

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 4

TITLE: 2021 SOUTH FLORIDA GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAM

ACTION: REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER (FON): EPA-R4-SFL-2021-01

ASSISTANCE NUMBER LISTING: #66.484

RFA OPENS: June 11, 2021

RFA CLOSES: July 26, 2021

ANTICIPATED DATE OF SELECTION: September 10, 2021

ANTICIPATED AWARD: 90 days after the selection and notification date

The closing date and time for receipt of applications is **July 26, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET)** in order to be considered for funding. Application packages must be submitted electronically to the EPA through Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) no later than **July 26, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. (ET)** in order to be considered for funding.

IMPORTANT: Ensure your organization is registered and received confirmation for SAMs.gov, D&B DUNS number, and Grants.gov systems. If you have not completed the registration and received confirmation for SAMs and DUNS, then you may have difficulties applying through Grants.gov. Reference information is located within this RFA.

Application and Budget: If you are proposing cost share or in-kind contribution as part of your scope, your application (424) and budget (424A) must reflect federal requested amount and cost share or in-kind contribution amount for a total budget for the application.

SOUTH FLORIDA PROGRAM SUMMARY: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) South Florida Program is a program that provides competitive grants to address the immediate and emerging ecological pressures and threats to nearshore waters, bays, estuaries, beaches, and coral reefs central to South Florida's economic well-being. This RFA solicits applications for the South Florida Program region that includes the Florida Keys; Florida Reef Tract; Caloosahatchee Estuary; St. Lucie Estuary; Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay. This RFA is an open competition for applicants to apply for funding for projects meeting the resource management goals and objectives identified in resource management programs and initiatives within these geographic locations. Award decisions will be evaluated based on RFA priorities; documentation of ecological urgency; connections to resource strategic/management plan; demonstrated partnerships and collaboration; geographic location; quantifiable improvements to water quality/marine ecology; and innovative techniques to restore and improve water quality / marine habitat.

Note to Applicants: If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractors in your application to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the [CONTRACTS and SUBAWARDS](#) provisions.

FUNDING/AWARDS: The EPA Region 4 may award approximately \$4,000,000 using fiscal year 2021 funding. To address the Priorities described in Section I of this announcement, we anticipate making awards to approximately twenty applications with funding ranging from \$150,000 to a maximum of \$350,000 per project. The total amount of funding and number of awards depends on funding availability, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. If additional funding becomes available, the EPA may select and award additional projects under this announcement. Unless pre-award costs are specifically approved by the EPA, recipients should not incur project costs, including nonfederal match, until they receive an award offer from the EPA.

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Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

The South Florida RFA is consistent with EPA's Strategic Plan to improve aquatic ecosystems and water quality. Applicants must ensure the goals and objectives of the project are consistent with EPA goals and measures. Applicants must explain in their application how their project will advance current EPA priorities.

The EPA also requires that grant applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see the [EPA's Order 5700.7A1](#), Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements). Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the goals and objectives as described in EPA's Strategic Plan and EPA Order 5700.7A1. More information on Strategic Plan, Outputs, and Outcomes in Section I.C.1-3 of this announcement.

A. South Florida Program

This RFA supports the Special Studies/Research component for the South Florida Program. Special Studies are projects that provide information specific to management questions and concerns, inform

policy and provides understanding of the South Florida aquatic ecosystems which includes the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; Florida Reef Tract; Biscayne Bay; St. Lucie Estuary; Caloosahatchee Estuary; and Florida Bay. Examples of eligible projects include: supporting coral monitoring, research, and restoration efforts; loss of key habitats such as seagrass, coral and benthic communities; addressing reoccurring harmful algal blooms; residential canal demonstration projects; stormwater demonstration projects; water quality and benthic habitat monitoring; reducing contaminants of emerging concern such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products and microplastics; identifying and understanding cause/effect relationships of pollutants; addressing specific management questions and concerns; applying innovative approaches, methods, or techniques for preventing, treating, and removing pollution to coastal waters; and investigating localized water quality impacts from potential incoming pollution sources.

Projects submitted for RFA funding consideration must be located within the South Florida geographic region that includes the coastal areas south of the Caloosahatchee River (C43) and the St. Lucie Canal (C44). Priority regions include the Florida Keys; Florida Reef Tract; Biscayne Bay; Florida Bay; and Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River watersheds.

The EPA strongly encourages applicants to identify partnerships that will support the priority or priorities addressed in their application. Please see Section V of this announcement for the evaluation criterion that addresses partnerships. As part of the evaluation, EPA will consider the mutual interests of each partner, how their involvement addresses the common goals of South FL Project Priority Action Items (see B, below) or otherwise meets the resource management goals and objectives identified in resource management programs and initiatives within these geographic locations. EPA will also consider how partnering will achieve the goals of the project, and whether partners are contributing monetary and/or in-kind for the project.

The South Florida Program was created through Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and Protection Act of 1990. The FKNMS includes 2,900 square nautical miles of nearshore waters and coral reefs extending from Biscayne Bay to the Dry Tortugas. Recognizing the critical role of water quality in maintaining Sanctuary resources, Congress directed the Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Florida, in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to develop a Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) for the FKNMS. The Act directs the WQPP to develop corrective actions and compliance schedules to address point and nonpoint sources of pollution to maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Sanctuary. This includes restoration and maintenance of a balance, indigenous population of corals, shellfish, fish and wildlife, and recreational activities in and on the water.

In 1998, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established to restore and protect coral reef ecosystems. In October 2002, the USCRTF implemented a National Action Plan to conserve coral reefs. The [Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative \(SEFCRI\)](#) characterizes the existing condition of the coral reef ecosystem; quantifies and characterizes the land-based sources of pollution, identifies how sources of pollution impact the coral reef; develops strategies to reduce the impact of land-based sources of pollution; and increases public awareness and understanding of the effects of land-based sources of pollution on water quality and coral reefs.

In 2021, Congress recognized that an “an unprecedented coral disease outbreak especially along the Florida Reef Tract, has left America’s Great Barrier Reef on the brink of functional extinction, posing a significant obstacle to coral reef restoration efforts. Coral reef tracts serve as a major economic driver for the State of Florida and the U.S. territories, and are the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the ocean.” The Committee instructed federal agencies to support coral monitoring, research, and restoration efforts in highly impacted and high priority coral reef habitats.

