OVERVIEW

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3

TITLE: Chesapeake Bay Program Office Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications for: **Assessment and Methodology Development for Advanced Automated Techniques and Protocols to Map Chesapeake Bay Submerged Aquatic Vegetation from High-Resolution Satellite Imagery**

ACTION: Request for Applications (RFA)

RFA #: EPA-I-R3-CBP-23-11

ASSISTANCE LISTING #: 66.466

IMPORTANT DATES

July 21, 2023	Issuance of Request for Applications (RFA)
September 6, 2023	Application submission deadline (see Section IV for more information)
October 23, 2023	Approximate date for EPA to notify applicants of results
November 6, 2023	Approximate date for selected applicant to submit revised federal cooperative agreement application
January 1, 2024	Approximate date of award/Project start date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 2
II. AWARD INFORMATION 11
III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION 12
IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION 14
V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION 19
VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION 21
VII: AGENCY CONTACT 23
VIII: OTHER INFORMATION 23
APPENDIX A. APPLICATION FORMAT 24
APPENDIX B. BUDGET GUIDANCE 26

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

1. About the Chesapeake Bay Program

The Chesapeake Bay is North America's largest and most biologically diverse estuary. A resource of extraordinary productivity, it is worthy of the highest levels of protection and restoration. Authorized by Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 117, 33 USC Section 1267, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) is responsible for supporting the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council (Executive Council), including the coordination of federal, state, and local efforts to restore and protect living resources and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. CWA Section 117 also authorizes EPA to provide assistance grants to support the goals of the program.

The CBP was bolstered by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, allowing for increased investment in traditional, nature-based, and green infrastructure. The CBP is committed to increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in its grant programs, projects, and associated community engagement efforts.

The CBP is a unique regional partnership that has led and directed the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. Today, the CBP partners include the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission (a tri-state legislative body); and EPA, representing the federal government. The partnership's work is guided by the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, which establishes the plan for collaboration across the Bay's political boundaries and establishes goals and outcomes for the restoration of the Bay, its tributaries, and the lands that surround them.

2. CBP Partnership Structure

The CBP is guided at the direction of the Executive Council, which establishes the policy direction for the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and exerts its leadership to rally public support for the Bay effort and signs directives, agreements, and amendments that set goals and guide policy for Chesapeake Bay restoration. The Executive Council is established by CWA Section 117.

To ensure implementation of the Executive Council's Chesapeake Bay Agreements, the CBP has several committees, teams, workgroups comprised of participating partners. The committees, teams, and workgroups that will be supported the activities of this RFA include the following:

- The **Principals' Staff Committee (PSC)** acts as the senior policy advisors to the Executive Council, accepting items for their consideration and approval and setting agendas for Executive Council meetings. The PSC translates the restoration vision by setting policy and implementing actions on behalf of the Executive Council. The PSC also provides policy and program direction to the Management Board.
- The **Management Board** provides strategic planning, priority setting, and operational guidance through implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, accountable implementation strategy for the CBP. It directs and coordinates the goal teams and workgroups under it.

- The **Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)** provides scientific and technical guidance to the Chesapeake Bay Program on measures to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay. Since its creation, STAC has worked to enhance scientific communication and outreach throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed and beyond.
- The six **Goal Implementation Teams (GITs)** includes federal and non-federal experts from throughout the watershed. Academic experts, advocacy organizations, and others become active members of the broad restoration partnership.
- The **Water Quality GIT (WQGIT)** is charged is to evaluate, focus, and accelerate the implementation of practices, policies, and programs that will restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries to conditions that support living resources and protect human health.
- The **Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) Team** works to increase collaboration among science providers to provide monitoring, modeling, and analysis needed to update, explain, and communicate ecosystem condition and change to support the GITs.
- The **Communications Workgroup** provides support for the communication needs of the CBP partners by spurring public action through consistent messaging, expanded media coverage, use of multimedia and online tools, comprehensive branding and promotion, outreach to stakeholders, and coordinated internal and external communications.

Pursuant to CWA Section 117(b)(2), 33 USC Section 1267(b)(2), the Chesapeake Bay Program Office (CBPO) is the office within EPA charged with providing support to the Executive Council in the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. The CBPO and CBP, mentioned above, are two distinct entities.

For additional background information on the CBP achievements and commitments, see the CBP partnership's website located at http://www.chesapeakebay.net/.

B. Scope of Work

1. Introduction

There are two overarching objectives of this RFA, which EPA is seeking project proposals to address. The first objective is to map the density and distribution of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) accurately, efficiently, and effectively throughout the mesohaline habitat in Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries from high-resolution (approximately 4m per pixel resolution or less) satellite imagery using automated detection and classification methods, and, in doing so, develop and document a protocol that would inform Bay-wide SAV assessment efforts. The second objective is to develop and document a robust, repeatable method of generating vector-based polygons that:

1. represent SAV beds from the pixel-based SAV classifications developed under Objective 1 that are calibrated to results generated from hand-delineated SAV mapping of beds as estimated from the present SAV survey protocol; and
2. applies the polygon bed delineation method to SAV classification results from high resolution satellite imagery to produce SAV cover maps of *Zannichellia palustris* that are suitable for summarizing acreage and density throughout the mesohaline portion of Chesapeake Bay.

