# Strengthening Environmental Impact Assessment in the Lower Mekong Region
## *July 2, 2015*

**FEDERAL AGENCY NAME:** U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of International and Tribal Affairs

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE:** ***Strengthening Environmental Assessment Processes in the Lower Mekong Region***

**ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE:** Request for Proposals - Initial Announcement

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:** EPA-OITA01

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER:** 66.931 International Financial Assistance Projects Sponsored by EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs

**DATES:** The deadline for proposals to be received is 11:59 pm Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EDT) on August 19, 2015**.** Submissions must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov) by **August 19, 2015 at 11:59 p.m. EST** in order to be considered for funding. Proposals received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

**OVERVIEW:** This notice announces a Request for Proposals (RFP) through an open competition for EPA funds. EPA is soliciting proposals for a project to provide assistance in strengthening environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes in the Lower Mekong Region. EPA anticipates awarding one Cooperative Agreement from this announcement, subject to availability of funds and the quality of proposals received. The award amount is $600,000 provided incrementally over the four-year period of performance.

Under this agreement, the recipient will work with EPA to help conceptualize, develop, and deliver capacity building programs and provide technical assistance to enhance key functions of environmental regulatory agencies, promote social and environmental safeguards, and strengthen the environmental impacts assessment and enforcement with particular emphasis on robust public participation in the processes that form the foundation for enhanced environmental protection in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Proposals for this project should focus on the provision of technical expertise, project management, stakeholder coordination, and development and logistical management of workshops and training designed for cooperating countries in the Lower Mekong region, including Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam. Through direct engagement with governments, civil society, and private sector stakeholders, the recipient, in cooperation with US EPA and other partners, will promote rigorous implementation and

enforcement of EIA laws and processes that lead to more socially equitable, environmentally sustainable economic growth in the region.

The awarding instrument will be a cooperative agreement. There is no cost share or matching requirement for these funds. Selection of the recipient will be based on the evaluation of the eligible proposals; once selected, the applicant will receive instructions to submit a full application package. EPA reserves the right to reject all applicants and make no award from this competition.

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## *SECTION I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION*

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of International and Tribal Affairs is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants interested in applying for Federal Assistance to strengthen environmental impact assessment processes in the Lower Mekong Region.

### A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Environmental Impact Assessments:

EIAs provide a tool to integrate environmental, economic, and social concerns, while mitigating adverse impacts on natural and human environments. EIAs allow governments to set conditions for approval (i.e. for site selection, construction, operation and closure), plan for infrastructure needs and land use, and monitor impacts and compliance. Involving the public and stakeholders leads to better identification of future economic, social, and environmental costs, maximizing potential benefits and enhancing future monitoring. If EIA requirements are circumvented prior to construction (when it is most opportune to enable changes to be made to better reconcile multiple objectives), there can be significant environmental, economic and social costs down the road. Likewise, unnecessary costs and delays caused by inefficiencies in the EIA process reduce the benefits sought from economic development and investment. Implementation and enforcement of EIA requirements, procedures, and commitments to mitigation and monitoring will help government, investors, and civil society mitigate risk and increase opportunities for longer term economic growth.

Lower Mekong Region:

Rapid economic growth in the Lower Mekong countries has reduced the poverty rates, but has also increased the pace of natural resources extraction and infrastructure development. Much of the economic growth has been fueled by demand within the region for food, energy, and commodities. Current economic policies, such as the 2015 single Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic community (AEC), promote greater regional economic harmonization and a reduction in trade barriers. Foreign direct investments (FDI) are now flowing into the sub-region at unprecedented rates, providing crucial sources of development finance.

However, new investments—especially those in large-scale infrastructure and agriculture—can have significant social, environmental, and economic impacts over the short and long term. There are serious concerns that planned infrastructure development—such as hydropower dams—could, without sound Social and Environmental Safeguards (SES) systems, disrupt the river's major fisheries and the food security, livelihoods, water availability and quality, ecosystem functions, and transportation options for approximately 60 million people in the Lower Mekong Sub-region. Similarly, the conversion of natural forests into palm oil, rubber, timber and other commercial agricultural commodities, and for development of roads, dams, mines and pipelines are major threats to biodiversity in the Lower Mekong countries. Degradation of these resources and loss of biodiversity will have implications globally.