B. Scope of Work to address the Priority Action Items

There are a total of 13 Priority Action Items:

Priorities 1-5 identified below are for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. These priorities are addressed in the following report and website: Priority Action Items identified in Appendix 1: *The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Water Quality Protection Program Report to Congress*, September 2013, (Additional priority items identified on pages 36-37). The [FKNMS](#) report and web page provide applicants with additional information regarding priority action items, goals and objectives.

Priorities 6-13 are South Florida Program priorities for the geographic areas that include the Caloosahatchee Estuary, St. Lucie Estuary, Florida Bay, Biscayne Bay, and Florida Keys.

Applying the application evaluation criteria located in Section V. Project Evaluation and Review Information in the RFA, competitive applications and applications should address one or more of the Priority Action Items identified below and describe importance to resource management in the South Florida ecosystem. Application amounts for Priority Action Items (1 – 13) range from \$150,000 - \$350,000.

While Priority Action Items will receive highest consideration during application evaluation, this RFA is an open competition for applicants to submit applications meeting the resource management goals and objectives identified in resource management programs and initiatives within these geographic locations. Award decisions will be evaluated based on RFA priorities; documentation of ecological urgency; connections to resource strategic/management plan; demonstrated partnerships and collaboration; geographic location; [environmental justice](#); improving coastal resiliency; technology transfer; quantifiable improvements to water quality/marine ecology; and innovative techniques to restore and improve water quality/marine habitat.

Priority Action Items (1-5) – Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

1. Stormwater Pollutant Reduction Projects

Investigate stormwater impacts from impervious surfaces to nearshore waters and/or residential canal systems that contribute to impaired water quality and ecological impacts. Projects may include identifying and demonstrating cost-effective best management practices, innovative technologies, and/or green infrastructure techniques; analyzing and quantifying the volume and composition (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorous, silt, marine debris, metals and oils) of stormwater runoff; investigating the cost and effectiveness of stormwater management regulations, treatment, and disposal methodologies for reducing nutrient, trash into nearshore waters, and stormwater pollutant loading; updating stormwater

loading estimates for the Florida Keys; and/or evaluating municipal stormwater plans to assess effectiveness (or lack of) in reducing pollutant loading.

2. South Florida Water Quality Connectivity

Develop new or apply currently accepted models to investigate the connectivity between waters and associated pollutants discharged from Florida's southeast and southwest coasts (e.g., sewage overflows, river inputs) into Florida Bay, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and/or the Florida Reef Tract. This study may include in-situ water quality monitoring, remote sensing, or some combination of both to determine if patterns of turbidity, chlorophyll a, nutrients, temperature, and salinity can be quantitatively linked to upstream inputs.

3. Non-municipal Wastewater Sources

Develop strategies to evaluate the impacts from non-municipal sources (e.g., marine/RV sanitation devices) on centralized wastewater treatment systems; develop recommendations for modifying central wastewater systems to accept these sources and support expansion of pump-out infrastructure for marinas in Monroe County.

4. Public Education and Outreach

Design and implement new and innovative education and outreach projects that inspire individual action or coordinated efforts among members of the Florida Keys community to protect and restore water quality and natural resources within canals and/or nearshore waters of the Florida Keys. Provide the information and tools necessary to engage the public in promoting meaningful contributions, or larger partnerships to actively improve water quality. Projects should include an evaluation component to assess the ease of implementation, the outcome or impacts produced by the education and outreach program, and how well the program functions within the unique social and economic environment of the Florida Keys.

5. Water Quality in Key West Harbor and the Adjacent Marine Ecosystem

Evaluate existing water quality and sediment monitoring data, and/or collect additional monitoring data, to quantify potential impacts from large vessels entering, exiting, and mooring in Key West Harbor through the Main Ship Channel. Study may extend to adjacent areas potentially impacted beyond the harbor and channel. If collecting additional data, monitoring of turbidity throughout the water column and sedimentation should be included in this study, but other factors that may have impacts on living marine resources may also be evaluated (e.g., dissolved oxygen throughout the water column, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, nitrite, pH, , etc). The study may include *in situ* monitoring, remote sensing, or some combination of both.

South Florida Program Priorities (6 – 13) – Caloosahatchee Estuary, south St. Lucie Estuary, Florida Bay, Biscayne Bay and Florida Keys.

6. Florida Reef Tract Coral Health

Develop innovative techniques to treat or mitigate the effects of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) impacting half of the reef building coral species on the Florida Reef Tract. Projects may include: identifying and propagating coral species that have demonstrated resistance to SCTLD; on the ground coral restoration demonstration projects; developing techniques to promote resistance to SCTLD in affected coral species; developing management options for resource managers to mitigate coral disease impacts and prevent further spread of the disease; development of strategies for future reef restoration projects; and identifying coral, environmental conditions and areas that have survived the disease for resilient qualities (potentially genetic) essential for incorporation into future reef restoration.

7. Harmful Algal Blooms in South Florida

EPA recognizes the environmental and economic challenges many communities face from harmful algal blooms (HABs) in freshwater and coastal ecosystems. The Agency encourages research and development of tools and technologies that help promote scientific progress towards preventing, mitigating, and reducing HABs such as red tide, microcystis/cyanobacteria and sargassum impacting beaches, canals, and nearshore waters.

8. Water Quality and/or Seagrass Monitoring

Enhance water quality and/or seagrass monitoring networks in targeted areas such as the Caloosahatchee Estuary, St. Lucie Estuary, Biscayne Bay or Florida Bay to quantify environmental impacts from land-based pollution; assess changes of ecological conditions and functions; evaluate effectiveness of management actions; determine causes of seagrass decline and evaluate health, species, and composition; evaluate impacts from Lake Okeechobee management; or develop early detection of pollutants or harmful algal blooms.

9. Aquatic Habitat Restoration in South Florida

Within the South Florida ecosystem, oysters, seagrass, mangroves, and shoreline plants play a vital role supporting healthy and resilient estuaries, bays, and nearshore waters by providing food, habitat, nutrient removal, water filtration, carbon storage and shoreline stabilization. EPA supports the design of habitat projects to reestablish, rehabilitate or enhance oysters, seagrass, or mangroves by building local capacity and engaging community volunteers to protect and restore these living resources.