Although the CBP is comprised of federal and non-federal organizations, activities funded under this RFA will support the non-federal partners. The recipient of the cooperative agreement awarded under this RFA may work directly with federal agencies, but the nature of the work will result only in direct, significant benefits to the non-federal agencies, partners, and the general public. Any indirect or incidental benefits to EPA are not the purpose of this RFA.

EPA seeks to support one recipient to meet these objectives by providing the CBP with data and protocols needed to evolve the Bay-wide SAV monitoring program towards satellite remote sensing methods and advance efforts to meet the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. This will be accomplished by performing two activities, Proof of Application and Methods Development, which are described in more detail in Section I.B.3. below.

The total estimated funding under this solicitation is approximately $440,000 overall, with an estimated $150,000 available for years 1-2 and $70,000 available for years 3-4. There is no guarantee of funding throughout this period or beyond.

This project includes two activities, as detailed below. Applicants must address both activities below in their application.

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Activity 1: Proof of application	$150,000	$150,000	--	--
Activity 2: Methods development	--	--	$70,000	$70,000

If your organization has an interest in this project, the experience and knowledge to accomplish the activities described below and is eligible to receive a federal assistance agreement as described in Section III of this announcement, we encourage you to apply. Each eligible application will be evaluated using the criteria described in Section V. This is a multi-year project, and the application should have a work plan and budget for the first year and a projected work plan and estimated budget detail for each subsequent year (up to four years).

2. Chesapeake Bay SAV Monitoring Program

Since 1984, the Chesapeake Bay Program has worked with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to conduct an annual survey of SAV throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal waters. The Chesapeake Bay SAV Monitoring Program (hereafter the SAV monitoring program) collects, interprets, and synthesizes both aerial imagery and ground survey data to report SAV acreage and density throughout the Bay annually and reliably. The program is the most successful and consistent large-scale, long-term SAV monitoring program in the world. SAV scientists and managers across the Chesapeake Bay watershed have grown to depend upon the data for a variety of purposes, from basic research and education to regulatory decision-making and annual public communications on the health of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Adoption of monitoring and assessment approaches with significant cost and programmatic efficiencies are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the SAV monitoring program (Landry et al. 2021).

Satellite image quality and quantity are improving for the purpose of SAV distribution and density mapping. Radiometrically calibrated and atmospherically corrected products are available from several public and commercial sources. Maps of SAV distribution and density are critical for management of estuarine/coastal water quality and natural resources, ecological modeling and forecasting, climate warming effects, ocean acidification, and blue carbon estimates. Maintenance of the annual aerial SAV survey program for Chesapeake Bay has been under pressure for several reasons, including aircraft costs and scheduling, labor costs for manual photointerpretation, and increasingly limited access to restricted airspace. The use of satellite data to complete SAV assessments represents an opportunity to address issues associated with the current annual CBP aerial SAV survey program.

An important challenge in monitoring SAV with satellite-based imagery in tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay is to calibrate SAV maps derived from pixel-based classification methods applied to high resolution satellite images for characterizing SAV cover with those manually delineated from high resolution aerial imagery of the existing CBP annual survey. Currently, under the long-term CBP Annual Survey protocols, SAV bed edges are manually delineated without an automated decision protocol for setting bed boundaries. Individual beds include areas of varying SAV abundance and include spaces between SAV patches without SAV. Each bed is then visually classified for an estimated overall SAV bed density. A purely pixel-based summary of SAV cover will underestimate acres of SAV compared to the manually delineated SAV polygons that link SAV patches, including areas devoid of SAV, into defined beds, creating an artificial downward shift in SAV acreage and density trends. Consequently, new methods are required to generate vector–based polygons from pixel-based SAV data maps auto-generated using a stable decision protocol supporting an algorithm for bed delineation with the high-resolution satellite imagery. Algorithm development would be aligned with, and allow for calibration with, the hand delineated SAV maps manually generated from aerial imagery. The imagery underpins the annual reporting of the SAV abundance indicator that tracks progress towards achieving the SAV goals of the CBP.

Automating the workflow from image acquisition through classification to mapping products and summary outputs of habitat cover is essential for advancing the SAV monitoring program with efficient, effective, and robust monitoring.[1]

Activities 1 and 2 will:

1. Develop key workflow elements essential to an automated assessment process needed to support a future satellite-based SAV monitoring program that can efficiently and effectively operate from image acquisition through classification to develop mapping products and summary outputs of Chesapeake Bay tidal water SAV habitat cover; and
2. Demonstrate the utility of AI/ML-based SAV classification and polygon SAV bed delineation of pixel-based assessment results to evaluate spring SAV distribution in the mesohaline region of the Chesapeake Bay.