Project Context:

The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) was created in response to the July 2009 meeting between former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the Foreign Ministers of the Lower Mekong Countries -- Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The Ministers agreed to enhance cooperation in the areas of environment, health, education, and infrastructure development. Burma formally joined the initiative in July 2012.

In support of LMI, USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) recently launched the Sustainable Mekong Program, a suite of activities designed to promote socially sound and environmentally sustainable infrastructure investments in the Lower Mekong region. The Sustainable Mekong Program encourages multi-stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making, promotes adoption of international-standard social and environmental safeguards, and partners leading U.S. government scientists and engineers with Lower Mekong governments to ensure that cutting-edge science and technology inform their decisions.

RDMA and USEPA signed an interagency agreement in September 2014 to promote environmental leadership in the Lower Mekong. Under this agreement, EPA will support the Sustainable Mekong Program through targeted technical assistance to governments and regional institutions on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and enforcement, including related permitting and an emphasis on public participation. EPA has executed similar programs in Central America and other parts of the world on strengthening EIA and enforcement, and EPA's efforts in the Lower Mekong will draw from successes and lessons learned though those initiatives.

## B. PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Objective:
To provide technical assistance to governments and regional institutions in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and enforcement, including related permitting and an emphasis on public participation.

Activities and Anticipated Results:
EPA will collaborate with the recipient to provide technical assistance and build capacity in the implementation and enforcement of EIA processes, including in the areas of public participation and stakeholder engagement, in the Lower Mekong region. Through the specific activities listed below, EPA and the recipient will:

1. Build the capacity of Lower Mekong country governments by delivery of training courses;
2. Help develop, tailor, and/or distribute tools and best practices to access, integrate, and screen environmental/economic/social data, as well as track and enforce the implementation of EIAs;
3. Deliver trainings or workshops on public participation and stakeholder engagement in the EIA process;
4. Support annual meetings of the EIA Directors and other partners to help guide/schedule activities;
5. Customize and translate EPA's EIA Review Guidelines for Energy, Mining, and Tourism;
6. Provide support to individual countries on their EIA policies and procedures; and
7. Support development of country-specific and regional recommendations for strengthening EIA procedures and practices.

1. **Support for EIA capacity building and training** –Through trainings and workshops, the recipient will build capacity within governments and civil society groups to improve the review of environmental impact assessments. The recipient may use EPA tools such a developed training course, "Principles of EIA Review". Applicants should incorporate actual EIAs from the host country to add practical, experiential learning to trainings or workshops. Leveraging EPA's expertise on EIA, the applicant should be able to:
    - Coordinate and manage logistics, including participant travel if necessary, for the delivery of EIA training courses in each participating country.
    - Adapt, modify and deliver training courses at least once in each country, including translating course materials.
    - Work with national governments to select appropriate local EIAs to use as case studies.
    - Provide follow-up with course participants to analyze implementation of course learnings in their country's EIA program.

2. **Data access, integration, and screening tools for EIAs** – NEPAssist is a tool that permits countries, preparers, and the public to screen proposed projects through providing instantaneous access to distributed environmental, economic, and social data and environmentally-based land use plans from multiple institutions and instantaneous analysis of key factors to assist in identification of potentially significant environmental and social impacts. The tool was developed for use in the United States, but has been modified and adapted in several countries in Latin America. The applicant should be able to:
    - Assess the data management capabilities for EIA review in partner countries/institutions and identify opportunities to provide targeted technical assistance.
    - Help partner countries conduct a self-assessment designed by EPA to determine the need and ability to implement NEPAssist.
    - As appropriate, support workshops and/or meetings to help design and implement NEPAssist in selected partner countries.

    The recipient will not be responsible for the installation or technical assistance for the NEPAssist tool. EPA will provide countries with software and technical support for the software adaptation.