10. Reducing Trash in South Florida

The EPA Trash Free Waters Program seeks trash removal from rivers, estuaries, wetlands and beaches through clean-up events, trash prevention and education. Land based trash is a threat to wildlife and human health as it travels from land to water and into the ocean. Projects may include trash prevention focusing on management activities to reduce trash from entering waterways; trash removal programs that include regular, organized cleanup events to remove trash from priority areas; and educational/outreach campaigns that modify behavioral practices to reduce trash in Florida's waterways.

11. Analyses of Water Quality Data

Conduct alternative analyses or “mining” of the existing suite of water quality data and/or satellite imagery to determine if water quality improvements, hotspot areas, or specific sources contributing to water quality degradation can be determined. Consider incorporating other monitoring tools, such as satellite imagery, to provide additional information about regional trends.

12. Sponge Restoration Techniques

Incorporate current knowledge of sponge community filtration and recruitment dynamics in a study for improving water quality. Develop a pilot study to demonstrate and evaluate the feasibility, effectiveness, prospects, and potential impact on ecosystem services, including water quality, of reestablishing sponge communities on benthic habitat and coral reefs impacted from disease, harmful algal blooms and storm events within the geographic areas.

13. Impacts of Contaminants of Emerging Concerns on South Florida Aquatic Ecosystems

Investigate the impacts of Contaminants of Emerging Concerns (CEC) including pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs), endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs), microplastics and legacy pollutants identified within the South Florida marine environment on the function of marine ecosystems including adverse impacts to habitat, species, and ecological communities most vulnerable to the exposure of CECs. Identify, develop, and implement a pilot study targeted towards monitoring identified priorities and programs that will achieve the protection of those resources.

C. The EPA’s Strategic Plan Linkage & Anticipated Outcomes, Outputs & Performance Measures

Pursuant to Section 6a of the EPA Order 5700.7, “Environmental Results under the EPA Assistance Agreements”, the EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to the Agency’s Strategic Plan. The EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see the EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements).

1. Linkage to the EPA Strategic Plan: All applications and applications must support the EPA’s Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: A Cleaner, Healthier Environment: Deliver real results to provide Americans with clean air, land, and water, and ensure chemical safety; Objective 2 “Provide for Clean and Safe Water;” and

Goal 2: More Effective Partnerships: Provide certainty to states, localities, tribal nations, and the regulated community in carrying out shared responsibilities and communicating results to all Americans.; Objective 2: Enhanced Shared Accountability.

The special studies included in this announcement of the federal funding opportunity support the EPA’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan Goals.

2. Outputs: The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced over a period or by a specific date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of outputs for projects include:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of efforts to reduce or eliminate sources of pollution and to evaluate progress toward achieving and maintaining water quality and protecting and restoring coral reef habitat and other living resources;
- Characterization of sources and causes of water quality impairment within a watershed that will allow the development of management/action/restoration plan(s);

Preparation and timely delivery of quarterly and draft/final project reports that document results of the special study project; and/or,

- Progress reports and a final report will also be a required output, as specified in Section VI(E) of this announcement, “Reporting Requirement”.

3. Outcomes: The term “outcome” means the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but may be quantitative. Outcomes may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. Projects to be funded with this announcement are expected to produce outcomes related to the outputs identified in the application and scope.

Examples of expected outcomes that may occur because of the technical/scientific information generated by the special studies projects associated with this announcement include:

- Increase knowledge of managers and elected officials concerning negative impacts of pollutants on water quality and living biological resources, which should lead to the development and implementation of action plans that will reduce pollutant loading and result in the conservation of natural resources;
- Improve water quality;
- Restore seagrass, sponge, oyster, or mangroves habitats;
- Restore and recover Florida Reef Tract; and/or,
- Reduce pollutant loading to coastal waters.

4. Performance Measures: The applicant should also develop performance measures expected to be achieved through the proposed activities and they should be described in the application. These performance measures will help gather insights and will be the mechanism to track progress concerning successful process and output and outcome strategies and will provide the basis for developing lessons to inform future recipients.

D. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for this action is the Clean Water Act (Section 104(b)(3)), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements for Water Quality and Watershed Management: Experiments, Studies, Surveys, Demonstrations, and Investigations. A demonstration project must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the project. A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not a demonstration. This announcement supports the Water Quality Protection Program for the Florida National Marine Sanctuary and the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative.

Section II. Award Information

A. Funding Amount: The total estimated funding under this competitive announcement is \$4,000,000. The range of funding is \$150,000 with a maximum of \$350,000 per grant award.

B. Rejection of Applications: The EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than expected.

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

D. Number of Awards: The EPA anticipates awarding approximately 15-20 assistance agreements under this announcement ranging in value from approximately \$150,000 to a maximum of \$350,000 per grant award, subject to the availability of funds, quality of evaluated applications, and other applicable considerations.

E. Project Period: The EPA anticipates that for awards made under this RFA projects will start in January 2022. Proposed project/budget periods can range from one to three years for this funding announcement.

F. Funding Type: The funding for selected projects will be in the form of grants or cooperative agreements. The appropriate funding type and programmatic grant terms and conditions will be added to the grant award document. For most projects a cooperative agreement is the preferred funding

mechanism. The principal purpose of the federal and non-federal relationship established by a cooperative agreement is the transfer of money to the recipient to accomplish a “public purpose” of support or stimulation. For projects selected within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, there will be substantial involvement between the EPA Region 4, the FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) and the recipient during performance of the activity with coordination and collaboration to achieve the goals under the WQPP program. The successful applicant will be expected to participate and present project updates at the FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program meetings. If necessary, include and identify travel funds in the budget to attend these meetings.

G. Additional Awards: The EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this RFA, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after (or at the time) original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

Section III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Entities:

In accordance with CFDA 66.484, applications will be accepted from States, local governments, territories, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S. (including the District of Columbia); public and private universities and colleges; hospitals; laboratories; public or private nonprofit institutions; and intertribal consortia.

Non-profit organizations, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve and/or expand its operations. Note that 2 CFR Part 200 specifically excludes the following types of organizations from the definition of “non-profit organization” because they are separately defined in the regulation: (i) institutions of higher education; and (ii) state, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments. While not considered to be a “non-profit organization” as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, Institutions of Higher Education, and state, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA.

Non-profit organizations selected for potential funding greater than \$200,000 in federal funding will be required to demonstrate Administrative and Program capabilities in managing federal funds.

