evaluated. Letters of support will not be counted towards page limits.

Budget Narrative

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

Budget items must be:

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

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

- **De Minimis Rate:** If eligible, state if your organization is opting to use the de minimis rate of up to 15% of total modified direct costs. Entities that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate (including provisional rate) may propose to use the de minimis rate. For more information, refer to [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#).

- **Negotiated Rate:** State if you will negotiate with your cognizant agency. If your organization has previously negotiated a rate, attach a copy of the most recently negotiated rate agreement (active or expired).

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

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

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

Environmental and Regulatory Compliance Costs. Include costs in the budget for completing compliance activities for state and Federal environmental and cultural resources laws and regulations. Applicants may contact their [local Reclamation office](#) to discuss the compliance requirements and potential costs. If the project is selected for award, these costs will be reviewed for accuracy and adjusted as needed. See "Administration and National Policy Requirements" for additional detail.

Technical Assistance. If the proposed project is selected, Reclamation may be able to provide technical assistance or services **after** award on a fee for service basis. Before applying, discuss the potential for technical assistance with Reclamation and include these costs in the budget. For more information, contact the Program Coordinator identified in the Have Questions section above.

Program Cost Restrictions

Proposal Costs. The costs for preparing and submitting an application in response to this funding opportunity, including developing data necessary to support the proposal, are not eligible project costs and must not be included in the project budget.

Monitoring Cost Limitation. The costs to develop a monitoring program, conduct pre-construction monitoring to track baseline conditions, purchase and install monitoring equipment, and to conduct up to twelve months post-construction monitoring shall not exceed 25 percent of the total project cost.

Other Project Costs. The costs for the purchase or lease of water or land, or to secure an easement other than a construction easement are not eligible project costs under this funding opportunity.

Conflict of Interest and Unresolved Matters Disclosures:

If any actual or potential conflict of interest exists related to this project at the time of application, the applicant must provide sufficient information to support a program determination

of significance per [2 CFR 1402.112](#). Refer to [2 CFR 200.112](#) Conflict of Interest and [2 CFR 200.113](#).

Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement:

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

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

Other Required Information

Letters of Commitment: Applicants should include letters of commitment from third-party cost share sources. Letters of commitment should identify the amount of funding committed, the date the funds are available, time constraints on the availability of funds, and any other funding contingencies.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Address to Request Application Package

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

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

Submission Dates and Times

Closing Date for Applications: 09/08/2027

Closing Date Explanation

This funding opportunity will have two application deadlines. The first application period will close Wednesday, September 9th, 2026, and the second application period will close Wednesday, September 8th, 2027.

Wednesday, September 9th, 2026, 4:00pm MDT

And Wednesday, September 8th, 2027, 4:00pm MDT

Submission Instructions

Apply Through Grants.gov

To apply through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), please follow the instructions in the [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#). Before applying, ensure that at least one person at your organization is registered and has the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only the AOR can submit the application. If you need more users, they must create their own Grants.gov account. Follow these steps below to apply:

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

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

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

By mail or United States Postal Service overnight services:

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

By all other express delivery and courier services:

Bureau of Reclamation mail services
Attn: NOFO Team
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 67, Rm. 152
6th Avenue and Kipling Street
Denver, CO 80225

If you submit a hard copy application, we encourage you to reach out to the Reclamation Financial Assistance Contact listed in the “[Basic Information](#)” section before 2:00 PM MT on the submission date to confirm that your application has been received.

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Eligibility Review

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

Applications will be removed if they do not include:

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

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

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

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

Merit Review

Applications will be evaluated against the merit review criteria listed below. Responses to the criteria should be included in the Project Narrative. Applicants should thoroughly address each criterion and any sub-criteria in the order presented below.

Merit Review Criteria Scoring Summary	Points:
Criterion A. Project Benefits	40
Criterion B. Project Planning and Support	15
Criterion C. Readiness to Proceed	15
Criterion D. Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities	20

Criterion E. Construction Priority	10
Criterion F. Cost Share Priority	5
Total	105

General Recommendations for Responding to Merit Review Criteria

Applications that include clear documentation and/or support for each of the responses will receive the most points. This should include qualitative information and quantitative data, such as citations to relevant studies or statistics, sampling data and observations, photographic evidence, relevant analyses, and other applicable support.

