

**Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Applications Due: **Tuesday, June 30, 2026**



**Great Lakes National Program Office**

**Great Lakes Biology Monitoring  
Program: Zooplankton, *Mysis*, and  
Benthic Invertebrate Components**

Funding Opportunity Number: **EPA-R5-GL2026-ZMB**



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# 1. Basic Information

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Great Lakes National Program Office

*Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program (GLBMP): Zooplankton, Mysis, and Benthic Invertebrate Components*

## A. Executive Summary

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) solicits applications from eligible entities for grants to be awarded pursuant to the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(GLRI\) Action Plan IV](#). The Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program (GLBMP) fulfills EPA's statutory obligation specified in Clean Water Act Section 118(c)(B) to establish a Great Lakes system-wide surveillance network to monitor the water quality of the Great Lakes. The goals of the GLBMP are to (1) report on Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem condition using assessments of the lower food web (phytoplankton, chlorophyll, zooplankton, *Mysis* and benthic invertebrates) as indicators; (2) assess the impacts to the lower food web from invasive species including quagga mussels; and (3) inform fisheries and habitat management. The Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) is requesting applications for a project to complete sample collection and analyses in support of the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate components of the GLBMP. The targeted audience for this funding opportunity is eligible entities listed below capable of analyzing zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate community abundance and composition. The intended beneficiaries of the GLBMP are all those who live, recreate, or work within the Great Lakes basin.

## B. Key Information:

**Opportunity Number:**

EPA-R5-GL2026-ZMB

**Assistance Listing:**

66.469

**Announcement Type:**

Initial

**Funding Available:**

\$8.1 million

**Number of Awards:**

1 Cooperative Agreement

## C. Key Dates:

June 30, 2026 11:59 pm ET	Application Submission Deadline
June 30, 2026 10:59 PM CT	Application Submission Deadline (Local Time)
August 2026	Anticipated Notification of Selection
October 2026	Anticipated Award Notification

## D. Funding Details:

It is anticipated that up to **one award** will be made under this announcement. The amount of funding is expected to be **\$8,100,000**, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. Awards funded under this opportunity are expected to have a six year project period.

## E. Agency Contact Information:

Further information, if needed, may be obtained from the EPA contact(s) indicated below.

Technical and Administrative Contact: **GLBMP-ZMB NOFO Team, [GLRI-RFA@epa.gov](mailto:GLRI-RFA@epa.gov)**

## F. Other Funding Considerations

Up to \$8,100,000 may be awarded under this NOFO over approximately six years, consisting of incremental funding of about \$1,350,000 per year, contingent on the quality of applications received, funding availability, future appropriations, satisfactory performance of work, and other applicable considerations. Funding each year is not guaranteed. The application should include an annualized budget and budget detail narrative for the project, and a detailed workplan covering each year of the project.

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

Selection or award of funding under this NOFO is not a guarantee of future funding. EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

## 2. Eligibility

### A. Eligible Applicants

Only these types of organizations may apply:

- [Indian Tribe.](#)
- [State & Local Governments.](#)
- [Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\).](#)
- [Nonprofit organizations.](#)

Consistent with Assistance Listing No. **66.469** and the EPA's Policy for Competition of Assistance Agreements ([EPA Order 5700.5A1](#)), this funding opportunity is being limited to a subset of eligible applicants.

Qualified non-federal entities eligible to apply include non-federal governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, and institutions. This includes state agencies; any agency or instrumentality of local government; interstate agencies; federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations; colleges and universities; non-profit organizations; and other public or non-profit private agencies, institutions, and organizations. Non-profit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization which: (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. 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 applicants. "For profit"

organizations, international organizations, federal agencies, and individuals are not eligible applicants.

## (1) Other Eligibility Requirements

Applications must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered eligible:

1. Applications must include activities taking place within the Great Lakes Basin.
2. Applications must address at least one of the program priorities listed in Section 3.A. Purpose, Priorities, and Activities.
3. Applications must not request more than \$8,100,000.
4. Applicants may only submit 1 application under this opportunity. Applicants that submit more than 1 application will be contacted to determine which application to evaluate. The remaining application(s) will be deemed ineligible.
5. Applications must specify a start date of January 1, 2027, and must specify an end date for the cooperative agreement of no later than March 31, 2033, that allows for the completion of analysis and final data reporting for all samples collected from 2027 through 2031.
6. Applications must include detailed budget information in addition to the mandatory SF-424A form. A detailed budget narrative is mandatory and must be included in the project narrative. The budget information in the application must include all proposed budget subcategories and how requested funds support each of the tasks proposed in the workplan. There must be sufficient detail for EPA to determine the amount of funds going to each individual task.

To be eligible under this request, applicants must demonstrate how they will:

1. Collect zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate samples from all GLBMP stations listed in Table 1 for the years 2027-2031 using procedures that maintain comparability and continuity with historic sampling.
2. Generate and analyze data for zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate community composition and biomass collected in 1 (above); perform analyses using appropriate methods to retain comparability and continuity with historical GLBMP data.
3. Complete statistical analysis, trend interpretation, and results reporting for the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate datasets collected in 1 (above).

[Section 6](#) has additional threshold criteria, including:

1. Applications must adhere to the page limit requirements. Any pages over the limit(s) in Section 4 will not be reviewed.
2. The submission must be received prior to the application deadline for consideration.

## B. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing is not a requirement to be eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Any cost share proposed by an applicant will be considered voluntary. Applicants will not be scored or evaluated solely on the inclusion of voluntary committed cost share if they choose to propose it.

Voluntary committed cost sharing is a binding requirement of Federal award. Applicants who propose voluntary cost share must include the costs/contributions on the SF-424, SF-424A Budget Information form, and Budget Detail.

If an applicant proposes voluntary cost share the following apply:

1. A voluntary committed cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations ([2 CFR 200.306](#)).
2. A voluntary committed cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
3. 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.
4. The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved budget.

## 3. Program Description

### A. Purpose, Priorities, and Activities

#### Program Purpose and Priorities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program (GLBMP) is a long-term monitoring program with the purpose of conducting annual monitoring and targeted science projects to assess ecosystem health, guide Great Lakes restoration, and protect the Great Lakes from current and future threats.