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.

B. Leveraging or Cost Sharing or Matching:

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 the EPA will evaluate applications based on a leveraging criterion.

1. 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 applications and application (See Section IV.B.10 of the announcement). Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

2. 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 and 424A.** 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 CFR Part 200 as applicable;
- A voluntary costs 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; and,
- 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, the EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR Part 200 as applicable.

2. 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 application 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 application and application. If applicants propose to provide this form of leveraging, the EPA expects them to make the effort to secure the leveraged resources described in their applications. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during grant performance, then the EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR 200.

C. Threshold Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the time of application submission will result in elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications from eligible entities (see Section III.A) which meet all criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration based on the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Applications must address one or more of the Priority Action Items listed in Section I.B and describe relevance to resource management in the South Florida ecosystem; however, the total grant amount should not be more than \$350,000.
2. Applications must substantially comply with the application/applicant and submission information instructions and requirements set forth in Sections IV of this RFA or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, pages more than the page limitation will not be reviewed.
3. Applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) as stated in Section IV.C of this RFA (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV.C) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this RFA. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their application is timely submitted.
4. Applications received 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 Ms. Jennifer Shadle as soon as possible after the submission deadline; failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
5. Applicants may submit multiple applications under this announcement but each one must be for a different project. If an applicant submits more than one application for the same project, EPA will review the first one received and any additional applications for the same project will be deemed ineligible.

Section IV. Application and Application Submission Information

Applicants must explicitly address the following sections as part of their application package submittal.

A. Application Information

To simplify the review process, obtain the maximum degree of comparison, and provide a fair and equitable evaluation of applications, reviewers will rely on the content of the entire application for evaluation purposes. Therefore, it is important that all applications are complete and substantially comply with the standard format as described in detail in this Section. For completeness of your grant application, please refer to the Application Submission Checklist (Appendix A). In addition to the forms listed in Section IV.D., each application **must** consist of the following components below:

- Application Cover Page (see Appendix B for a sample);
- A one-page project application summary (single spaced); and,
- Application (16-page maximum double spaced).

B. Format of Application

The application should be readable in PDF or MS Word and consolidated into a single file and include the information below in paragraphs 1-14. Please note that there is a page limit for the application (see below). In addition to addressing the components listed below, applicants should ensure their application also addresses the evaluation criteria listed in Section V of this solicitation.

The application must be no more than sixteen (16) double-spaced 8.5 x 11-inch pages (a page is one side of paper). The page limit does not include documents specifically excluded from the page limit as noted below. Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins and that applicants format their application as described below. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application. Additional pages beyond the 16-page limit will not be reviewed. If a single-spaced application is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 16-page double-spaced page limit for application applications **[eight (8) single-spaced pages are the equivalent of the 16-page double-spaced application page limit; any excess pages whether single or double spaced will not be reviewed]**.

Applications that do not substantially comply with the criteria above may be deemed ineligible. Applications should also include the following items:

1. Introduction for Addressing the Priority Action Items
 - a. Situation, Need, and Previous Efforts - Discuss notable gaps in knowledge or capabilities, why the proposed project should be performed, review significant work by yourself or by

others in the proposed area of interest (include reference citations). Describe how this project relates to long term management strategy.

b. Objective(s) - State what is to be studied, measured, observed, or developed, and the anticipated results. State hypotheses, as relevant, that the proposed special study is designed to test.

c. Applications, Benefits, and Importance - Describe how the anticipated results, will contribute to expected benefits and their utility to the priority action items and/or resource managers.

2. Methods and Approach

d. Description of Major Tasks – Clearly describe set of tasks that must be performed to accomplish the objective(s) and describe each task. State the tasks in the same order as the hypotheses they are designed to test. Experimental design must be described with statistical tests, if applicable, for hypotheses proposed. All projects collecting data will be required to submit a Quality Assurance (QA) plan to EPA for approval prior to collection of data.

e. Environmental Impact - State and explain any potential short-term impacts that your project will have on the environment, including the type and duration such as water quality and sample collection impacts.

f. Future Efforts – If the proposed project is part of a larger project, it should, if possible stand alone. The application should also describe any future efforts or next research steps including the type, extent, and timing of those efforts. The application should also indicate how this research informs future effort or phase.

3. Project Management

g. Administration - Describe the administrative responsibilities and authority of the Principal Investigator.

h. Roles and Responsibilities - Describe the team composition (including names and affiliations of key individuals) and the assignments of team members to major tasks. Provide specific estimates of the time each member will work on the project.

4. Support Requirements and Conditions

i. Permit or Cooperation Required - Proposed projects must comply with all state and federal regulations applicable to the project area. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance. If a permit(s) or clearances from any government agency or organization is required for execution of the project please provide the name of the

agency, the method of obtaining the clearance or permit, and the time required or state "none".

j. Data or Facility Access - If access is required to data or facilities held by another organization, please identify the data or facility, the nature and type of access required, the methods of obtaining such access, and the effect of being denied access or state "none".

5. Project Schedule

k. Milestone and Deliverable Schedule - Provide a project schedule to include all milestones and deliverables for each task under section 2 above. Describe what items of data are to be delivered. State the format in which data will be presented. **Provide a monthly or quarterly schedule for all deliverables.**

Project deliverables will vary by project however each project requires two types of reports from the principal investigator, a Semi-annual report and a Final Report.

The principal investigator shall provide semi-annual progress reports to the Project Officer on March 30th and September 30th of each year. These reports will consist of updates on progress toward work objectives, justification, approach, results to date, any problems encountered, actions taken to resolve problems, discussion of remaining tasks, and expenditures to date. Principal investigators shall prepare a draft final report summarizing the objectives, methods, approach, results, and significance of the study. The draft final report will be reviewed by the Project Officer and may be returned with comments. In the event comments are made, the principal investigator will address the comments and re-submit the report to the Project Officer.

6. Environmental Results – Outputs and Outcomes (see Section I. C)

- l. Outputs (project products) and Outcomes (project objectives) - List the outputs expected to be produced through the completion of the proposed project and the outcomes of the project to be accomplished as a result of the project outputs. Outputs and Outcomes should be linked to the EPA Strategic Plan and describe how they support the EPA's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.
- m. Tracking Outputs and Outcomes - Describe your approach for measuring and tracking your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) and project outcome(s).

7. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, application and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last five years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably the EPA agreements) in which you

have been a participant. Please describe (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) 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). You should also indicate whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements. In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, the EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from the EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

In addition, provide information on 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.

8. Budget Summary

This section of the application is a **detailed** narrative and itemization by cost categories of the proposed budget, including **total federal funds and cost share or in-kind contribution**. This section must include a detailed and itemized list and description of how the EPA funds will be used. Applicants **must** itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs within this section of the application. (See Appendix C)

Please provide information regarding how your indirect costs were derived based on your budget total.

If your entity proposes to use undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral students, and they are not deemed “employees” of your entity, please ensure you place the costs and details under the OTHER category as [Participant Support Costs](#).

9. Distinguishing between Subawards v/s Contracts: Per 2 CFR 200.330 and the [EPA Subaward Policy for EPA Assistance Agreement Recipients GPI-16-01](#):

Subawards: Pass-through entities (subrecipients) make subawards to other organizations to carry out a portion of the Federal award under terms that establish a financial assistance relationship to accomplish a public purpose that is authorized under a Federal program. Subrecipients only receive reimbursement for their actual direct or approved indirect costs such that they do not “profit” from the transaction and subrecipients are subject to the same Federal requirements as the pass-through entity. Subrecipients include Institutes of Higher Education and units of

government or nonprofit originations; units of government or intergovernmental agreements; and between nonprofit organizations for collaborative projects.

Subrecipients under Subawards are required to provide the awardee with progress reports, as outlined in the agreement, for the awardee to provide progress report to the awarding agency (EPA).

Contracts: procurement contractors (including individual consultants) typically provide goods and services on commercial terms, operate in a competitive environment and a reasonable profit is allowable.

Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the procurement provisions of the regulations at 2 CFR Part 200. Applicants are not required to identify subrecipients and/or contractors (including consultants) in their application/application. However, if they do, the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application/application. If EPA selects your project for funding it does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements as appropriate. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the application solely based on the firm's role in preparing the application/application.

Successful applicants cannot use subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products from for-profit organizations to carry out its assistance agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subrecipient must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance found at 2 CFR 200.330, the definitions of subaward at 2 CFR 200.92 and subrecipient at 2 CFR 200.93, and [Appendix A to EPA's Subaward Policy](#). EPA will not be a party to these transactions. Applicants acquiring commercial goods or services must comply with the competitive procurement standards in 2 CFR 200.317-326 and cannot use a subaward as the funding mechanism.

10. Voluntary cost share/match and other leveraged funds (See Section III.B)

Demonstrate how you will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support the proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes but is not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education, and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, 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 resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected

applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the award.

11. Partnership with other entities

The EPA may not require applicants to partner with other entities, it can allow or even encourage such partnering and evaluate this during the competitive evaluation process by including a partnership criterion in the solicitation. Partnerships are **awarded points** based on the application evaluation criteria described in Section V of this announcement.

Explain how this project meets the mutual interests of each partner(s), how their involvement addresses the common goals of South Florida Program priorities 1-13, how partnering with these entities will achieve the goals of this project, and whether partners are contributing monetary and/or in-kind for the project. Letters of support are strongly encouraged and must address the mutual interests and involvement in the project. Please attach your letters of support within the RFA Attachments area. If you are addressing the partnership within the application/application only, then it must be included as part of the 16-page limit. Applicants that do not plan on partnering with other agencies or groups should demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such partnerships.

12. Information Transfer

Describe the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods development. Examples include: Presentations of results at appropriate forums, conducting webinars or other outreach targeted to relevant audiences, share results on a website and share the website address with relevant organizations.

13. Literature Cited

References used in the application narrative (not to exceed one page).

14. Attachments (**are not included** as part of the 16-page application/application limit)

Not to exceed 13 total pages, attachments may be used to provide biographies and qualifications, technical backup material to the text, details of computation, and other pertinent information. Techniques or methodologies, if critical to the successful completion of the research, should be discussed in detail within the application text (16-page limit). Do not attach copies of any journal articles or other applications to your submittal.

Letters of Support - Attach any letters of support from partners.

Biographies and Qualifications - Provide a brief biography for each team member that highlights education, experience, and publications related to the proposed project. Curriculum vitae must not exceed one- page single space per person.

NOTE: Applications that do not follow the required format may be deemed ineligible and not reviewed.

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

Applicants, except as noted below, must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under this funding opportunity based on the grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If an applicant does not have the technical capability to apply electronically through grants.gov because of limited or no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), the applicant **must** contact OMS-ARM-OGDWaivers@epa.gov or the address listed below in writing (e.g., by hard copy, email) at least 15 calendar days prior to the submission deadline under this announcement to request approval to submit their application materials through an alternate method.

Mailing Address:

OGD Waivers
c/o Jessica Durand
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.
Mail Code: 3903R
Washington, DC 20460

Courier Address:

OGD Waivers
c/o Jessica Durand
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Rm # 51278
Washington, DC 20004

In the request, the applicant must include the following information:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Organization Name and Unique Entity Identifier (e.g., DUNS)
- Organization's Contact Information (email address and phone number)
- Explanation of how they lack the technical capability to apply electronically through Grants.gov because of 1) limited internet access or 2) no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

EPA will only consider alternate submission exception requests based on the two reasons stated above and will timely respond to the request; all other requests will be denied. If an alternate submission method is approved, the applicant will receive documentation of this approval and further instructions on how to apply under this announcement. Applicants will be required to submit the documentation of approval with any initial application submitted under the alternative method. In addition, any submittal through an alternative method must comply with all applicable requirements and deadlines in the announcement including the submission deadline and requirements regarding

application content and page limits (although the documentation of approval of an alternate submission method will not count against any page limits).

If an exception is granted, it is valid for submissions to EPA for the remainder of the entire calendar year in which the exception was approved and can be used to justify alternative submission methods for application submissions made through December 31 of the calendar year in which the exception was approved (e.g., if the exception was approved on March 1, 2019, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to EPA through December 31, 2019). Applicants need only request an exception once in a calendar year and all exceptions will expire on December 31 of that calendar year. Applicants must request a new exception from required electronic submission through Grants.gov for submissions for any succeeding calendar year. For example, if there is a competitive opportunity issued on December 1, 2020 with a submission deadline of January 15, 2021, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2021. Please note that the process described in this section is only for requesting alternate submission methods. All other inquiries about this announcement must be directed to the Agency Contact listed in Section VII of the announcement. Queries or requests submitted to the email address identified above for any reason other than to request an alternate submission method will not be acknowledged or answered.