Criterion A. Project Benefits (40 points)

Up to **35 points** may be awarded based on an evaluation of the extent to which the project is expected to benefit multiple sectors and watershed health. Responses should describe the anticipated benefits, include quantified projections of those benefits, and, if applicable, the metrics that will be used to evaluate progress or determine success.

Note: If the work proposed for WaterSMART funding is one phase of a larger phased project, please only describe the benefits stemming from the work described in the Technical Project Description section of the Project Narrative.

Sub-Criterion A.1. Benefits to Multiple Users, Stakeholders, & Interests (15 points)

Identify the water users, stakeholders, and other interests in the basin that will benefit from the proposed project. Explain how they will benefit from the project and the scale and significance of the anticipated benefits.

Projects that directly benefit multiple users/ sectors, and/or provide significant and quantifiable benefits will receive the most points under this sub-criterion.

Address the following as applicable:

- Will the project benefit multiple sectors and/or water users? For example, will the project provide watershed health benefits and benefits to municipal, agricultural, Tribal, or industrial water users?
- Will the project protect critical infrastructure? For example, will the project restore or replace dams, roads, diversions, or other infrastructure critical to the local community and economy?
- Will the project benefit the health of fisheries, and/or boost commercial, recreational, subsistence, or Tribal ceremonial fishing? For example, will the project create additional spawning habitat for salmonids or sport fish, or eliminate barriers to fish passage, creating new fishing opportunity in previously inaccessible river reaches?
- Will the project increase or enhance public access to nature or recreational opportunities? For example, will the project create or restore riverside trails and access points, restore or improve boat launches, or alter the river channel to enhance river recreation?

- Will the project result in enhanced public safety? For example, will the project reduce or eliminate the risk of flooding or wildfire, create or protect transportation infrastructure (roads or bridges, etc.), or increase safety for boaters?
- Will the project help to reduce long term maintenance costs and labor? For example, will the project involve an upgrade, replacement, or removal that will reduce annual required maintenance (for example, annual creation of a push-up dam), saving stakeholders money and time?
- Will the project help to create new jobs or economic opportunity within the watershed? For example, will the project promote new jobs in the water management, recreation, or commercial fishing industries?
- Will the project help to reduce water conflicts within the watershed? For example, will it mutually benefit stakeholders who have disagreed in the past over water resource management, or help to stretch or conserve limited water resources multiple interests compete for?

Sub-Criterion A.2. Water Supply, Quality, and System Benefits (10 points)

Explain how the proposed project will improve water quantity or availability, water quality, and/or hydrologic function in the watershed.

*Applications containing a well-supported description and quantification of the benefits resulting directly from the proposed project **and** the metrics that will be used to evaluate the project's success or progress will receive more points under this sub-criterion.*

Address the following as applicable:

Water Quantity/ Availability:

- What are the current water supply conditions and how much water will be conserved (in acre-feet per year) as a direct result of the project?
- How much of the conserved water will be made available (via a formal mechanism) for beneficial instream use? *Note: For more information on eligible water conservation projects under this funding opportunity, please see [Eligible Project Activities](#).*
- How will the project make more water available, or make water available at a more advantageous time or location?

Water Quality and Hydrologic Function:

- What are the current water quality conditions?
- How will the project improve those conditions? For example, will the project address dissolved oxygen issues, reduce nutrient pollution, improve temperature variations, eliminate violations to water quality standards, etc.?
- What will be the impact of the improved water quality? What are the anticipated effects and the beneficiaries?
- Will the project improve hydrologic function of the watershed? For example, will the project connect or restore floodplain/ wetland connectivity, increase groundwater recharge, or provide other hydrologic benefits?

Sub-Criterion A.3. Fish and Wildlife Benefits (10 points)

Explain how and to what extent the proposed project will benefit aquatic or riparian species, improve aquatic or riparian habitat, and/or increase watershed resiliency.