The GLBMP is designed to address the following priorities:

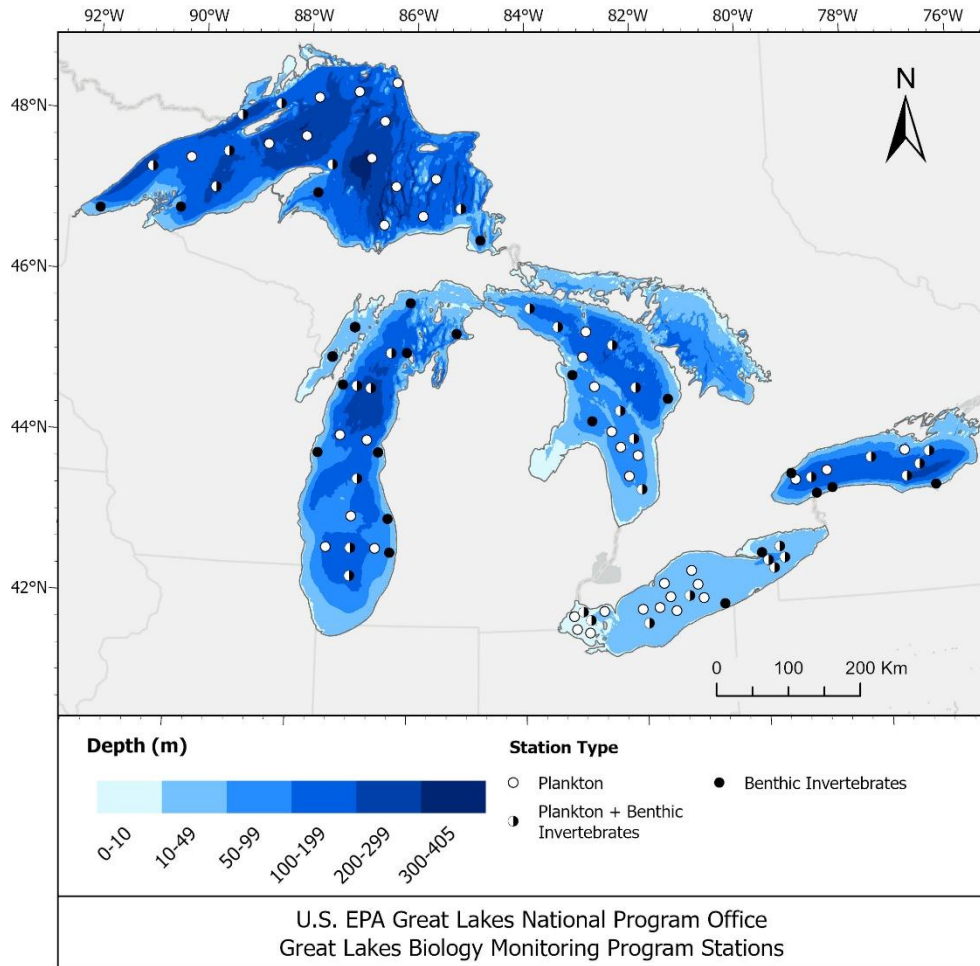
1. Report on Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem condition using assessments of the lower food web (plankton, chlorophyll, zooplankton, *Mysis* and benthic invertebrates) as indicators;
2. Assess the impacts to the lower food web from invasive species including quagga mussels; and
3. Inform fisheries and habitat management.

Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program activities are implemented to fulfill EPA's statutory obligation specified in Clean Water Act Section 118(c)(B) to establish a Great Lakes system-wide surveillance network to monitor the water quality of the Great Lakes; achieve commitments of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and support U.S. domestic actions of the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative, lake-specific priorities identified in Lakewide Action and Management Plans (LAMPs), and other Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) activities.

Zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate samples are collected in the open waters of the five Great Lakes and analyzed to assess spatial and temporal trends in biological communities. Table 1 describes GLBMP base monitoring program sampling station information and analytes. Annual intensive benthic surveys in one lake each year are also conducted to support comprehensive assessments of the benthic invertebrate community and address lake-specific information gaps.

**Table 1.** GLBMP base monitoring program zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate sampling station information. The applicant should demonstrate how they will collect and process these required samples. Additional stations and/or samples may be proposed as part of Supplemental Studies.

<b>Station Type</b> (see Figure 1)	<b>Number of Stations, annual</b>	<b>Sample Frequency, annual</b>	<b>Samples Collected, annual</b> (see Rosette sampling Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for details)
Plankton	72	Spring & Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zooplankton: 20-m vertical tow (64 µm mesh, 0.5-m diameter net) and 100-m vertical tow (153 µm mesh, 0.5-m diameter net)</li> <li>• <i>Mysis</i>: vertical tow (250-500 µm mesh, 1-m diameter net) at all stations &gt;30 m deep that are sampled at night (note: this is approximately half of the total plankton stations).</li> </ul>
Benthic invertebrates	2 (Spring) 58 (Summer) 80 – 100 (Intensive Lake Benthic Survey); approximate station number, varies among lakes	Spring, Summer, Intensive Lake Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring: Ponar samples (rinsed on 500 µm mesh) analyzed only for <i>Hexagenia</i> at 2 western Lake Erie stations.</li> <li>• Summer: Ponar samples (rinsed on 500 µm mesh) analyzed for all benthic invertebrate community taxa.</li> <li>• Intensive Lake Benthic Survey: Ponar samples (rinsed on 500 µm mesh) analyzed for benthic invertebrate community taxa.</li> </ul>



**Figure 1.** Map of the Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program (GLBMP) base program monitoring stations, including stations that are sampled for plankton (zooplankton; *Mysis* at sites >30 m visited at night; white circles) and stations that are sampled for benthic invertebrates (black circles). Stations where both plankton and benthic invertebrates are collected are shaded half white and half black.

### Program Activities

Applicants must propose program activities that align with the stated priorities and goals of the Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program and address the following program-specific objective:

1. the continued documentation of the status and trends of the water quality and ecological health of the open waters of the Great Lakes based on zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate community analyses;

Applicants may propose program activities that align with the stated priorities and goals of the Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program and address the following additional program-specific objectives:

2. evaluation of artificial intelligence approaches to assess zooplankton taxonomy compared to traditional microscopy methods; approaches to assess *Mysis* and/or benthic invertebrates may also be proposed; and
3. supplemental studies of zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities for each lake coincident with the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative (CSMI) five-year schedule.

Applicants are expected to support these program-specific objectives through completion of activities that should include:

- Base Monitoring Program
  - Zooplankton and *Mysis* Collection, Taxonomic Analysis, and Biomass Calculations
  - Benthic Invertebrate Collection, Taxonomic Analysis, and Biomass Calculations; and
  - Statistical Analysis, Interpretation, and Reporting.
- Supplemental Studies
  - Artificial Intelligence Approaches; and
  - Lake-specific Studies.
- Data Management and Quality Assurance
- Results

***Base Monitoring Program: Zooplankton and Mysis Collection, Taxonomic Analysis, and Biomass Calculations***

Applicants must describe their plans to collect, identify, enumerate, and determine biomass for zooplankton and *Mysis* from all five Great Lakes in spring and summer, starting in spring 2027 through summer 2031. Collection will occur aboard the R/V *Lake Guardian*. Applicants should document their taxonomic expertise and their capability to hire and train taxonomists. Applicants should demonstrate how they intend to maintain comparability and continuity of sampling procedures and taxonomic analysis with historic methods and datasets.