Application 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](https://www.grants.gov) and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then go to the "Get Registered" link on the page. If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. DUNS number) and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met 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 DUNS number assignment is FREE.

Applicants need to ensure that the AOR who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose Unique Entity Identifier (e.g., DUNS number) is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the DUNS number 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](https://www.grants.gov) and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then "Apply for Grants" from the dropdown menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. 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](https://www.adobe.com/reader/compatibility)

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the

opportunity on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, **EPA-R4-SFL-2021-01**, or the ASSISTANCE LISTING number **66.484**, in the appropriate field and click the Search button.

Please Note: All applications must now be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) using the "Workspace" feature. Information on the Workspace feature can be found at the [Grants.gov Workspace Overview Page](#).

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than July 26, 2021 at 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 – Pre-award Compliance Review Report
5. Narrative Application (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in Section IV. B. of this announcement

Optional Documents:

6. Other Attachments, if applicable
 - a. Bios and Letters of Support, if applicable
 - b. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable
 - c. Lobbying Form, if applicable

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically.

If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from the EPA (not from grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Steve Blackburn, at (404) 562-9397 or blackburn.steven@epa.gov or Jennifer Shadle at shadle.jennifer@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

Technical Issues with Submission

1. 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.

2. 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 enough 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.

3. 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 by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will decide concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to Jennifer Shadle at shadle.jennifer@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Steve Blackburn at 404-562-9397. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to 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.
 - a. If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call 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 Jennifer Shadle at shadle.jennifer@epa.gov.
 - b. 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 Jennifer Shadle at shadle.jennifer@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.

c. Grants.gov rejection of the application package: If a notification is received from Grants.gov stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal and it is too late to reapply, promptly send an email to **Jennifer Shadle at shadle.jennifer@epa.gov** with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by Grants.gov and attach the entire application in PDF format.

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

Please note that the process described in this section is only for requesting alternate submission methods. All other inquiries about this announcement must be directed to the Agency Contact listed in Section VII of the announcement. Queries or requests submitted to the email address identified above for any reason other than to request an alternate submission method will not be acknowledged or answered.

D. Application Submission Deadline:

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to the EPA through Grants.gov no later than 11:59pm EST on July 26, 2021. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit. Please submit *all* application materials described required by Grants.gov and this RFA. For additional instructions on completing and submitting the electronic application package, click on the "Show Instructions" tab that is accessible within the application package itself.

Section V. Application Evaluation and Review Information

A. Merit Evaluation

Only eligible entities whose applications meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.B. below. All eligible applications will be evaluated by reviewers using the following criteria to receive a score up to a total of 100 points:

B. Applications will be evaluated by reviewers using the following criteria:

1. Rationale and Relevance to Management (15 points)

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on: The extent and quality to which the proposed project addresses one or more of the Priority Action Items listed in Section I, and degree to which the application's approach to addressing one of the Priority Action Items or a management actions item that produces results/outputs that can be applied to identifying and solving problems within the South Florida ecosystem.

2. Scientific Merit **(15 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well the project advances the state of science and knowledge within the South Florida marine ecosystems to assist the management decision making process. Components of the scientific merit review includes background of the project, statement of the purpose, significance of the study, research question and design, methodology, hypotheses, project assumptions/limitations and anticipated findings.

3. Feasibility **(15 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the ability of the project to be successfully completed within the time frames discussed in this announcement by providing a clearly articulated milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire grant period. This includes a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks interim milestones, deliverables and final products including the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task.

4. Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes and Tracking **(10 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to the EPA's Strategic Plan. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for tracking progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. **(10 points)**

5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance Criteria **(10 points total)**

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the applicant's:

- a. past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in the narrative application as described in Section IV of this announcement. **(3 points)**
- b. history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV of the announcement including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported the cause. **(3 points)**
- c. organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. **(4 points)**

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 you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items a and b above. A neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

6. Budget **(10 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the applicant presents a detailed budget reasonable, cost-effectiveness and adequate to carry out proposed project and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. Applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

7. Leverage **(10 Points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent the project will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes but is not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Applicants will also be evaluated based on the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how they will obtain the leveraged resources, Reasonableness of costs and the value of in-kind contributions, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged funds/resources will play to support the proposed project activities.

8. Partnerships **(10 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on partnerships with other governmental or non-governmental agencies or groups. This will include the mutual interests of each partner(s), how their involvement addresses the common goals of South FL Priority Action Items, how partnering with these entities will achieve the goals of this project, and whether partners are contributing monetary and/or in-kind for the project. Partnerships can include letters of support. Applicants that do not plan on partnering with other agencies or groups will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such partnerships.

9. Information Transfer **(5 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods developed to appropriate stakeholders.

C. Review and Selection Process

The eligible applications will be reviewed by a panel of the EPA staff using the criteria in Section V. B. and given a numerical score. The panel will provide a final numerical score to the EPA South Florida Coordinator and management based on the cumulative average of all the individual panel members' scores per application. The South Florida Coordinator will provide recommendations, based on cumulative scores and funding available, to the EPA Water Division Director or their designee for approval.

Final funding decisions will be made by the Water Division Director/Approving Official based on the rankings and recommendations of the EPA evaluation teams' scores and ranking. In making the final selections, the Approving Official may also consider programmatic priorities. It is anticipated that federal assistance agreements will be awarded during the second quarter of fiscal year 2021 with project and budget periods to begin on January 1, 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.

D. Additional Provisions Incorporated by Reference

Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into The Solicitation:

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation including the clause on Reporting and Use of Information Concerning Recipient Integrity and Performance can be found on the EPA Solicitation Clauses page. These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

If a application is selected for funding, the EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made via electronic mail or letter within 60 days of this RFA closing date. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Region 4 Grants Management Office through an official Award Document.

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 the EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award document, signed by the EPA Region 4 grants officer, is the authorized document and will be provided through electronic format to the principal

contact. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g. application), which must be approved by the EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

Unsuccessful Applicants:

The EPA anticipates notification to unsuccessful applicant(s) will be made via electronic or postal mail within 15 days of final selection and management approval. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the grant application, Standard Form 424.