3. **Public participation and stakeholder engagement in the EIA process** – The Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE) is one of the key partners in this project. The MPE program is focusing on increasing public participation and civil society in the EIA process and expects to hold numerous meetings, workshops, and training courses analogous to EPA's work. The recipient should be able to, as appropriate:
    - Participate in and assist with MPE-convened events.
    - Where no other support could be provided by other partners, provide logistical support for additional participants from governments in the region.

4. **Annual meeting of EIA Directors** – The recipient will bring together EIA directors from environmental ministries to meet with EPA, key donors, and other partners (e.g. relevant U.S. Embassies and USAID mission representatives) annually to guide/schedule activities under this component, as well as share best practices and recommended reforms. At the discretion of the recipient, these regional meetings may include other countries beyond the Lower Mekong countries to exchange best practices. The recipient will:
    - Work with EPA and other partners to develop the program for the meeting and to prepare appropriate background information.
    - Help facilitate the meeting and distribute a summary report highlighting key outcomes and decisions.
    - Provide support logistics and travel for officials attending from participating countries and outside experts as needed.

5. **EIA Review Guidelines for Energy, Mining and Tourism** – EPA has developed three EIA Technical Review Guidelines for Energy, Mining, and Tourism. Based on demand from the region, the recipient will:
    - Adapt the guidelines to the Mekong regional context, particularly by amending the appendices with country- specific information on the sector or the regulatory programs.
    - Translate the documents into local language based on demand and adequate funding.
    - Edit, publish, and distribute the documents in electronic and hard-copy formats.
    - Support at least one workshop per guideline to validate the content.

6. **Country-Specific EIA Policy Support** –The recipient will provide relevant EIA policy examples to support national governments as they strengthen their EIA policies. This support is contingent on request from the national government and relevance to broader program goals.

7. **Country-Specific and Regional Reforms Recommendations** – Based on lessons learned from training events, country consultations, and sharing of EIA related tools, the recipient will provide country-specific and regional recommendations for strengthening EIA procedures and practices. EPA and other experts will provide technical expertise to the recipient to support and evaluate the recommendations.

EPA will provide funding to support the recipient's time and expenses. Relevant expenses could include meeting rooms and a/v equipment, document translation and interpretation at meetings, reproduction and distribution of manuals/documents developed as part of the program, labor to tailor/develop tools, travel costs for officials from the participating countries, and recipient travel costs.

For details on EPA's planned FY15 activities under this program, please see Appendix B.

Partners and Stakeholders:
The EIA Directors from each country, their staff, experts, and other officials are the primary stakeholders for the project. In addition, other stakeholders could include ministries of environment, health, transportation, mining, water, and energy; universities, financial international organizations, NGOs, other donors, and the private sector. Other specific partners will include the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), the Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE), and the Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN).

## C. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The statutory authorities for this cooperative agreement are Clean Water Act, Section 104, 33 U.S.C. 1254; Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001, 42 U.S.C. 6981; Clean Air Act, Section 103, 42 U.S.C. 7403; Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10, 15 U.S.C. 2609; Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442 (a) and (c), 42 U.S.C. 300j-1 (a)(1) and (c)(3); and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Section 102(2)(F).

## D. ALLIGNMENT WITH EPA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to the Agency's Strategic Plan. EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/epa_order_5700_7a1.pdf)

All proposals must support Goal 4 of EPA 2014-2018 Strategic Plan: Ensuring the Safety of Chemicals and Preventing Pollution; Objective 1: Ensuring the Safety of Chemicals; J5 – Trade and Governance.

International capacity-building plays a key role in protecting human health and the environment by providing technical cooperation to help countries reduce air pollution, better manage air quality, and reduce the global use and emission of mercury. The depletion of natural resources, such as forest cover, in one nation can have environmental and economic consequences in many other countries. EPA's strategic plan is available on line at: http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan

## E. MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

Pursuant to EPA Order 5700.7, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA requires that all grant recipients adequately address environmental outputs and outcomes. Outputs and outcomes differ both in their nature and in how they are measured. Applicants must discuss environmental outputs and outcomes in their proposed work plan.