Applicants may suggest modifications to historic sampling and/or taxonomic procedures with supporting rationale. The supporting rationale should demonstrate how the proposed procedures will still maintain continuity between historical data and the data collected under this project. Once the award has been made and prior to the analysis of any zooplankton and *Mysis* samples, the award recipient will need to demonstrate comparability and consistency with existing species identification procedures and the historical dataset.

Current GLBMP sampling procedures, analytical techniques, and historic taxonomic species lists for zooplankton and *Mysis* can be found by referencing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) posted on [the NOFO website](#). Summary-level zooplankton taxonomy data (major groups) are available for direct download from the Great Lakes Environmental Database (GLENDa) via EPA's Central Data Exchange (CDX) reporting site (<https://cdx.epa.gov/>). Applicants can request detailed historical data on zooplankton taxonomy by emailing [GLRI-RFA@epa.gov](mailto:GLRI-RFA@epa.gov) with the subject line "EPA-R5-GL2026-ZMB: GLBMP Taxonomy Data".

### **Base Monitoring Program: Benthic Invertebrate Collection, Taxonomic Analysis, and Biomass Calculations**

Applicants must describe their plans to collect, identify, enumerate, and determine biomass for benthic invertebrates from all five Great Lakes spring and summer, starting in spring 2027 through summer 2031. Applicants must also describe their plans to collect, identify, enumerate, and determine biomass for benthic invertebrates from annual intensive benthic surveys in one lake each year (see schedule in the “Supplemental Studies” section), starting in 2027 through 2031. Collection will occur aboard the R/V *Lake Guardian*. Applicants should document their taxonomic expertise and their capability to hire and train taxonomists. Applicants should demonstrate how they intend to maintain comparability and continuity of sampling procedures and taxonomic analysis with historic methods and datasets. Historic taxonomic species lists for benthic invertebrates and analytical techniques can be found in the SOPs posted on [the NOFO website](#).

Applicants may suggest modifications to historic sampling and/or taxonomic procedures with supporting rationale. The supporting rationale should demonstrate how the proposed procedures will still maintain continuity between historical data and the data collected under this project. Once the award has been made and prior to the analysis of any benthic invertebrate samples, the award recipient will need to demonstrate comparability and consistency with existing species identification procedures and the historical dataset.

Summary-level benthic invertebrate taxonomy data (major groups) are available for direct download from the Great Lakes Environmental Database (GLENDa) via EPA’s Central Data Exchange (CDX) reporting site (<https://cdx.epa.gov/>). Applicants can request detailed historical data on benthic invertebrate taxonomy by emailing [GLRI-RFA@epa.gov](mailto:GLRI-RFA@epa.gov) with the subject line “EPA-R5-GL2026-ZMP: GLBMP Taxonomy Data”.

### **Base Monitoring Program: Statistical Analysis, Interpretation, and Reporting**

Applicants must describe their plans for statistical analysis, trend interpretation, and results reporting for zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate datasets. References to specific statistical methodologies and approaches should be included.

In this section, describe plans to ensure the monitoring and assessment information generated is made available to the Great Lakes community in a wide variety of formats, including presentations, technical reports including State of the Great Lakes (SOGL) reports, and peer-reviewed journals, and other products. Applicants are expected to discuss how this dissemination of information will occur. The successful applicant is expected to integrate recent and historical data to provide interpretation of changes to the biological communities.

Applicants should demonstrate how they will work with the EPA Project Officer and GLBMP Technical Lead to report on the status and trends of the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities in the Great Lakes in a timely manner and support the development of technical reports.

Applicants should also discuss how their work will increase understanding of the biological health of the Great Lakes and the implications for ecosystem and fisheries management. The advancement of scientific knowledge may include the development of zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate community-based indicators, application of ecosystem models, identification of stressor-state relationships, and the further education of graduate and undergraduate students in taxonomy and Great Lakes ecosystem science.

**Supplemental Studies: Artificial Intelligence Approaches**

Applicants should describe their plans to pilot artificial intelligence approaches to estimate zooplankton abundance and community composition and compare these results to data generated using traditional microscopy and other relevant methods. Applicants may also propose studies to pilot artificial intelligence approaches to estimate *Mysis* and/or benthic invertebrate populations. The proposed work should evaluate the effectiveness of artificial intelligence approaches for zooplankton, *Mysis* and/or benthic invertebrate enumeration and identification. Applicants should describe how these analyses fit within their proposed budget, including any relevant information on sampling frequency and locations for analysis using advanced approaches with supporting rationale.

**Supplemental Studies: Lake-specific Studies**

Applicants should describe how they intend to carry out supplemental assessments of the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities, biomasses, and distributions annually to address lake-specific data and information gaps. These studies should contribute to the information needed by resources managers and occur coincident with the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative (CSMI) field year for each lake, per the schedule below:

CSMI Schedule	
2027	Lake Huron
2028	Lake Ontario
2029	Lake Erie
2030	Lake Michigan
2031	Lake Superior

The program design for these supplemental studies should focus on the conditions occurring within each lake and address lake-specific data and information gaps. Studies may investigate how zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities are impacted by factors such as, but not limited to:

- a. the role of non-native species in large-scale changes to the Great Lakes lower food web;
- b. fluctuations in the state of the biological community on various temporal scales (e.g., short-term, seasonal, interannual, long-term) and/or spatial scales (e.g., nearshore-offshore, lake basin scale, whole lake scale);
- c. oligotrophication of offshore waters in Lakes Michigan, Huron, Erie (eastern basin) and Ontario, and the associated increases in water clarity;
- d. eutrophication and algal blooms in Lake Erie and embayments; and
- e. rates and mechanisms of invertebrate and fish predations.

Note: assessments of benthic invertebrate communities for the annual intensive benthic survey in one lake each year (coincident with CSMI field year for each lake) is included as part of the base monitoring program. However, additional activities for these surveys (or other activities) may be proposed as supplemental studies.

### **Data Management and Quality Assurance**

Applicants must describe their plans and capability to complete data recording, quality assurance, and generation of data submission materials for zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate data. With large quantities of data being generated, a comprehensive and efficient data management system is necessary. Applicants should demonstrate their plans to manage all data generated from sample collection and analysis and submit data to EPA in electronic format. GLNPO will provide existing data management tools, which may be maintained and modified as needed by the grantee to meet these requirements.