B. Disputes

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

C. Debriefings

Unsuccessful applicants interested in requesting a debriefing should refer to the procedures for debriefings in the [Dispute Resolution Procedures](#), which can also be found at 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement. Please note that the FR notice referenced above refers to regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding this, the procedures for competition related debriefings and disputes remains unchanged from the procedures described at 70 FR 3629, 3630, as indicated in 2 CFR Part 1500, Subpart E.

D. Nonprofit Administrative Capability Clause (applicable to non-profit awards over \$200,000)

Updated February 17, 2021 Non-profit applicants that are recommended for funding under this announcement are subject to pre-award administrative capability reviews consistent with Section 8b, 8c, and 9d of [EPA Order 5700.8: EPA's Policy on Assessing Capabilities of Non-Profit Applicants for Managing Assistance Awards](#). In addition, non-profit applicants selected for awards over \$200,000 may be required to fill out and submit to the grants management office [EPA Form 6600.09, United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrative Capability Questionnaire](#) with supporting documents as required in EPA Order 5700.8.

E. Administrative and National Policy Requirement

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. Applicants selected for funding may be required to provide a copy of their application to their Point of Contact (POC) for review, pursuant to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. This review is not required with the Initial Application and not all applicants require such a review.

A listing of POCs.

F. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into The Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to DUNS, SAM, copyrights, disputes, and administrative capability, can be found at the EPA Solicitation Clauses. These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

G. Reporting Requirements

Per 2 CFR 200.328 Monitoring and Reporting requirements, grantees will be required to submit semi-annual reporting on March 30th and September 30th until the grant expiration. The reports shall consist of updates on progress toward work objectives, justification, approach, results to date, any problems encountered, actions taken to resolve problems, discussion of remaining tasks, and expenditures to date.

H. Quality Assurance/Quality Control

Recipients of federal assistance agreements will be required to develop and submit a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) combination to the EPA project officer. Approval of the QMP/QAPP is required before work can begin or any data can be collected. Through the plan, the recipient explicitly commits to incorporating procedures that will reduce and maintain random and systematic errors within specified tolerable limits. In addition, the recipient of a federal assistance agreement will document quality control procedures and evaluate the quality of the data being produced. Plans should include or refer to a description of safety, training, and equipment maintenance. Data quality objectives will be developed to ensure the utility of data for the applications. The QMP/QAPP will be prepared according to the format prescribed in the "EPA requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans for Environmental Data Operations, EPA OA/R-5". The recipient should develop the QMP/QAPP in close coordination with the EPA Region 4 QA/QC Officer and the EPA technical officer. If requested, the EPA will provide a QMP/QAPP on file with Region 4 to assist recipients. If collection of data is included in the application, please allow time for QAPP development, up to three months, and include QAPP preparation within the milestone schedule.

I. Data Management

Under cooperative agreements with the EPA Region 4 and NOAA/FKNMS, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) implements a data management plan and data management system for the monitoring and special studies programs associated with the FKNMS. Each recipient of a federal assistance agreement for monitoring and special studies projects will work with the designated data management entity to define data entry conventions and issues. All original and ancillary data produced under the monitoring and special studies programs will be generated, processed, stored and archived in a manner that provides detailed documentation of the procedures used during all stages of data collection, reduction, processing, analysis, and storage.

J. Publications

Recipients of federal assistance agreements for special studies are expected to submit manuscripts on the funded projects to appropriate scientific journals within one year of the completion of the final report. Recipients of federal assistance agreements for monitoring projects are expected to submit manuscripts to appropriate scientific journals at an appropriate time during and/or after the completion of the project.

The appropriate time for submission of manuscripts will be negotiated with the EPA project officer. Authors are expected to cite support from the specific sponsor of their project or study in all publications resulting wholly or partially from sponsored activities. For example, an appropriate acknowledgment would be as follows:

“This project/study was funded by a federal assistance agreement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to assistance Number EPA-R4-SFL-2021-01.

Reprints of any abstract, article or other publication that result from this sponsored project/study should be sent to the EPA project officer.

K. Public Relations

Official press releases on the special studies projects may be prepared by the EPA Region 4 and/or FKNMS staff to be used by all recipients of federal assistance agreements for distribution to the news media. Principal investigators are not prohibited from discussing their projects with news media; however, principal investigators should notify the EPA project officer of any contacts with the news media regarding special studies projects funded via federal assistance agreements.

L. 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.

M. Final Application Submission

Generally, following EPA’s evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. Final applications and forms will be requested, as necessary, from those eligible entities whose application has been successfully evaluated and preliminarily recommended for award. Those entities will be provided with instructions and a due date for submittal of the final application package.

N. Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the sub-award and executive total compensation reporting requirements established under OMB guidance at 2 CFR Part 170, unless they qualify for an exception from the requirements, should they be selected for funding.

O. Unliquidated Obligations

An applicant that receives an award under this announcement is expected to manage assistance agreement funds efficiently and effectively and make sufficient progress towards completing the project activities described in the work-plan in a timely manner. The assistance agreement will include terms/conditions implementing this requirement.

P. Website References in Solicitations

Any non-federal websites or website links included in this solicitation are provided for application preparation and/or informational purposes only. EPA does not endorse any of these entities or their

services. In addition, EPA does not guarantee that any linked, external websites referenced in this solicitation comply with Section 508 (Accessibility Requirements) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Q. Unpaid Federal Tax Liabilities and Felony Convictions for Non-Profit and For-Profit Organizations:

For announcements open to for-profits or non-profits where awards will be funded by FY12, FY13, FY14, FY15, FY16, FY17, FY18, FY19, FY20 and/or FY 21 appropriations. Per the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law 116-260, awards made under this announcement are subject to the provisions contained in Division E, Title VII, Sections 744 and 745, and prior appropriations act, regarding unpaid federal tax liabilities and federal felony convictions. These provisions (and the prior ones) prohibit EPA from awarding funds made Updated February 17, 2021 available by the Act (and the prior appropriations acts) to any for-profit or non-profit organization: (1) subject to any unpaid federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability; or (2) that was convicted of a felony criminal conviction under any federal law within 24 months preceding the award, unless EPA has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation, based on these tax liabilities or convictions, and determined that such action is not necessary to protect the government's interests. Based on application of these provisions, non-profit or for-profit organizations that are covered by these prohibitions may be ineligible to receive an award under this announcement. Questions about this provision should be raised to the point of contact identified in Section VII of the solicitation or the EPA Suspension and Debarment Program (<https://www.epa.gov/grants/suspension-and-debarment-contacts>).