All applicants are required to link their projects to environmental results. Environmental results are used as a way to gauge a project's performance using output and outcome measures. The term "output" means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specific date. The term "outcome" means an environmental 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.

Anticipated Outputs:
EPA anticipates the outputs from the project to be awarded under this announcement will include:

1. Development of training material and the delivery of training (both regional and country specific) to individuals from the Lower Mekong countries that will help them improve their EIA review and enforcement programs.
2. Number of attendees at training events and other meetings from the different countries.
3. Numbers of trained facilitators, reviewers, and preparers in each country.
4. Number of tools, guidance manuals, policies, guidelines, etc. developed and adopted.
5. Recommendations for strengthening EIA Review in the region, developed in collaboration with EIA Directors from environmental ministries with input from relevant stakeholders, in a report to country Ministers.

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

Anticipated Outcomes:
EPA anticipates outcomes from this project that will show improvements in EIA review and increased compliance rates in the region that lead to improved environmental conditions. Some may not be quantifiable during the project period. Projects to be funded under this announcement are expected to produce at least one, and preferably all, of the following environmental outcomes:

1. Improve results of the environmental and social outcomes of the EIA, permitting and enforcement process to:
    - Create opportunities for constructive early engagement of stakeholders and civil society
    - Strengthen the technical and scientific basis for EIA-based decision making in priority sectors
    - Improve follow-up monitoring and enforcement through auditable and transparent commitments from EIAs
    - Improve inter-institutional cooperation to avoid circumvention of the EIA process, duplication and results
2. Strengthen processes for environmental impact assessment, permits, and enforcement, including sharing practices and lessons learned to:
    - Identify opportunities to provide targeted technical assistance
    - Enhance regional coordination on social and environmental safeguards and the development of regional and/or country specific EIA protocols
    - Enhance roles of capable government entities with clear roles, oversight and accountability
    - Ensure follow-up monitoring and enforcement
    - Create opportunities for early public scoping and effective involvement

- Carry out risk-based categorization for degrees of EIA implementation and review
- Improve efficiencies in implementation practices and administration
- Develop the context for EIA -based decision making
- Enhance use of scientifically validated models to support decision making in complex situations, particularly for the Mekong River Basin

## *SECTION II. AWARD INFORMATION*

### A. AMOUNT OF FUNDING AVAILABLE

EPA anticipates one award of **$600,000**.

Funding for these projects is not guaranteed and is subject to the availability of funds and the evaluation of proposals based on the criteria in this announcement.

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

### B. FUNDING TYPE

EPA anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement under this announcement. Cooperative agreements permit substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicant 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 this project will be:

- Close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;

- Joint operational involvement, participation, and/or collaboration during performance of the scope of work;

- In accordance with 2 CFR §§200.318-200.326, review of proposed procurement;

- Approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and,

- Review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

### C. START DATE/PROJECT DURATION

EPA anticipates that the start date of this cooperative agreement would be no later than **October 1, 2015**, and the period of performance will not exceed 4 years. Should the award of funds be delayed, EPA will work with the applicant to adjust the proposed project start and end dates as needed.

### D. MISCELLANEOUS

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement. 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 selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

## *SECTION III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION*

### A. WHO MAY APPLY?

Nonprofit organizations, public and private universities and colleges, international organizations, and foreign governments are eligible to apply under this opportunity. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

Hospitals, laboratories, States and local governments, territories and possessions, and Indian Tribes are not eligible to apply. In addition, for profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Coalitions/partnerships are encouraged to apply collectively. EPA will consider letters of support for and/or commitment to the project from potential partners.

### B. COST SHARING OR MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

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

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

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

- A voluntary cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations (2 CFR 200.306).

- A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.

- The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.

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

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

## C. ELIGIBILITY SCREENING REQUIREMENTS: THRESHOLD EVALUATION CRITERIA

To be eligible for funding considerations under this announcement, proposals must meet the following threshold criteria. Failure to meet any of the following criteria in the proposal submission will result in the automatic disqualification of the proposal for funding consideration. Ineligible applicants will be notified within 15 calendar days of the determination that they are ineligible based on the threshold criteria.