[1] References:

Landry, B., Tango, P., Bisland, C., Coffer, M., Dennison, B., Hill, V., Lebrasse, C., Li., J., Orth, R., Patrick, C., Schaeffer, B., Witman, P., Wilcox, D., Zimmerman, R. 2021. Exploring Satellite Image Integration for the Chesapeake Bay SAV Monitoring Program – A STAC Workshop. STAC Publication Number 21-001. Edgewater, MD. (45 pages)

Successfully developing, documenting, and applying the methodology is essential to advancing the program into the future with efficient, reliable, cost effective, and robust monitoring that sustains and enhances the Bay-wide annual assessment of SAV for the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

3. Tasks for Activity 1 (Proof of Application)

The following are examples of the types of tasks required to carry out Activity 1: Proof of Application. Applicants should address these tasks or describe in detail alternative approaches to providing the requested support.

- Develop a quality assurance project plan (QAPP) for satellite-image data acquisition and management.
- Access, collate and assemble high-temporal (daily-weekly), high-spatial (<4m) resolution satellite imagery for the entire mesohaline region (41 CBP SAV segments) of the Chesapeake Bay and its lower tidal tributaries for the entire SAV growing season (March through November) for two consecutive years in preparation for automated SAV assessment.
- Prepare data for classification (i.e., radiometric correction, glint, filter for cloud impacted pixels, etc.).
- Use Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) automated detection methods to autogenerate pixel-based maps of SAV acreage and density in each of the 41 CBP SAV segments defined as mesohaline for the entire SAV growing season.
    - The purpose of creating high-temporal frequency maps is to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of auto-generating maps of SAV from high-resolution (i.e., approximately 4m per pixel resolution or less) satellite imagery at scales beyond site-specific study that can be used to assess seasonal variation in SAV cover. Additionally, it will be necessary in subsequent steps to compare auto-generated SAV maps to hand-delineated SAV maps produced by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) for calibration purposes.
- Document methods and provide protocols and coding for data acquisition, collation, management, classification, and summarization.
- Provide quarterly reports to the Chesapeake Bay Program Monitoring Team through one of its related workgroup venues (e.g., Integrated Monitoring Workgroup, Data Integrity Workgroup, Criteria Assessment Protocol, SAV Workgroup) summarizing image collection status, as well as status of completing assessments while updating the group on any issues, successes and challenges involved in the work.
- Provide semi-annual reports to the Project Officer that will be reviewed with the awardee and the Project Officer.
- Provide annual data set deliverables to the Project Officer.
- Provide an annual interpretive summary of results to the Project Officer.
- Provide final report including full disclosure of SAV distribution generated from satellite imagery and all methods/algorithms/protocols used to generate pixel-based SAV maps.

4. Tasks for Activity 2 (Methods Development)

The following are examples of the types of tasks required to carry out Activity 2: Methods Development. Applicants are expected to conduct these tasks or describe in detail alternative approaches to providing the requested support.

- Effective acquisition and SAV classification of high-resolution satellite imagery for Chesapeake Bay tidal waters (mesohaline segments specifically) during Activity 1 of this project, recognizing the diverse environmental conditions offered by the Bay and the different considerations surrounding satellite-based imagery (e.g., radiometric corrections, glint, etc.).
- Develop automated protocol methods to create vector-based SAV polygons from pixel-based SAV classification using data and maps from Activity 1. Use boundaries and decision process methods for SAV bed characterization established by VIMS (for the Bay-wide aerial survey) to mimic historically applied hand-delineation techniques and maintain consistency in image interpretation and product development. Calibrate to SAV maps hand-delineated from aerial imagery (VIMS Bay-wide aerial survey) where SAV bed polygons in each of two years align in space and time.
- Using the methods developed for vector-based SAV bed delineation of the pixel-based satellite data, generate spring season (March-May) *Zannichellia* acreage and density maps of all 41 Chesapeake Bay mesohaline segments for two years of acquired satellite imagery.
- Define a method with decision rules in a protocol for calculating seasonal SAV cover from the high-temporal density satellite-based data.
- Create composite maps and calculate maximum *Zannichellia* area coverage for the spring season throughout the Chesapeake Bay mesohaline region for each of the two years of data collection as 1) a regional summary number of acreage cover by year, and 2) CBP management segment specific summaries of SAV cover for each year.
- Document methods and provide protocols and coding for data acquisition, collation, management, classification, and summarization.
- Provide quarterly reports to the Chesapeake Bay Program Monitoring Team through one of its related workgroup venues (e.g., Integrated Monitoring Workgroup, Data Integrity Workgroup, Criteria Assessment Protocol, SAV Workgroup) method development status. These reports shall provide the status of completing assessments while updating the group on any issues, successes and challenges involved in the work.
- Provide semi-annual reports to the Project Officer that will be reviewed with the awardee and the Project Officer.
- Provide annual data set deliverables to the Project Officer.
- Provide an annual interpretive summary of results to the Project Officer.
- Provide final report including full disclosure of SAV distribution generated from satellite imagery and all methods/algorithms/protocols used to generate vector-based SAV maps from pixel-based SAV maps/data.