R. Exchange Network

The Environmental Information Exchange Network (Exchange Network, Network or EN) is a partner-inspired, developed, implemented, and governed information network. It facilitates environmental data sharing among EPA, states, tribes, and territories. The EN uses a standards-based approach that allows partners to exchange data over the Internet regardless of the specific information technology used. This replaces the need to perform complex and expensive data transformations to move data between systems or to share data on paper, discs, or other media or via email. Partners share electronic data more easily and at a lower cost, and environmental decision makers can use the data to make timely decisions. States, tribes and territories exchanging data with each other or with EPA, should make the Exchange Network and the agency's connection to it, the Central Data Exchange (CDX), the standard way they exchange data and should phase out any legacy methods they have been using. More information available on the [Exchange Network](#).

S. Competency of Organizations Generating Environmental Measurement Data

In accordance with EPA's Policy to Assure the Competency of Organizations Generating Environmental Measurement Data under Agency-Funded Assistance Agreements, successful applicants/recipients for awards under this competition that are expected to exceed \$200,000 in federal funding that involve the generation or use of environmental data must demonstrate competency to perform such work either prior to award, or if that is not practicable or will delay the award, prior to beginning any work involving the generation or use of environmental data under the agreement. Applicants that demonstrate competency prior to award must maintain competency, as appropriate, during the award period. Applicants that do not address competency prior to award must demonstrate competency prior to beginning any work

involving the generation or use of environmental data under the agreement and maintain competency, as appropriate, during the award period. A copy of the policy is available online at Federal Register Volume 78, Number 82 or a copy may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement.

T. Mandatory Disclosures

As required by 2 CFR § 200.113, non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR § 200.339 including suspension and debarment.

U. Life Sciences Dual Use Research of Concern

Projects awarded under this solicitation that involve life sciences research as defined below are subject to the requirements of the United States Government Policy for Institutional Oversight of Life Sciences Dual Use Research of Concern (iDURC Policy), provided that the recipient is an institution within the United States that receives funding through this agreement, or from any other source, to conduct or sponsor research involving any of the agents or toxins identified in Section 6.2.1 of the iDURC Policy. If the recipient is an institution outside the United States that receives funding through this agreement to conduct or sponsor research involving any of those same agents or toxins, it will also be subject to requirements of the iDURC Policy. The iDURC Policy is available for reference. Life Sciences Research, for purposes of this clause, and based on the definition of research in 40 CFR §26.102(d), is a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge involving living organisms (e.g., microbes, human beings, animals, and plants) and their products. EPA does not consider the following activities to be research: routine product testing, quality control, mapping, collection of general-purpose statistics, routine monitoring and evaluation of an operational program, observational studies, and the training of scientific and technical personnel. [Note: This is consistent with Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11.]

V. IDC Competition Clause

Indirect costs (IDCs) may be budgeted and charged by recipients of Federal assistance agreements in accordance with 2 CFR 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 CFR 200.414(f)

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 CFR 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 CFR 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 CFR 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.

W. Terms and Conditions

The applicable terms and conditions that apply to awards resulting from this solicitation will be included in the Award document. A general listing of terms and conditions can be found at [The Grant Terms and Conditions](#) page.

Section VII. Agency Contact

If you have any questions concerning this RFA for federal funding and/or applications requirements, please contact Ms. Jennifer Shadle at shadle.jennifer@epa.gov or Mr. Steven Blackburn at blackburn.steven@epa.gov.

APPENDIX A
APPLICATION SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Please note that this is to be used at the applicant's convenience in preparing their application. It is **not required** to be submitted.

Respondent: _____

- _____ 1. Application Checklist
- _____ 2. Application Cover Page along with one-page summary
- _____ 3. Application (16-page double spaced maximum), with all required elements as outlined in Section IV.

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 – Pre-award Compliance Review Report
- 5. Narrative Application (Project Narrative Attachment Form) - prepared as described in Section IV. A and B of this RFA

Optional Documents: the following are not required per Grants.gov; however, are required for the EPA to process a selected applicant for award.

- 6. Other Attachments Form, if applicable
 - a. Bios and Letters of Support, if applicable
 - b. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable
 - c. Lobbying Form, if applicable

APPENDIX B
APPLICATION COVER PAGE SAMPLE
EPA-R4-SFL-2021-01

A cover page is required as part of the application package and **is not included** in the 16-page application limit. This is an example of a cover page.

A application submitted for projects in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary or Southeast Florida:

Project Title:

Principal Investigator(s):

Date Submitted: _____ Proposed Start Date: _____

Total Federal Funding Request: _____

We, the undersigned, certify that, in the event this application is accepted whole or in part, our signatures on this application constitute intended acceptance of and compliance with applicable policy, rules, and regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ENDORSEMENTS:

Submitted by:
Principal Investigator

Approved by:
Institutional Representative

Signature

Signature

Typed Name

Typed Name

Title

Title

Address

Address

Phone

Fax

Phone

Fax

E-mail

E-mail

For Administrative Detail, Please Contact:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone

Fax

E-mail

APPENDIX C

BUDGET SUMMARY INFORMATION

Budget Summary

This section of the application is a detailed description of the budget found in the SF-424A and must include a detailed discussion of how the EPA funds will be used. Applicants must **itemize and provide details** for all costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs.

If the project budget includes cost-share, then the Budget Summary within the narrative application must include a detailed description of how the applicant will obtain the cost-share and how the cost-share funding will be used. If the EPA accepts an offer for a voluntary cost-share, applicants must meet their sharing commitment as a legal condition of receiving the EPA funding. If the proposed cost-share is to be provided by a third-party, a letter of commitment is required. Any form of cost-share included in the Budget Detail must also be included on the SF424 and SF-424A forms. Please see Section III. B. of this RFA for more detailed information on cost-share.

For more guidance on preparing a budget, applicants should refer to the Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance, as described in RAIN-2019-G02.