Applications containing a well-supported description and quantification of benefits resulting directly from the proposed project and the metrics that will be used to evaluate the project's success or progress will receive more points under this sub-criterion.

Species:

- What is the current condition of species health and/or species populations in the project area? Specifically identify the species that will directly benefit from the project and their status (e.g., Federally or state endangered, native species, sport fish, etc.).
- How will the project benefit those species? For example, are there any projected increases in species populations or improvements to species health that are anticipated to result from the project?

Habitat:

- What is the current condition of aquatic or riparian habitat in the project area?
- How will the project benefit the aquatic or riparian habitat? For example, will the project reconnect, create, or restore habitat, create new spawning and/or rearing habitat, improve the quality and permanence of habitat, or remove barriers to fish passage?

Resiliency:

- What is the current status of watershed resilience? For example, is the watershed vulnerable to, or slow to recover from, severe flooding, wildfire, or other disruptions?
- How will the project increase watershed resilience? For example, will the project reduce the impacts of development, reduce the risk of severe wildland fire and its impacts, or facilitate watershed recovery from floods, wildfire, or drought?

Sub-Criterion A.4. Project Performance and Monitoring (5 points)

Describe the plan to monitor the performance of the project once complete. Please include monitoring of all components of your restoration project, including hydrologic, physical and biological indicators.

- What are the desired conditions that this project contributes to and how will outcome objectives and project success be measured?
- Describe the performance measures that will be used to quantitatively or qualitatively define actual project benefits upon completion of the project. Include support for why the specific performance measures were chosen.
- For projects anticipated to benefit streamflow or aquatic habitat, applicants are required to include information about a plan to monitor outcomes for a five-year period post-implementation. Please describe the plan to monitor the benefits over a five-year period and include detail on the steps to be taken to carry out the plan.

Example performance measures could include the monitoring and improvement of various biotic and physical ecological indicators, including water quality and chemical composition, measurable changes in instream water supply, or observable changes in the presence or composition of vegetation or wildlife, etc.

Criterion B. Project Planning and Support (15 points)

Up to **15 points** may be awarded based on the extent to which the proposed project: 1) was developed as part of a collaborative planning process, and 2) is widely supported by a diverse set of stakeholders within the watershed.

Sub-Criterion B.1 Prior Planning (5 points)

Up to 15 points may be awarded based on whether the proposed project was identified in a planning document covering the project's geographic area that was created through a collaborative process and included stakeholder input. Applicants should only discuss the most relevant planning document in their response to this sub-criterion. Include a copy of any sections of the planning document referenced in your response.

Applications that demonstrate that the proposed project is specifically identified in a reach or watershed scale planning document that was collaboratively developed by a diverse group of stakeholders will receive the most points under this sub-criterion.

Address the following as applicable:

Plan Description and Objective:

- Is the proposed project identified in and/or supported by a specific planning document? If so,
- What is the name of the plan and when was it developed?
- What is the purpose and objective of the plan?
- What is the geographic scope of the plan?
- What types of issues does the plan address? For example, does the plan address water quantity issues, water quality issues, issues related to ecosystem and watershed health or the health of species and habitat?

Plan Development:

- Was the plan developed through a collaborative process? If so,
- Who was involved in the plan development and how were they involved? Identify the specific entities or organizations and describe their involvement.
- How was input from these entities and other stakeholders considered in development of the plan?
- Was the plan prepared by the applicant? If not, was the applicant involved in the development of the plan, and if so, how were they involved? If the applicant was not involved, explain why.

Plan Support for Project:

Is the proposed project directly identified and/or supported by the plan? If so,

- Is the project identified specifically by name and location in the plan?
- Is this type of project or activity identified in the plan?
- Does the proposed project address a goal, objective, or need identified in the plan?

- How does the plan prioritize this project over other potential projects or activities? If the project was not prioritized within the plan, explain why the applicant and its partners are choosing this project for implementation over the other potential projects.

Sub-Criterion B.2. Project Support (10 points)

Up to **10 points** may be awarded based on the level of current stakeholder support for the implementation of the proposed project.

Applications that demonstrate strong current support for the project from a diverse array of stakeholders will receive the most points under this criterion. This could include letters of support, third-party cost-share, in-kind contributions or other support.