5. Skills and Experience
To fulfill the activities of this RFA, applicants are expected to have the following skills and experience, or describe in detail alternative approaches (e.g., hiring contractors) to ensure the provision and availability of such skills and experience:

- Knowledge and experience working with SAV monitoring and assessment programs.
- Capacity and experience in the coordination of satellite image collection, high resolution (approximately 4m per pixel resolution or less) satellite-data assessment knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Satellite data management, data storage, and data delivery capacities.
- Experience, resources, and capacity suitable to effectively conduct high-spatial resolution satellite-based image acquisition, storage of high temporal frequency satellite data, filtering, collating, and managing of the data suitable for support of SAV monitoring and assessment.
- AI/ML algorithm development, programming, and documentation skills and experience that support protocol developments involving satellite data acquisition, management, image processing, characterization, and output generating methods necessary to support development of a monitoring protocol for future satellite-based data assessments in Chesapeake Bay tidal waters.
- Management of resulting data and summarizing, reporting, and delivery of the results.
- Computer laboratory skills.
- Expertise in computer laboratory procedure oversight, including quality assurance and quality control procedures associated with satellite-based data assessment.
- Strong programmatic experience, skills, and proficiency with program management, data management, metadata management of water quality and SAV monitoring programming.
- History of interpretation, communication, and delivery of satellite-based environmental resources for SAV assessments.
- History of meeting reporting requirements in a timely, effective, and efficient manner.
- Proficiency with data management and analysis, including use of spreadsheets, databases, and graphics software to present results of data analyses.
- Strong GIS and analytical skills.
- Familiarity with ecological and environmental monitoring programs and analyses.
- Experience developing and using program quality assurance and control procedures (QAPP development).
- Proficiency with scientific writing, editing, communication, and computer skills.

C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage & Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs
Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7A1, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to the Agency's Strategic Plan.

1. Linkage to EPA's Strategic Plan
The activities to be funded under this solicitation support the FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan. Awards made under this solicitation will support *Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities*, *Objective 5.2 Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds* of the Strategic Plan.

EPA Order 5700.7A1 also requires that grant applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements. Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to

the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the activities described in Section I.B.2-4.

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 or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period. Examples of potential outputs under the Scope of Work of this announcement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide Chesapeake Bay mesohaline region analysis of high resolution (approximately 4m per pixel resolution or less) satellite-image assessments of SAV to support Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration efforts and address the needs and requirements of CBP decision-makers and managers in the understanding of how CBP nutrient reductions are achieving SAV acreage and density goals.
- Provide quarterly progress updates to at least one of the Chesapeake Bay Program Monitoring Team venues (e.g., Integrated Monitoring Workgroup, Data Integrity Workgroup, Criteria Assessment Protocol Workgroup, SAV Workgroup).
- Provide an annual report to the EPA Project Officer that includes annual data set deliverables and an annual interpretive summary of results.
- Submit a final report to CBP including full disclosure of SAV distribution generated from satellite imagery and all methods/algorithms/protocols used to generate vector-based SAV maps from pixel-based SAV maps/data. Summary of methods and protocols should be provided in a user-friendly manner so all future users can understand and reproduce the methodology given the same data sources.

Semi-annual and final reports will also be required outputs for all activities, as specified in Section VI.C., Reporting, of this announcement.

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 must also be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. Examples of potential outcomes under the Scope of Work of this announcement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Improved understanding of how reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loads delivered to tidal Bay waters are impacting SAV acreage and density through time and space, and as a consequence, support achievement of Bay water quality standards.
- Improved understanding of how SAV acreage and density are related to management actions as represented by achievement of the Chesapeake Bay living-resource-based water quality standards and water quality standards of other tidal Chesapeake TMDLs, Chesapeake Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes, and assessments.
- Increased knowledge and strategies to improve local economic, human health, and environmental goals through a restored Chesapeake Bay.

- Improved knowledge of SAV in the Chesapeake's mainstem and tidal tributaries thereby improving calibration and verification data of the Phase 7 Bay Model and other key CBP management tools.
- More informed CBP decision-making and leadership support in understanding tidal Bay response to nutrient and sediment reductions, to inform actions aimed at overcoming present and future water quality challenges.

D. Authorizing Statutes and Regulations

This grant is made pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 117(d), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267(d), which authorizes EPA to issue grants and cooperative agreements for the purposes of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem, and is funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (PL 117-58). This project is subject to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200) and EPA-specific provisions of the Uniform Grants Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 1500).

E. Minority Serving Institutions:

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

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at Historically Black Colleges and Universities;

2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities;

3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at Hispanic-Serving Institutions;

4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; and

5. Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at Predominately Black Institutions.

F. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation

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

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards

The total estimated federal funding under this solicitation is approximately $440,000 for one cooperative agreement. Funding will be awarded incrementally in the amount of 150,000 per year for Years 1-2 (Activity 1) and $70,000 per year for Years 3-4 (Activity 2) depending on funding availability, satisfactory performance, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Activity 1: Proof of application	$150,000	$150,000	--	--
Activity 2: Methods development	--	--	$70,000	$70,000

EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no award under this announcement or award less than the estimated funding amounts referenced above. Funding depends on availability, satisfactory performance, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. EPA makes no commitment of annual funding amounts for any fiscal year(s), as funds may be limited based on these applicable considerations.

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

B. Award Type

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

- Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the recipient;
- Collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- In accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, review of proposed procurement;
- Approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and
- Review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of these reports rests with the recipient).