For Base Monitoring Program data, applicants should demonstrate how they will submit final verified shallow zooplankton tow (20-m tows with 64 µm mesh) data within 18 months of final sample collection in a given field year (e.g., submit final verified 2027 data by February 2029); how they will submit final verified deep zooplankton tow (100-m tows with 153 µm mesh) and *Mysis* net tow data within 12 months of final sample collection in a given field year (e.g., submit final verified 2027 data by August 2028); and how they will submit final verified benthic invertebrate data within 12 months of final sample collection in a given field year. Once data are reviewed and approved by EPA, the data will be made publicly available on the Great Lakes Environmental Database (GLENDa) via EPA's Central Data Exchange (CDX) reporting site.

Progress updates on datasets and analysis generated as part of Supplemental Studies must be submitted on an annual basis, starting in year 2 of the grant period. Applicants must demonstrate how project elements and processes will allow field and lab data to be efficiently managed and interpreted year-to-year.

Applicants must demonstrate how they will develop, implement, and maintain a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that is consistent with the requirements of the current version of the [EPA QAPP Standard CIO 2105-S-02](#) and a Quality Management Plan (QMP) in accordance with the current version of the [EPA QMP Standard CIO 2105 S-01](#). A QAPP is specific to individual projects and outlines the procedures and processes necessary to ensure the quality of data or information generated during the project. It details the project's objectives, the type and quality of environmental information required, and how it will be collected, analyzed, and used. A QMP describes and documents the organization's Quality Program, including the program's organizational structure, quality policies and procedures, criteria and areas of application, and roles, responsibilities and authorities. Applicants must discuss their plans for ensuring the continuity and consistency of zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate taxonomy data through reproducible quality assurance and quality control samples. Cross-lab training and demonstration of identification consistency with the previous grant recipient may be required. Please see the [Quality Assurance Resources for GLRI Grantees website](#) for more information.

### **Results**

Applicants must describe how their proposed project will achieve outputs and outcomes that support the program's purpose, priority, goals, and objectives in their responses to the criteria in

Section 6. The description must include how the proposed project will support GLRI Action Plan IV Measure of Progress 5.2.1. Annual Great Lakes monitoring conducted; interdisciplinary science projects and assessments implemented to support the GLRI and U.S. domestic actions in support of the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative, lake-specific priorities identified in LAMPs and other GLWQA activities.

Outputs and outcomes specific to each project will be identified as deliverables in the negotiated workplan if the application is selected for award. Recipients will be expected to report progress toward the attainment of expected project outputs and outcomes during the project performance period.

The term “**output**” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable over the term of the grant funding period.

The expected outputs for the grants awarded under these guidelines should include but are not limited to:

- a quantification of Great Lakes ecosystem health based on analyses of zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate community structure and productivity, incorporating both established laboratory methodologies and technology-based approaches;
- an evaluation of the temporal trends of ecosystem health based on zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities in the Great Lakes;
- development of Great Lakes scientists through the education of graduate and undergraduate students in zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate taxonomy and Great Lakes ecosystem science;
- an evaluation of the use of artificial intelligence approaches for zooplankton community assessments; can also include *Mysis* and/or benthic invertebrate assessments;
- targeted studies for lake-by-lake assessment of zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities coincident with the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative (CSMI);
- dissemination of results; and
- development of State of the Great Lakes indicator reports that use data generated through the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate and components of the GLBMP.

The term “**outcome**” means the result, effect or consequence that will be achieved by carrying out an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within a grant funding period.

EPA anticipates the outcomes from the projects awarded under this announcement may be an increase in the capacity to:

- understand the biological health of the Great Lakes lower food web;
- understand the spatial and temporal trends of zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities to assess Great Lakes ecosystem health to fulfill EPA's statutory obligation specified in Clean Water Act Section 118(c)(B); achieve commitments of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and support U.S. domestic actions in support of the Cooperative

Science and Monitoring Initiative, lake-specific priorities identified in LAMPs and other GLWQA activities;

- surveil for new aquatic non-native species within the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities;
- understand the impacts of changing nutrient availability (*i.e.*, driven by dreissenid mussel feeding and/or nutrient load changes) on the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities;
- enhance the Great Lakes ecosystem health indicators; and
- increased application of technology-based approaches for assessing the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities.

See [EPA Order 5700.7A1: EPA's Policy for Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for more information about outputs and outcomes.

## B. Program Goals and Objectives

The activities to be funded under this NOFO support Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American” of [EPA's “Powering the Great American Comeback” Initiative](#).

This announcement will result in financial assistance for a monitoring project to fulfill EPA's statutory obligation specified in Clean Water Act Section 118(c)(B) to establish a Great Lakes system-wide surveillance network to monitor the water quality of the Great Lakes, and in furtherance of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). Specifically, the goal of this NOFO is to solicit applications for monitoring zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate populations in the Great Lakes in support of the Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program (GLBMP).

The Great Lakes Biological Monitoring program was established in 1983 to assess and investigate the ecological health of the Great Lakes. The program generates data to assess whole lake responses to stressors, such as changes to nutrient loads and invasive species, providing information to federal, state and tribal fisheries and water quality managers. Sampling is focused on the relatively homogeneous offshore waters of each lake. Zooplankton community analyses have been an integral part of the program since its inception, benthic invertebrate assessments were added in 1997, and *Mysis* population assessments were added in 2006. More information on the Great Lakes Biology Monitoring Program can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-monitoring/great-lakes-biology-monitoring-program>.

Monitoring zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrates is important because their composition and biomass are strong indicators of water quality and ecological condition. Zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate identification and enumeration have historically provided the information needed to link primary production in the lakes to fish communities. Zooplankton and *Mysis* are important food sources to pelagic forage fish, and benthic invertebrates are consumed by numerous fish species throughout the Great Lakes.

The structure of the zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities has changed in many areas of the Great Lakes in recent decades in response to altered nutrient dynamics, invasive species, and other stressors, with potentially great impacts on fish reproduction and growth. Ecological indicators based on zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate communities have been a critical part of the information used to assess the results of management actions and to

guide state and local fisheries and water quality managers. Tracking these conditions and documenting the changes to the environmental status of the Great Lakes is of critical importance to a broad stakeholder community that includes fisheries managers, water quality managers, and local communities that rely on the Great Lakes for drinking water, recreation and economic value.

Technology-based approaches for determining zooplankton abundance community composition are developing rapidly, including imaging technologies paired with artificial intelligence approaches for zooplankton identification. Evaluating these technologies and comparing outputs to results generated by the traditional microscopy approach is essential for understanding how technology-based approaches can complement and enhance monitoring efforts in the future. Such technologies may also be relevant for assessing *Mysis* populations. For evaluating benthic invertebrate communities, technology-based approaches such as the use of video data have also enhanced monitoring efforts, and artificial intelligence approaches may further improve efficiency for processing these data.