Address the following as applicable:

- What stakeholders support the project, and what interests or sectors do they represent?
- Describe any cost-share contributions (cash, labor, material, equipment, etc.) that are being provided by stakeholders.
- Is the project supported by land or water management agencies within the project area? If so, identify the agencies.
- If the project includes work on Federal land or a Federal facility, explain whether the agency supports the project. It is recommended that applicants provide a letter from the Federal land/facility owner in their application package. Note: Other sources of Federal funding cannot be included within the scope of the project proposed for Reclamation funding. Other Federal agencies can complete environmental and cultural resource compliance, provide access to land, and provide project oversight as necessary; however, any costs associated with these activities should not be included within the project budget.)
- Is there opposition to the proposed project? If so, what entities oppose the project and why? How does the applicant plan to address this opposition? Note: Opposition will not necessarily result in fewer points.

Criterion C. Readiness to Proceed (15 points)

Up to **15 points** may be awarded based on the extent to which the proposed project can proceed to implementation upon entering into a financial assistance agreement.

Projects with a high level of design and engineering (60% final design or more) completed at the time of application, a clear and detailed implementation plan, and thorough budget with accompanying budget narrative, will receive more points under this evaluation criterion.

Sub-Criterion C.1. Design and Engineering (5 points)

Up to **10 points** may be awarded based on the extent of the engineering and design work that is complete at the time the application is submitted.

- Identify and describe the design and engineering work performed specifically in support of the proposed project.
- If additional design is required, describe the planned process and timeline for completing the design.

Sub-Criterion C.2. Environmental and Cultural Compliance (5 points)

- Describe any permits and agency approvals that will be required along with the process and timeframe for obtaining such permits or approvals.
- Have you spoken with your local Reclamation office? What level of environmental compliance have they indicated will be necessary for the project (i.e., an EIS, EA, etc.)? Please contact the Program Coordinator listed in the “[Have Questions](#)” Section, to be connected with a local point of contact for environmental and cultural compliance.
 - Are you working with other Federal agencies in addition to Reclamation on environmental and/or cultural compliance? Has another Federal agency agreed to serve as the lead for compliance? Please identify any agency you are working with and provide the information for a point of contact.
 - What environmental and cultural compliance research, reports, or studies have you completed to date?
 - What is the estimated cost and timeframe to complete compliance? Have you included a line item to cost-share anticipated compliance costs with Reclamation in your budget?

Sub-Criterion C.3. Project Implementation (Schedule and Budget) (5 points)

- Describe the implementation plan for the proposed project. Include an estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work, including major tasks, milestones, and dates. This may include, but is not limited to, design and engineering, environmental and cultural resources compliance, permitting, and construction/installation.
- Does the applicant have access to the land or water source where the project is located? Has the applicant obtained any easements that are required for the project? If so, provide documentation. If the applicant does not yet have permission to access the project location, describe the process and timeframe for obtaining such permission.
- Describe any additional efforts planned to engage with regional stakeholders during the final planning and construction phase of your project

Criterion D. Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities (20 points)

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

- advances the Trump Administration’s priorities, including E.O. 14154: Unleashing American Energy, justifies alignment with priorities and requirements in E.O. 14332: Improving Oversight in Federal Grantmaking
- includes primary project elements that develop, demonstrate, and or implement artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that advance the Trump Administration and Department of Interior’s priorities for AI, including OMB M-25-21 Accelerating the Use of AI through Innovation, Governance, and Public Trust; S.O. 3444 Leading Interior’s Path to Artificial Intelligence Transformation
- aligns with Secretary Burgum’s strategic objectives, including those identified in Secretarial Orders 3417 Addressing the National Energy Emergency, 3418 Unleashing

American Energy, 3419 Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis

- aligns with goal and objectives in the U.S. Department of the Interior FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan; supports water management and enhanced operational flexibility in Reclamation States, within with priority given to the Colorado River Basin and other basins which is experiencing long-term drought conditions

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

Criterion E. Construction Priority (10 points)

Up to **10 points** may be awarded based on the extent that the proposed project is a construction project that can be completed within the allowable project duration. Projects that focus on construction of hard infrastructure to deliver durable, long-term improvements in water reliability and resilience will be prioritized. Hard infrastructure is tangible or built infrastructure. Please identify the hard infrastructure construction components of the project, if applicable.