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

For this project, federal involvement would typically be in the form of participation with other CBP partners and stakeholders in an advisory capacity to the grantee. The participation is expected to include involvement through various CBP GITs and related committees and workgroups (on which EPA

also participates to ensure that all the recommendations for technical work support the CBP partners). All work conducted is to support the *2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

C. Partial Funding

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

D. Expected Project Period

The expected project period for the cooperative agreement is four years, with funding provided on an annual basis. No commitment of funding can be made beyond the first year. The expected start date for the award resulting from this RFA is **January 1, 2024**.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

A. Eligible Applicants

Consistent with Assistance Listing No. 66.466, the Clean Water Act Section 117(d), and EPA's Policy for Competition of Assistance Agreements (EPA Order 5700.5A1), competition under this solicitation is available for technical and general assistance grants to nonprofit organizations, states, tribes (federally recognized) and local governments, colleges, universities, and interstate agencies. For-profit organizations are not eligible to submit applications in response to this RFA.

Consistent with the definition of "nonprofit organization" at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Note that 2 CFR 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. While not considered to be a non-profit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA. Hospitals operated by state, tribal, or local governments or that meet the definition of nonprofit at 2 CFR 200.1 are also eligible to apply as nonprofits or as instrumentalities of the unit of government depending on the applicable law. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status; such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

B. Cost-Share or Matching Requirements

Pursuant to CWA Section 117(d)(2)(A), 33 USC Section 1267(d)(2)(A), the agency shall determine the cost-share requirements for awards. The Assistance Listing Number, 66.466, states that assistance agreement applicants must commit to a cost-share ranging from 5 percent to 50 percent of eligible project costs as determined at the sole discretion of EPA. For this RFA, EPA has determined that an applicant must provide a minimum of 5 percent of the total cost of the project as the non-federal cost-share.

Cost-share may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. Involvement from foundations, watershed groups, private sector, eligible governmental, as well as non-conventional partners can help with the match. The match must be met by eligible and allowable costs and is subject to the match provisions in grant regulations. Applications that do not demonstrate how the minimum five percent match will be met will be rejected. Selected recipients must comply with 2 CFR 200.306 to meet cost-share or matching requirements.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III.A., B., and C. to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.

2. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this solicitation (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this solicitation. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this solicitation to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submission through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.

3. Applications submitted outside of Grants.gov will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or technical problems associated with Grants.gov or SAM.gov. An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a submission outside of Grants.gov.

4. Applications must be for projects linked to the strategic goal outlined in Section I.C.1.

5. For an application to be considered eligible for funding, project-related work included in the application must take place within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which includes portions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia, and all of the District of Columbia.

6. Applications must show how they will meet the 5 percent cost-share requirement of Section III.B. Applications that fail to meet the minimum 5 percent cost-share requirement will be rejected. (See Appendix A for additional information regarding the budget narrative and formula for calculating cost share.)

7. Applications requesting funding over the maximum funding available ($440,000) will be rejected.

8. If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible.

9. Applications must address both Activity 1 and 2 described in Section I.B. to be considered eligible. Applications that address only one activity or neither will be considered ineligible.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

A. How to Obtain an Application Package

Applicants can download individual grant application forms from the application package available in the Workspace associated with this opportunity on Grants.gov.

B. Submission Process

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

Applicants must apply electronically through Grants.gov under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined here. Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in section 3. Technical Issues with Submission below.

2. Submission Instructions

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

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov (1) to

complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the Entity Registration Checklist for details on this process.

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

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

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

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

b. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the Grants.gov Applicant Registration instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov. Please review the Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles and Learning Workspace - User Roles and Workspace Actions for details on this important process.

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

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

c. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to Grants.gov and click the red "Apply" button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

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

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

d. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov no later than **September 6, 2023**, 11:59 PM ET. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Please note that successful submission of your application through Grants.gov does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

3. Technical Issues with Submission

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

1) Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
2) Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3) Send an email with the RFA number EPA-I-R3-CBP-23-11 in the subject line to Emily Heller (heller.emily@epa.gov) before the application deadline time and date and must include the following:
    a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
    b. Description of the issue
    c. The entire application package in PDF format.

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

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

EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by-case basis. EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to submit through Grants.gov due to Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to

submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov.

4. Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1) Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2) Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3) EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
4) EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report
5) Project Narrative Attachment Form – The project narrative should be prepared as described in Appendix A of the announcement.
6) Budget Narrative Attachment Form – The budget narrative should include a spreadsheet that shows each year's cost for the salaries, fringe benefits, total salaries/wages, travel expenses, equipment, supplies, contractual expenses, other cost, and indirect cost. An optional multi-year budget detail template is available at https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance. For more information, please refer to RAIN-2019-G02, Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance.

Optional Documents:

7) Other Attachment Form – The applicant's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement should be included, as applicable. See RAIN-2018-G02-R, Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements for additional information about indirect costs.