## C. Statutory Authority

The Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322 authorizes the activities under this NOFO. The U.S. EPA has authority to award grants and cooperative agreements for planning, research, monitoring, outreach and implementation projects in furtherance of the GLRI and the GLWQA. This NOFO is being offered under [Assistance Listing 66.469](#).

## D. Funding Type

It is anticipated that cooperative agreements will be funded under this funding opportunity.

Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work supported. Although the 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:

- coordination of the successful applicant's participation in surveys aboard the R/V *Lake Guardian*;
- close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- in accordance with [2 CFR 200.317](#) and [2 CFR 200.318](#), review of proposed procurement;
- approving qualifications of key personnel (the EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and
- review of reports and manuscripts prepared under the cooperative agreement.

The 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.

## E. Requirements for Increasing Access to Results of EPA-Funded Extramural Scientific Research

It is EPA Policy to ensure that the results of EPA-funded extramural scientific research are accessible to the public to the greatest extent feasible consistent with applicable law; policies and Orders; the Agency's mission; resource constraints; and U.S. national, homeland and economic security. This entails maximizing, at no charge, access by the public to peer-reviewed,

scientific research journal publications or associated author manuscripts, and their underlying digital research data, created in whole or in part with EPA funds, while protecting personal privacy; recognizing proprietary interests, confidential business information and intellectual property rights; and avoiding significant negative impact on intellectual property rights, innovation, and U.S. competitiveness. EPA's Policy for Increasing Access to Results of EPA-Funded Extramural Scientific Research may be accessed at: [Non-EPA Researcher Requirements](#). Terms and conditions implementing this policy may be accessed at: [Non-EPA Researcher Requirements](#).

Reasonable, necessary, and allocable costs for data management and public access as discussed in EPA's Policy for Increasing Access to Results of EPA-Funded Extramural Scientific Research may be included in extramural research applications and detailed in the budget justification described in Section 4 or as otherwise directed.

## 4. Application Contents and Format

### A. Application Forms

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: use this to submit your Project Narrative
6. Budget Narrative Attachment Form

#### ***Optional Documents:***

7. Other Attachments Form: Use this to submit other attachments, including the CVs of proposed project staff and letters of support, as applicable

**Application Formatting Requirements:** Each Narrative Proposal must be formatted for 8½” x 11” paper and should use no smaller than an 11-point Times New Roman font with 1” margins. Do not use a “double column” (a.k.a. newspaper) format. Do not include more than one application in any file, and do not zip the file or use a file extension for your files.

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.

### B. Project Narrative Description

#### **Narrative Proposal**

The narrative proposal (including the Summary Information Page, Workplan, Detailed Budget Narrative, Maps, and Charts and Figures,) must be no more than thirty single-spaced pages in length and include the items below, in the requested order. Excess pages will not be reviewed.

Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures must be included in the Narrative Proposal file. They may be included within the body of the workplan or as an appendix. In either case those items will be counted toward the page limit. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures that are submitted as a separate attachment will not be reviewed.

The Project Narrative should include:

**A. Summary Information Page (may not exceed one page):**

- a. Project Title (60 characters):** EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience
- b. Applicant Information:** Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, and e-mail address.
- c. Proposed Funding Request:** The total dollar amount requested from EPA. This amount must be within the total funding available.
- d. Project Duration:** Provide beginning and end dates for the project, consistent with the project period length specified in Section 1.D. Funding Details.
- e. Project Description (100 words):** Summarize the proposed project using plain language. Include the expected outputs, outcomes, and environmental benefits resulting from the implementation of the project.
- f. Project Location:** Provide representative coordinates (latitude and longitude) for the location where analysis will be performed.

**B. Workplan:**

The workplan for each proposed project must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections 1-3 of this NOFO (including the threshold eligibility criteria in Section 2) and should address each of the evaluation criteria set forth in Section 6. The workplan should be organized in the order and with the headings and information requested below. Additional details and associated point values for each section of the workplan are described in NOFO Section 6.B. Review Criteria below.

- a. Study Design:** Define plans to collect zooplankton, *Mysis*, and benthic invertebrate samples across all Great Lakes during spring and summer surveys aboard the R/V Lake Guardian. Define plans to collect benthic invertebrate samples in support of the intensive lake benthic survey each year. Explain how the project team intends to carry out supplemental studies, including: 1) evaluating technology-based approaches using artificial intelligence to assess communities, and 2) lake-specific assessments of these communities in each lake, coincident with the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative field year. Describe how the project will maintain comparability and continuity with historic sampling procedures and/or suggest modifications with supporting rationale.
- b. Collaboration:** Describe the type of any collaboration/support proposed, how you will ensure that it will materialize during project performance, and what role it will play in the overall project. Any letters demonstrating evidence of collaboration and support from the public or private sector should be attached using the Other Attachments Form.

- c. **Results (Outputs and Outcomes):** Provide an overview of the anticipated outputs and outcomes resulting from implementation of the proposed project. The description must include how the proposed project will support GLRI Action Plan IV Measure of Progress 5.2.1. *Annual Great Lakes monitoring conducted; interdisciplinary science projects and assessments implemented to support the GLRI and U.S. domestic actions in support of the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative, lake-specific priorities identified in LAMPs and other GLWQA activities.*
- d. **Programmatic Capability and Past Performance:** Include the PI's and Institution's past history of managing agreements, including their history of meeting reporting requirements. Describe past project expenditure rates and the expertise of proposed project staff.
- e. **Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed narrative explaining how EPA funds and any voluntary cost-shares will be used. Applicants should use whole-dollar amounts. The applicant must provide a detailed budget with estimated funding requested for each project task. A detailed budget narrative is mandatory and must be included in the workplan (see Section 2.A.).

The budget information in the application should provide sufficient detail for EPA to determine cost-effectiveness, reasonableness and allowability of costs. It must include all proposed budget subcategories present on the SF-424A if applicable (Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Equipment, Contractual, Other and Indirect); the amount requested per subcategory and a detailed description of what the funds will be used for; and how requested funds support each of the tasks proposed in the workplan. Applicants requesting indirect costs may propose an indirect cost rate below their negotiated rate or below the federal *de minimus* rate (15%).

Applicants must provide the aggregate amount they propose to issue as subaward work, as well as an accompanying budget table for each subaward and a description (budget narrative) of the types of activities to be supported via subaward(s). Subaward budget tables must include all associated costs, including indirect costs.

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.

## C. Applicants Using Contractors

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.

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. If an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application, it does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements.

The EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subrecipients and/or named contractor(s) during the application evaluation process unless the applicant provides documentation that it has complied with these requirements.

For additional guidance, applicants should review [EPA's Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#), [EPA's Subaward Policy](#), and [EPA's Subaward Policy Frequent Questions](#). The EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500, as well as the requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.321 and 40 CFR Part 33 Subpart C.