Criterion F. Cost Share Priority (5 points)

Up to **5 points** may be awarded to proposals that include non-Federal cost share contributions exceeding the minimum by at least 5 percent. Projects with a higher non-Federal cost share may be awarded more points. State the percentage of non-Federal funding provided using the following calculation:

$$\text{Non-Federal Funding} / \text{Total Project Cost} = \%$$

See Cost Sharing Requirement and Budget Narrative for more information on cost-share requirements and eligible costs.

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

Review and Selection Process

This program reviews proposed budgets to ensure:

- figures are correct
- estimated costs are necessary and reasonable and clearly linked to project narratives
- avoid obviously unallowable costs
- identify costs requiring prior approval

- ensure indirect cost rates are applied correctly
- confirm cost sharing requirements are reflected in the budget.

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

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

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

Risk Review

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

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

- Allowability, allocability, and reasonableness of proposed costs
- Financial strength and stability of the applicant
- Past performance, including satisfactory compliance with all terms and conditions of previous awards, such as environmental compliance, reporting requirements, and audit compliance

- Adequacy of personnel practices, procurement procedures, and accounting policies and procedures.

AWARD NOTICES

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

Anticipated Project Start Date: 08/01/2027

Anticipated Project End Date: 08/01/2030

Anticipated Project Start Date:

August 2027 for applications submitted in the first application period.

August 2028 for applications submitted in the second application period.

Anticipated Project End Date:

September 2030 for projects submitted in the first application period.

September 2031 for projects submitted in the second application period.

Reclamation anticipates contacting potential award recipients and unsuccessful applicants in March 2026 and March 2027, subject to the timing and amount of final appropriations. Reclamation will contact award recipients individually to discuss the time frame for the completion of their agreement. A webinar will be held for successful applicants within 30 days following their notice of selection to review next steps and pre-Financial Assistance Agreement procedures.

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

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and National Policy Requirements

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

Automated Standard Application for Payments Registration

All recipients must be registered with and willing to process all payments through the Department of Treasury Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system. All recipients with active financial assistance agreements with Reclamation must be enrolled in ASAP under the appropriate Agency Location Code(s) and UEI Number prior to the award of

funds. If a recipient has multiple UEI numbers, they must separately enroll within ASAP for each unique UEI Number and/or Agency. If your entity is currently enrolled in the ASAP system with an agency other than Reclamation, you must enroll specifically with Reclamation in order to process payments. All of the information on the enrollment process for recipients, will be sent to you by ASAP staff if selected for award.

Approvals and Permits

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

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

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

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

Official Resolution

Prior to award, the recipient must provide an official resolution adopted by the organization's governing body, or, for state government entities, an official authorized to commit the recipient to the financial and legal obligations of the financial assistance award. The official resolution verifies:

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

Geospatial Data

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

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

Include Metadata: Your Geographic Information Systems (GIS) files must include complete metadata. Metadata is information that describes the data, such as where it came from, how

accurate it is, and how it should be used. This is to ensure that anyone using the data understands its context and quality.

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

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

Intangible Property

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

Real Property

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

Wage Rate Requirements (Davis-Bacon Act)

Section 41101 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, otherwise known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) requires that all laborers and mechanics employed by contractors or subcontractor in the performance of construction, alteration, or repair work on a project assisted in whole or in part by funding made available under the BIL shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on similar projects in the locality, as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with Subchapter IV of Chapter 31 of Title 40, United States Code (commonly referred to as the Davis-Bacon Act).

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

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

In response to a FOIA request for research data relating to published research findings produced under a Federal award that were used by the Federal Government in developing an agency action that has the force and effect of law, the Federal awarding agency must request, and the recipient

must provide, within a reasonable time, the research data so that they can be made available to the public through the procedures established under the FOIA.