C. Content and Form of Project Narrative

Each application will be evaluated using the criteria in Section V.B. of this announcement. All application review criteria in Section V must be addressed in the project narrative. The project narrative shall not exceed **15** pages in length. Pages refer to one side of a single-spaced, typed page. Font size should be no smaller than 10 and the application must be submitted in an 8 ½" x 11" page size format. **Note that the 15 pages include all supporting materials, including resumes or curriculum vitae.** The 15-page limit does not include documentation of non-profit status, letters of support, cost-share letters of commitment, the SF-424, SF-424A, budget detail, Key Contacts Form and 4700-4 form. If you submit more than 15 pages for the project narrative, the additional pages will be discarded and will not be reviewed. See Appendix A for additional instructions.

D. Other Application Information

1. Intergovernmental Review

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. EPA implemented the Executive Order in 40 CFR Part 29. EPA may require applicants selected for funding to provide a copy of their application to their State Point of

Contact (SPOC) for review as provided at 40 CFR 29.7 and 40 CFR 29.8. The SPOC list can be found on the webpage below. [2]

Office of Federal Financial Management Resources and Other Information

EPA may require successful applicants from states that do not have a SPOC to provide a copy of their application for review to directly affected state, area-wide, regional and local government entities as provided at 40 CFR 29.7 and 40 CFR 29.8. These reviews are not required before applying. Only applicants that EPA selects for funding under this announcement are subject to the Intergovernmental Review requirement.

2. Funding Restrictions

a. Administrative Cost Cap Requirement under Statutory Authority

Recipients applying for CBP assistance agreements must adhere to the requirements for "Administrative Costs" under the CWA Section 117 (d)(4), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267 (d)(4), which states that administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award (annual grant award = federal share plus cost-share). *Appendix B: Administrative Cost Cap Worksheet* is provided as an example of a method to calculate the 10-percent limitation. You are not required to submit Appendix B with your application.

b. Allowable Costs

All costs incurred under this program must be allowable under 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E. In accordance with applicable law, regulation, and policy, any recipient of funding must agree to comply with restrictions on using assistance funds for unauthorized lobbying, fund-raising, or political activities (i.e., lobbying members of Congress or lobbying for other federal grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts). See e.g. 2 CFR 200.450. Funds generally cannot be used to pay for travel by federal agency staff. Proposed project activities must also comply with all state and federal regulations applicable to the project area. The applicant must also review the solicitation for any other programmatic funding restrictions applicable to this program. If awarded funding, the recipient must refer to the terms and conditions of its award for other funding restrictions applicable to its award. It is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure compliance with these requirements. In addition, please see 2 CFR 200 for information on pre-award costs.

E. Coalition Coverage

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient (the "pass-through entity"). Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with EPA's Subaward Policy. The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332,

[2] Additional information regarding the Intergovernmental Review process can be found on the EPA Region 3 website at https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-region-3-grants-and-audit-management-branch-intergovernmental-review-process-and-single.

subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a "partner" or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

A. Evaluation Process

After EPA reviews applications for threshold eligibility purposes as described in Section III, CBPO will conduct a merit evaluation of each eligible application. Reviews will be performed by a team of professionals from EPA and other CBP partner organizations with a working knowledge of the technical analysis and programmatic evaluation needs of the CBP partnership. All reviewers will sign a conflict-of-interest statement indicating they have no conflict.

B. Evaluation Criteria: Maximum score: 100 points

The evaluation criteria below will be used to review eligible applications submitted under this RFA.

Criteria	Points
1. Organizational Capability, Scope, and Approach: Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on: a. How well it demonstrates that the applicant has the organizational skill, capacity, and experience to conduct all aspects of the proposed SAV project work outlined in association with Activities 1 and 2 under Section I.B. (**14 points**) b. The extent and quality to which it demonstrates the ability of the organization to timely and successfully achieve the relevant SAV assessment, program development, and analyses to support the CBP partners as described in Section I.B., regardless of whether the application encompasses one of the examples provided or puts forth an alternative approach that achieves the goal of the relevant Activities. (**13 points**) Note: Prior to naming a contractor (including consultants) or subrecipient in your application as a "partner", please carefully review Section IV.d, "Contracts and Subawards", of EPA's Solicitation Clauses. In evaluating this criterion, EPA will only consider the experience of any contractor(s), including consultants, if the applicant demonstrates they were selected in compliance with the competitive procurement	27

	requirements in 2 CFR 200.319 and 2 CFR 200.320. EPA does not accept justifications for sole-source contracts for services or products available in the commercial marketplace based on a contractor's role in preparing an application.	
2.	**Programmatic Capability and Past Performance:** 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 assistance agreements identified in their project narrative. Assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements (but not federal contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project within the last five years (preferably EPA agreements). (**5 points**) b. History of meeting the reporting requirements under assistance agreements identified in their project narrative, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable, final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not; (**10 points**) c. Programmatic experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the high resolution (approximately 4m per pixel resolution or less) satellite based SAV assessment, program development, and analyses as outlined in Section I.B; (**10 points**) d. Project manager/principal investigator expertise/qualifications, staff skills and knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed SAV project, as described in Section I.B.5. (**10 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.	35
3.	**Transferability of Results to Similar Projects and/or Dissemination to the Public:** Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the degree to which the application includes an adequate plan to gather information and lessons learned from the project and transfer that documentation, information, methods development, data, results, and recommendations to CBP partners and stakeholders across the Chesapeake Bay watershed in a timely manner. (**10 points**)	10
4.	**Innovation and Modernization of Methods Over Time:** Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the extent and quality of the application's description of innovation to deliver results by means of concepts, approaches, methods, or	10