## D. Release Copies of Applications

Copies of applications submitted under this NOFO may be made publicly available after selections are made.

Applicants should:

- clearly indicate which portion(s) of the application are confidential, privileged, or sensitive information, or
- state 'n/a' or 'not applicable' if the application does not have confidential, privileged, or sensitive information;
- not include trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is confidential or privileged, or sensitive information that would invade another individual's personal privacy (e.g., an individual's salary, personal email addresses, etc.);
- be aware that if such information is included, it will be treated in accordance with [40 CFR 2.203](#).

## E. Coalition Coverage

A coalition is formed when two or more eligible applicants coordinate to submit a single application. Coalitions must identify which single eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will receive subawards from the recipient (the "pass-through entity"). The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to the EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in [2 CFR 200.1](#) and comply with the [EPA's Subaward Policy](#).

## F. Quality Assurance

In accordance with [2 CFR Part 1500.12](#) and the Agency Quality Directives, all assistance agreements that include environmental information operations must submit a Quality Management Plan (QMP) for EPA approval. A QMP describes and documents the organization's Quality Program, including the program's organizational structure, quality policies and procedures, criteria and areas of application, and roles, responsibilities and authorities. It describes an organization's overall quality program and provides a framework for implementing quality assurance across all projects and operations within the organization.

The QMP documents all technical activities to be performed under the Quality Program and describes how the program will integrate quality assurance and quality control policies and procedures, and Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) into all environmental information operations. The QMP must comply with the requirements of the [EPA Quality Directives](#).

EPA Project Officers will work with all selected recipients on quality assurance requirements, which will be documented in the grant Quality Assurance Terms and Conditions. Once the award is made, if a QMP is required for the grant, the applicant will develop a QMP in accordance with the current version of the [EPA QMP Standard CIO 2105 S-01](#), and submit for EPA approval in accordance with the awarding EPA Office's QMP. Selected applicants cannot begin environmental information operations until EPA approves the applicant's QMP.

Projects falling under the assistance agreement that include environmental information operations are required to submit a QAPP consistent with the requirements of the current version of the [EPA QAPP Standard CIO 2105-S-02](#). A QAPP is specific to individual projects and outlines the procedures and processes necessary to ensure the quality of data or information generated during the project. It details the project's objectives, the type and quality of environmental information required, and how it will be collected, analyzed, and used.

## 5. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

### A. Submission Dates and Times

June 30, 2026 11:59 pm ET                      Application Submission Deadline

June 30, 2026 10:59 pm CT                      Application Submission Deadline (Local Time)

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

### B. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

#### SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. SAM.gov will provide a UEI for your organization, which is required to apply for grants using Grants.gov. To register, go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for the information you will need to register. Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements before applying for the award.

SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. [Begin that process today.](#)

#### Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](#). You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Please visit [How to Register to Apply for Grants](#) for additional information.

### C. Submission Instructions

You must submit your application through Grants.gov. See Section 5.B. above for information on getting registered.

Important tips:

- 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.
- See the Quick Start Guide for Applicants for instructions on how to submit.
- Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks.
- Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files.
- Your application must be submitted by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance.
- If you receive an error or the 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](tel:1-800-518-4726) or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).
- See Grants.gov Errors for information on other Grants.gov errors.
- 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. 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:

- Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
- Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
- Send an email with Funding Opportunity Number (FON): EPA-R5-GL2026-ZMB in the subject line to [GLRI-RFA@epa.gov](mailto:GLRI-RFA@epa.gov) before the application deadline time and date and must include the following:
  - Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
  - Description of the issue
  - The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, the 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.

Applicants with limited or no access to the internet may request an exception by following the procedures outlined [here](#). The request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods.

## E. Intergovernmental Review

The application is not subject to Intergovernmental Review.

## 6. Application Review Information

### A. Responsiveness Review

Applications must meet the eligibility requirements described in [Section 2](#) to be evaluated. Applicants not meeting these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will be notified within 15 calendar days of the determination.

- Applications must adhere to the page limit requirements. Any pages over the limit(s) in [Section 4](#) will not be reviewed.
- Initial applications must be submitted *on or before* the application deadline through Grants.gov or through limited circumstances as expressed in [Section 5](#). The EPA will not evaluate applications that are not submitted on time.
- *Technical difficulties applying:* Applicants having technical difficulties applying must contact the Grants.gov hotline at 1-800-518-4726 *and* then must email a PDF of the full application to the EPA contact listed in [Section 1](#). The submission must be received prior to the application deadline for consideration.

### B. Review Criteria

Criteria Name	Criteria Description	Points
<b>Project Implementation Plan</b>	Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>4 points</b> - describe what work will be done, by whom, how, and when it will be accomplished;</li> <li><b>2 points</b> - include a milestones table with significant achievements, deliverables, and date;</li> <li><b>4 points</b> - demonstrate how the proposed plans will effectively support the annual GLBMP to collect data, assess, and monitor status and trends of Great Lakes zooplankton, <i>Mysis</i>, and benthic invertebrate communities.</li> </ol>	<b>10</b>
<b>Base Monitoring Program Implementation</b>	Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate effective plans to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>20 points</b> – collect, identify, and enumerate Great Lakes zooplankton at all GLBMP stations; generate high-quality zooplankton data and biomass calculations that are directly comparable to historical datasets at all GLBMP zooplankton stations; submit data within required time frames; hire and train taxonomists;</li> <li><b>8 points</b> – collect, identify, and enumerate Great Lakes <i>Mysis</i> at all GLBMP stations; generate high-quality taxonomic data and biovolume calculations that are directly comparable to historical datasets</li> </ol>	<b>54</b>

	<p>at all GLBMP <i>Mysis</i> stations; submit data within required time frames; hire and train taxonomists;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. <b>20 points</b> – collect, identify, and enumerate Great Lakes benthic invertebrates at all GLBMP and CSMI benthic stations; generate high-quality taxonomic data and biomass calculations that are directly comparable to historical datasets at all GLBMP benthic stations; submit data within required time frames; hire and train taxonomists;</li> <li>iv. <b>2 points</b> – statistically analyze and integrate recent and historical data into reports and interpret changes in biological communities;</li> <li>v. <b>2 points</b> - submit progress reports, and contribute to EPA technical reports and State of the Great Lakes reports; and</li> <li>vi. <b>2 points</b> - expediently provide monitoring and assessment information to Great Lakes stakeholders (local, state, and tribal environmental managers and the scientific community) in a wide variety of formats.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Supplemental Studies</b></p>	<p>Applications will also be evaluated based on the extent to which proposed supplemental studies address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>6 points</b> - evaluate the effectiveness of artificial intelligence approaches for assessing Great Lakes invertebrate communities sampled by the GLBMP. <b>15 points</b> – address significant knowledge gaps and contribute needed information to resource managers through supplemental studies for each lake, to occur coincident with the Cooperative Science and Monitoring Initiative field years.</li> </ul>	<p><b>21</b></p>
<p><b>Data Management and Quality Assurance</b></p>	<p>Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent they demonstrate effective plans to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>2 points</b> - develop, implement, and maintain a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that uses reliable and reproducible quality assurance and quality control measures (e.g., training protocols for taxonomists, routine quality checks of taxonomic data, etc.). Please see the <a href="#">Quality Assurance Resources for GLRI Grantees website</a> for more information;</li> </ul>	<p><b>6</b></p>