Requirements for Agricultural Operations under P.L. 111-11, Section 9504(a)(3)(B)

In accordance with Section 9504(a)(3)(B) of P.L.111-11, financial assistance will not be awarded for an improvement to conserve irrigation water unless the recipient agrees to both of the following conditions:

1. Not to use any associated water savings to increase the total irrigated acreage of the recipient and
2. Not to otherwise increase the consumptive use of water in the operation of the recipient, as determined pursuant to the law of the state in which the operation of the recipient is located.

If the recipient is a Tribe, a financial assistance agreement will not be awarded unless the recipient agrees to not use any associated water savings to increase the total irrigated acreage or otherwise increase the consumptive use of water more than the water right of the Tribe, as determined by a court decree, a settlement, a law, or any combination of these authorities.

Title to Improvements P.L.111-11, Section 9504(a)(3)(D)

If the project results in a modification to a portion of a federally owned facility that is integral to the existing operations of that facility, the Federal government shall continue to hold title to the facility and the improvements thereto. Title to improvements, P.L.111-11, Section 9504(a)(3)(D) that are not integral to existing water delivery operations shall reside with the project sponsor.

Operation and Maintenance Costs under P.L.111-11, Section 9504(a)(3)(E)(iv)

The non-Federal share of the costs for operation and maintenance of any infrastructure improvement funded through an agreement awarded under this NOFO shall be 100 percent.

Improvements to Federal Facilities

Note that improvements to Federal facilities that are implemented through any project awarded funding must comply with additional requirements. Reclamation may also require additional reviews and approvals prior to award to ensure that any necessary easements, land use authorizations, or special permits can be approved and that the development will not impact or impair project operations or efficiency, consistent with the requirements of 43 CFR Section 429.

Liability under P.L.111-11, Section 9504(a)(3)(F)

Except as provided under 28 U.S.C. Chapter 171 (commonly known as the Federal Tort Claims Act), the United States shall not be liable for monetary damages of any kind for any injury arising out of an act, omission, or occurrence that arises in relation to any facility created or improved through an agreement awarded under this NOFO, the title of which is not held by the United States.

Reporting

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

- Submit Federal Financial reports and Program Performance reports.

- Use the [Federal Financial Report \(SF-425\) form](#) for financial reporting,
- Monitor award activities and report on program performance per [2 CFR 200.329](#),
- Promptly notify the awarding program in writing of any issues, delays, or conditions impairing award objectives per [2 CFR 200.329\(e\)](#),
- Disclose any conflicts of interest related to their award that arise during the award period per [2 CFR 1402.112](#),
- Report on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest per [2 CFR 200.330](#), and
- Report all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award per [2 CFR 200.113](#).
- Report any matters related to recipient integrity and performance to SAM.gov per [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).
- If the Federal share of the award is more than \$100,000 and the recipient makes or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection to the award, disclose those activities using the Disclosure of Lobbying (SF-LLL) form per [43 CFR 18.100](#).
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) and 2 CFR 170 requires certain recipients to report information on executive compensation, and information on all sub-awards, subcontracts and consortiums equal to or over \$30,000 to SAM.gov.
- Report any required mitigation to lessen environmental impacts of the project.
- Recipients of Reclamation awards must include the following information in performance reports:
 - a comparison of actual accomplishments to the milestones established by the financial assistance agreement for the period,
 - the reasons why the project did not meet established milestones, if applicable,
 - the status of milestones not met from the previous reporting period, if applicable,
 - whether the project is on schedule and within the original cost estimate,
 - any additional pertinent information or issues related to the status of the project, and
 - photographs documenting the project (appreciated, although not required). Note: Reclamation may print photos with appropriate credit to the recipient.
 - Final reports are public documents and may be made available on Reclamation's website.

Other Information

An informational webinar will be held on Tuesday, June 16th, 2026, at 1:00pm MDT. Interested parties can join the webinar [here](#). The webinar will provide general information about the Enhancing Water Resources funding opportunity, and individuals will have the opportunity to ask questions. Interested entities can also set up a 30-minute call with program staff to discuss their project. Access our Bookings page [here](#). For more information regarding this program, the general information webinar, and WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects, including previously funded projects and applications, visit [WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects | Bureau of Reclamation](#).