	combinations of these factors as well as the extent to which it addresses the development of recommendations for changes to the existing CBP partnership resource assessment and communication platforms and practices. This will further improve the effectiveness of efforts to raise public awareness and involvement across the diversity of stakeholder communities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. (**10 points**)	
5.	**Cost-effectiveness:** Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate each application based on the degree of cost-effectiveness, considering the following factors: organizational overhead, budget breakdown, and ability to control costs for the SAV activities listed in Section I. (**8 points**)	8
6.	**Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds:** Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (**5 points**)	5
7.	**Environmental Results:** Applicants will be evaluated based on their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving the environmental outputs and outcomes identified in Section I.C of the RFA. (**5 points**)	5

C. Review and Selection Process

Eligible applications will be evaluated and ranked using the criteria stated in Section V.B. above by a panel of reviewers from EPA and other CBP partner organizations with a working knowledge of the technical analysis and programmatic evaluation needs of the CBP partnership. The review team will then forward the highest-ranked applications to the CBPO Director or Deputy Director for final selection. In making the final funding decision, the selection official may also consider programmatic goals and priorities, including those described in the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

A. Award Notices and Instructions for Submission of Final Application

It is expected that the applicant will be notified in writing of funding decisions on or around **October 23, 2023** either via electronic or postal mail. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the EPA Region 3 Grants Management Office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grant award official is authorized to bind the government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding, or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grant award official, is the authorizing document and will be provided either via email or U.S. Postal Service.

Notification of selection does not indicate that the applicant can start work on the project. The selected applicant will be asked to submit a full federal assistance agreement application package. A federal project officer assists in the application process and negotiates a work plan, budget, and starting date. Processing for this particular cooperative agreement award is expected to take 60 days.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

If your application is selected for funding, the following information will be helpful in preparing your cooperative agreement application. A listing and description of general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at: https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-policies-and-guidance-grants.

C. Reporting

Progress Report/Final Report Requirements

The awarded applicant will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports (every six months) throughout the duration of the agreement to update the EPA Project Officer on project progress. Semi-annual progress reports are due within 30 days after the end of each reporting period, as detailed in the award terms and conditions. The recipient will also be required to participate in semi-annual calls/meetings with the EPA Project Officer to discuss progress. A final progress report is due to the EPA Project Officer within 120 after the end of the award performance period. As requested by the CBP partnership, the recipient will provide progress and informational presentations to CBP technical and management-decision making groups.

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

The QMP must document quality assurance policies and practices that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet program objectives. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA's Quality Management Plan (QMP) Standard. The recipient's QMP should be reviewed and updated annually as needed. The QMP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 45 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation.

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

D. Disputes

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

references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding the regulatory changes, the procedures for competition-related disputes remains unchanged from the procedures described at 70 FR 3629, 3630, as indicated in 2 CFR Part 1500, Subpart E.

E. 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.

VII: AGENCY CONTACT

For administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact Emily Heller via email at heller.emily@epa.gov. All questions must be received in writing via with the reference line referring to this RFA (Re: RFA EPA-I-R3-CBP-23-11). All questions and answers will be posted on https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-your-region-information-specific-epa-region-3.

VIII: OTHER INFORMATION

In developing your application, you may find the following documents helpful. Websites for guidance documents are listed here. If you prefer a paper copy, please call 1-800-YOUR BAY.

Boundaries of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
http://www.chesapeakebay.net/maps

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement
https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement

Chesapeake Bay Program Office Grant and Cooperative Agreement Guidance
https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance

EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans
https://www.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial

Please visit the EPA Grants website (https://www.epa.gov/grants), the EPA Region 3 Grants website (https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-your-region-information-specific-epa-region-3) or the Chesapeake Bay Program website (https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance) if you have questions about grant issues such as costs or eligibility.

Further information on CBP committees is located at:
https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/how_we_are_organized

APPENDIX A. APPLICATION FORMAT
U. S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, Region III
EPA-I-R3-CBP-23-11

The following information must be provided, or the application may not be considered complete and may not be evaluated.

Project Narrative Format: Use the Project Narrative Attachment Form (see Section IV.F.) to submit this document. Project narratives as described below shall not exceed 15 single-spaced pages in length. The project narrative must be submitted in an 8 ½" x 11" page size format, and font size should be no smaller than 10. Note that the 15 pages include all supporting materials, including resumes or curriculum vitae. The 15-page limit does not include documentation of non-profit status, letters of support, cost-share letters of commitment, SF-424, SF-424A, budget narrative, Key Contacts Form and 4700-4 form. Applicant's responses should be numbered and submitted according to the format listed below.