	<p>ii. <b>4 points</b> - proactively and effectively manage large datasets;</p>	
<b>Results</b>	<p>The significance of environmental outputs and outcomes you expect to achieve will be considered under the evaluation criteria and must be addressed in the application.</p> <p><b>8 points - Outputs</b></p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their ability to achieve the required outputs described in <a href="#">Section 3</a>.</li> <li>• how the outputs will be achieved;</li> <li>• effective plans for tracking progress towards achieving the outputs;</li> <li>• how the project outputs support the GLRI Action Plan IV (Focus Area 5, Objective 5.2); and</li> <li>• effective, innovative approaches towards achieving the outputs.</li> </ul> <p><b>4 points - Outcomes</b></p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their ability to achieve the required outcomes described in <a href="#">Section 3</a>;</li> <li>• how the outcomes will be achieved;</li> <li>• effective plans for tracking progress towards achieving the outcomes;</li> <li>• how the project outcomes support the GLRI Action Plan IV (Focus Area 5, Objective 5.2); and</li> <li>• effective, innovative approaches towards achieving the outcomes.</li> </ul>	<b>12</b>
<b>Programmatic Capability and Past Performance</b>	<p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. <b>3 points</b> - past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements;</li> <li>II. <b>3 points</b> - history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant</li> </ol>	<b>22</b>

	<p>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;</p> <p><b>III. 2 points</b> - organizational experience and plan for timely and successful achievement of the objectives of the proposed project;</p> <p><b>IV. 8 points</b> – staff, subrecipient, consultant, and contractor expertise/qualifications (as applicable), knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. Particularly, expertise in zooplankton, <i>Mysis</i>, and benthic invertebrate community ecology through previous peer-reviewed publications relevant to the Great Lakes;</p> <p><b>V. 4 points</b> - taxonomic expertise, qualifications, and proven ability to identify and enumerate Great Lakes zooplankton, <i>Mysis</i>, and benthic invertebrate, such as by providing a record of relevant publications; and</p> <p><b>VI. 2 points</b> - applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they describe their history of expending funds in a timely, efficient manner, proportional to the rate of progress.</p> <p>Note: In evaluating applications under items i, ii, and iii 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 <b>you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors</b> (items I. and II. above; a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). <b>If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.</b></p>	
<p><b>Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds</b></p>	<p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.</li> <li>• the extent and quality to which they describe quarterly fiscal expenditure projections for the duration of the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5</b></p>

<p><b>Budget</b></p>	<p><b>10 points</b> - Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the budget section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly and sufficiently describes and justifies the proposed budget;</li> <li>• properly categorizes costs according to the Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance;</li> <li>• includes costs which are eligible, reasonable, allowable, necessary, and proportional to the proposed benefits;</li> <li>• provides a sufficient narrative description of budget categories;</li> <li>• accounts for both federal funds and any proposed non-federal funds (e.g., any voluntary cost-share/match if applicable);</li> <li>• adequately describes how any proposed non-federal funds will be accounted for; and</li> <li>• clearly demonstrates the role EPA funding will play in the overall project.</li> </ul> <p><b>10 points</b> - Evaluation of proposed budgets will also consider the organizational overhead (indirect costs), direct costs, the budgets of proposed subawards (if any), and the applicant’s described ability to control costs versus anticipated results.</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>

Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capability to successfully perform the project as described in [Section 3](#) of this funding opportunity.

Only eligible entities whose applications meet the threshold criteria in [Section 2](#) of this announcement will be evaluated. **Applicants should explicitly address these criteria as part of their application package submittal in the project narrative.** Each application will be rated using a point system. Applications will be evaluated based on a total of 150 possible points.

**C. Review and Selection Process**

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in Section 2.A. Eligible Applicants. Only those applications which meet all the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by a review panel composed of federal agency staff.

**(1) Other Evaluation Factors**

Final funding decisions will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decisions, the selection official may also consider the following factors: the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider program or agency priorities. Any final selection out of

rank order must be documented and justified based on the factors listed above. Once selections have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA approving and awarding officials.

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

**Future Funding:** Selection or award of funding under this NOFO is not a guarantee of future funding. 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 selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

## **D. Risk Review**

The EPA will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov., when doing the risk review as required by [2 CFR 200.206](#).

## **7. Award Notices**

The EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made by Administrative Contact listed in this funding opportunity. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the EPA Region 5 Grants Office. Selection does not guarantee an award will be made. Statutory authorization, funding, or other issues during the award process may affect the ability of the EPA to make an award. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms, 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.

## **8. Post-Award Requirements and Administration**

### **A. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

The recipient and any sub-recipient must comply with the applicable [General Terms and Conditions](#). These terms and conditions are in addition to the assurances and certifications made as part of the award, terms and conditions, and restrictions reflected on the official assistance award document.

Awards issued as a result of this funding opportunity are subject to the requirements of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; Title [2 CFR Part 200](#) and [2 CFR Part 1500](#).

## B. Reporting

EPA's [General Terms and Conditions](#) in the Notice of Award will have information on performance and financial reports, including:

- How often you will report.
- Any required form or formatting.
- How to submit them.

## C. Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires:

- Data entry at SAM.gov for all subawards and subcontracts issued for \$30,000 or more.
- Reporting executive compensation for both recipient and subaward organizations.

# 9. Other Information

## A. Additional Provisions for Applicants

Additional provisions that apply this funding opportunity and/or awards made under this funding opportunity, can be found at [EPA NOFO Clauses](#). If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact to obtain the provisions.

## Appendix 1 - Budget Narrative Instructions

This section of the workplan is a detailed description of the budget found in the SF-424A and must provide adequate explanation of how 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.

If the project budget includes any voluntary cost-share, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed description of how the applicant will obtain the cost-share and how the cost-share funding will be used. If EPA accepts an offer for a voluntary cost-share, applicants must meet their sharing commitment as a legal condition of receiving 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 project budget must also be included on the SF 424 and SF 424A. Please see section [2.B. Cost Sharing](#) of this NOFO for more information.

Applicants should use the following instructions, budget object class descriptions, and example table to complete the Budget Narrative section of the workplan. Additional information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-05/documents/applicant-budget-development-guidance.pdf>. Note: Use only whole dollar amounts.