1. Name, address (street and email), and contact information of the applicant

2. Background - Include the following in this section:

i) Project title
ii) Brief description of your organization.
iii) Documentation of non-profit status, if applicable.
iv) Brief biographies of applicant lead(s) including resumes and/or curriculum vitae.
v) Funding requested. Specify total cost of the project. Identify funding from other sources, including cost-share or in-kind resources.
vi) UEI number — See Section IV.B

3. Work plan - Include the following in this section:

i) A clear and concise discussion of how your organization will meet the objectives and requirements of each Activity, as described in Section I of the announcement.

ii) Environmental Results – Outputs and Outcomes: Address how the application will meet the expected outputs and outcomes of this project, as outlined in Section I.C of the announcement.
- Output: An output is an environmental activity, effort, or work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced within the assistance agreement period. Examples of potential outputs for the activity are provided in Section I.C.2.
- Outcome: An outcome is a result, effect, or consequence that will result from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes are quantitative measures that may not necessarily be achievable within the assistance agreement period. Examples of potential outcomes are included in section I.C.3.

iii) Review Criteria**:**
Address in narrative form each of the review criteria identified in Section V.B of the RFA. Identify by the review criteria number and title followed by your narrative.

With specific respect to the Programmatic Capability Past Performance factor in V.B: Submit a list of federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements but not federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last five years (no more than five agreements and preferably EPA agreements) and 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) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements.

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

Budget narrative: For the first year and each of the subsequent years, provide a budget narrative breakdown by the major budget categories (i.e., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, other, and indirect). For more information, please refer to EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment's budget guidance at https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02 and indirect cost guidance located at https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2018-g02-r.

In each of the budgets, include the cost-share amount (a minimum of 5 percent for each of the total project costs) and demonstrate how the cost-share will be met, including, if applicable, letters of commitment from any third-party contributors. Please note that subaward costs must be itemized under a separate sub-line item within the "Other" budget cost category.

In addition, grantees applying for CBP assistance agreements must adhere to the requirement for "Administrative Costs" under CWA Section 117 (d)(4), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267 (d)(4), which states that administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. Information on how to calculate the 10 percent administration cost cap is located in Appendix B: Chesapeake Bay Program Administrative Cost Cap Worksheet.

To calculate the specific minimum cost-share amount, follow these two-steps:

1. EPA assistance amount (including any in-kind) ÷ 95% = 100% of Total Grant Amount
2. 100% of Total Grant Amount × 5% = Applicant's Minimum Cost-Share Amount

APPENDIX B. BUDGET GUIDANCE
EPA-I-R3-CBP-23-11

SAMPLE
(DO NOT SUBMIT WORKSHEET WITH APPLICATION)

CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE COST CAP WORKSHEET

INSTRUCTIONS: In accordance with Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 117(d)(4) and 117(e)(6), the costs of salaries and fringe benefits incurred in administering a grant under CWA Section 117(d) or 117(e) shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. The annual grant award is the total costs including Federal and cost share amounts. The worksheet below is provided to assist you in calculating allowable administrative costs. The Budget Detail of your Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) should reflect how your administrative costs will comply with the cap. For specific guidance, refer to the next page of this sample "Compliance with CWA Section 117 Requirements Restricting Administrative Costs."

Total Costs	$ _____
Cap %	X .10
Limit on Administrative Costs	$ (a) _____
List Administrative Costs: (Budgeted costs for application)	
_____	$ _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Total	$ (b) _____

Line (b) cannot exceed Line (a).

COMPLIANCE WITH CWA SECTION 117
RESTRICTING ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Statutory Authority

Under statutory authority, applicants applying for Chesapeake Bay Program grants/cooperative agreements under Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 117 (d) or (e) must adhere to the requirement on administrative costs as follows:

- Under CWA Section 117(a)(1) Administrative Cost - The term "administrative cost" means the cost of salaries and fringe benefits incurred in administering a grant under this section.
- Under CWA Section 117(d)(4) - Administrative Costs. - Administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award.
- Under CWA Section 117(e)(6) - Administrative Costs. -Administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award.

Guidance for Determining Administrative Costs

As determined by EPA/CBPO, the following provides guidance in determining administrative costs for grants/cooperative agreements under CWA Section 117 (d) and (e).

1. Administrative Costs

Salaries and fringe benefits charged against the project or program element for the sole purpose of administering the grant/cooperative agreements shall not exceed 10% of the annual grant **award (Federal and cost share)**. 100% of the salaries and fringe benefits related to these functions are considered administrative costs. Examples of administrative costs include, but are not limited to, preparation and submission of grant applications, fiscal tracking of grants funds, maintaining project files, and collection and submission of deliverables.

2. Non-administrative Costs

Salaries and fringe benefits related to the implementation of the project or program element of the grant/cooperative agreement are not considered administrative costs. None of the salaries and fringe benefit costs related to these functions shall be considered administrative costs. Example:

- The salaries and fringe benefits for technical staff to conduct work to accomplish specific Bay Program goals as outlined in the program or project elements are not administrative costs.

3. Calculation of Administrative Costs

In order to ensure compliance with this requirement, use the format above or a similar format to calculate the costs and include in the Budget Detail of your Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).

4. Questions Regarding Administrative Costs

The recipients shall direct questions to the EPA Project Officer who will determine what costs should be included as administrative costs on a case-by-case basis.