### A. Personnel - List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time

**assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period.** This category includes only direct costs for the salaries of those individuals who will perform work directly for the project (generally, paid employees of the applicant organization). If the applicant organization is including staff time (in-kind services) as a cost-share, this should be included as Personnel costs. Personnel costs do not include: (1) costs for services of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the “Other” category; or (3) effort that is not directly in support of the proposed project, which may be covered by the organization’s negotiated indirect cost rate. The budget narrative must identify the personnel category type by Full Time Equivalent (FTE), including percentage of FTE for part-time employees, number of personnel proposed for each category, and the estimated funding amounts.

- B. Fringe Benefits - Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included.** Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefit plans.
- C. Travel - Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips in-State and out-of-State and international (include specific international locations), number of travelers, and other costs for each type of travel.** Travel may be integral to the purpose of the proposed project (e.g., inspections) or related to proposed project activities (e.g., attendance at meetings). Travel costs do not include: (1) costs for travel of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) travel costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the “Other” category.
- D. Equipment - Identify each item to be purchased which has an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year.** Equipment also includes accessories necessary to make the equipment operational. Equipment does not include: (1) equipment planned to be leased/rented, including lease/purchase agreement; or (2) equipment service or maintenance contracts. These types of proposed costs should be included in the “Other” category. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 should be categorized as supplies, pursuant to 2 CFR Part 200 and or 2 CFR Part 1500. The budget narrative must include an itemized listing of all equipment proposed under the project.
- E. Supplies – “Supplies” means all tangible personal property other than “equipment”.** The budget narrative should identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). Non-tangible goods and services associated with supplies, such as printing service, photocopy services, and rental costs should be included in the “Other” category.
- F. Contractual - Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose and estimated cost.** Contractual/consultant services are those services to be carried out by an individual or organization, other than the applicant, in the form of a procurement relationship. Leased or rented goods (equipment or supplies) should be included in the “Other” category. The applicant should list the proposed contract activities along with a brief description of the

scope of work or services to be provided, proposed duration, and proposed procurement method (competitive or noncompetitive), if known.

**G. Other - List each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of its cost.** This category should include only those types of direct costs that do not fit in any of the other budget categories. Examples of costs that may be in this category are: insurance; rental/lease of equipment or supplies; equipment service or maintenance contracts; printing or photocopying; rebates; and subaward costs. Subawards (e.g., subgrants) are a distinct type of cost in this category. The term “subaward” means an award of financial assistance (money or property) by any legal agreement made by the recipient to an eligible subrecipient. This term does not include procurement purchases, technical assistance in the form of services instead of money, or other assistance in the form of revenue sharing, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, or direct appropriations. Subcontracts are not subawards and belong in the contractual category. Applicants must provide the aggregate amount they propose to issue as subaward work and a description of the types of activities to be supported, as well as an accompanying budget table for each subaward and a description (budget narrative) of the types of activities to be supported via subaward(s). Subaward budget tables must include all associated costs, including indirect costs.

**H. Indirect Charges - If indirect charges are budgeted, indicate the approved rate and base.** Indirect costs are those incurred by the grantee for a common or joint purpose that benefit more than one cost objective or project and are not readily assignable to specific cost objectives or projects as a direct cost. In order for indirect costs to be allowable, the applicant must have a federal or state negotiated indirect cost rate (e.g., fixed, predetermined, final or provisional), or must have submitted a proposal to the cognizant federal or state agency. Applicants may propose an indirect cost rate below their negotiated rate or below the federal *de minimis* rate (15%). Examples of Indirect Cost Rate calculations are shown below:

- a. Personnel (Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs)
- b. Personnel and Fringe (Indirect Rate x Personnel & Fringe = Indirect Costs)
- c. Total Direct Costs (Indirect Rate x Total direct costs = Indirect Costs)
- d. Direct Costs minus distorting or other factors such as contracts and equipment
- e. (Indirect Rate x (total direct cost – distorting factors) = Indirect Costs)

**Example Budget Table – Main Recipient**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>EPA Funding</b>	<b>Cost-Share</b>
<b>Personnel</b>		
(2) Conservation Specialists @ \$30/hr x 25 hrs/wk x 40 wks	\$60,000	
(3) Project Support Staff @ \$25/hr x 40 hrs/week x 40 wks	\$120,000	

<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL</b>	<b>\$180,000</b>	
<b>Fringe Benefits</b>		
20% of Salary and Wages - Retirement, Health Benefits, FICA, SUI	\$36,000 (20% of \$180,000)	
<b>TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	
<b>Travel</b>		
<i>In State travel for Project Manager and staff: (Specify the mileage, per diem, and other costs for each type of travel)</i>	\$3,300	
<b>TOTAL TRAVEL</b>	<b>\$3,300</b>	
<b>Equipment</b>		
<i>Trash Skimming Boat</i>	\$610,000	
<b>TOTAL EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>\$610,000</b>	
<b>Contractual</b>		
<i>ABC Support Services Contract: (Specify duration and work to be performed or services provided and type of contract)</i>	\$20,000	
<b>TOTAL CONTRACTUAL</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	
<b>Other</b>		
<i>Subaward to Friends of the Plovers</i>	\$24,960	
<i>Project Vehicle (leased)</i>		\$12,000
<b>TOTAL OTHER</b>	<b>\$24,960</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>
<b>Indirect Charges</b>		
<i>Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate = 10% (Indirect Rate x Personnel) = Indirect Costs; as negotiated)</i>	\$18,000	
<b>TOTAL INDIRECT</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>	

<b>TOTAL EPA REQUESTED FUNDING</b>	<b>\$892,260</b>	
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$904,260</b>	

\*\* Any voluntary cost-share funds, while not required under this RFA, must also be included on the SF-424A as detailed in [Section 2.B. Cost Sharing](#). Federal funds are not allowed to be used for cost-share; please identify the source of the cost-share in your budget narrative.

**Example Subaward Budget Table**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Personnel</b>	
(1) Project Manager from @ \$40/hr x 10 hrs/week x 52 wks	\$20,800
<b>Fringe</b>	
<i>20% of salary and wages -Retirement, Health Benefits, FICA, SUI</i>	\$4,160 (20% of 20,800)
<b>Supplies</b>	
<i>Office and related supplies to support training</i>	\$400
<i>Office computer and printer</i>	\$2,500
<b>TOTAL SUPPLIES</b>	<b>\$2,900</b>
<b>TOTAL SUBAWARD REQUEST</b>	<b>\$24,960</b>

**Expeditious Spending and Sufficient Progress in the use of GLRI Funds:** Include an explanation of how, if the applicant is awarded a grant, they will ensure that the funding will be used expeditiously.