- Proposals must substantially comply with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV and Appendix A of this announcement or else they will be rejected. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the proposal, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.

- Proposals must be received by the EPA through www.grants.gov as specified in Appendix A of this announcement on or before the proposal submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their proposal reaches the designated person/office specified in Section IV of the announcement by the submission deadline.

- Proposals received after the submission deadline will be considered late and returned to the sender without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with www.grants.gov. Where Section IV requires application receipt by a specific person/office by the submission deadline, receipt by an agency mailroom is not sufficient. Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with **Rakhi Kasat at kasat.rakhi@epa.gov** as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

- The applicant must demonstrate that it is eligible to apply for financial assistance under this announcement;

- All applicants must have personnel and/or partners proficient in English –oral and written – in order to communicate effectively with EPA and other stakeholders and to communicate results and write reports and related documents.

- Proposals must be submitted in English or they will not be accepted.

## *SECTION IV. PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION*

Please see Appendix A for:

- Requirement to submit through grants.gov and limited exception procedures
- Submission instructions
- Technical issues with submission

### A. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Your organization's Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) must submit your complete proposal package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov) no later than (**August 19, 2015**) 11:59 p.m. EST. Please allow

for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Please submit *all* of the proposal materials described below using the grants.gov application package that you downloaded using the instructions above. For additional instructions on completing and submitting the electronic proposal package, click on the "Show Instructions" tab that is accessible within the proposal package itself.

Proposals submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from grants.gov*)* within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Rakhi Kasat at (202) 564-0458 or kasat.rakhi@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

## B. CONTENT OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

The information in the proposal must provide EPA with a profile of the applicant, the purpose and anticipated results of the project, an explanation of how you plan to accomplish your project, how the project addresses the elements and activities described in Section I.B and the criteria in Section V, and an estimate of the time and money needed to complete the project (see format below).

The following forms and documents are *required* to be submitted under this announcement:

1. **Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)**
2. **Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)**
3. **Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)**
4. **Narrative Proposal**
5. **Biographical Sketch**

Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
Complete the form. There are no attachments. Please be sure to include organization fax number and email address in Block 5 of the Standard Form SF 424. Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711.

Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
Complete the form. There are no attachments. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22.

Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
Complete the form. There are no attachments.

Narrative Proposal:
The Narrative Proposal must be limited to no more than 15 single spaced pages of English text, including the cover page. Excess pages will not be reviewed or considered. Proposals should specify activities that would be accomplished with the total funding for this cooperative agreement ($600,000). The document should be readable in PDF format and consolidated into a single file. It should include the following components:

1. **Cover Page –** Include the following information**:**
    (a) Project Title
    (b) Project Manager: Identify who will serve as the principal party responsible for accomplishing the activities outlined in the work plan, including name, address, phone number, fax number, and email address.
    (c) Proposed funding request: Specify the total amount requested from EPA, as well as any resources or funding from other sources that may be contributing support.
    (d) Project period: Provide anticipated beginning and end dates.
    (e) Summary Statement: One-to-two sentence summary of the proposal describing approach and expected results.

2. **Narrative Workplan –** The narrative work plan must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III of this announcement, including the eligibility requirements in Section III, Part C, and address each of the evaluation criteria disclosed in Section V, Part A. The workplan must include:

    (a) **Legal, Policy and Technical Knowledge:** Outline clearly the legal, policy and technical expertise you have to carry out the work outlined in Section I.B. and the necessary experience in coordinating/managing environmental impact assessment activities and international capacity-building programs in other countries including:

    - Technical experience and knowledge of conducting and/or reviewing Environmental Impact Assessment.
    - Knowledge of environmental policies, laws, regulations and institutional arrangements in countries in the Lower Mekong region.
    - Training and other capacity-building activities in the Lower Mekong region.
    - Development of policy recommendations for environmental governance in the Lower Mekong region.
    - Knowledge of local languages, legal regulatory structure and environmental legal structure.
    - Management of international capacity-building and demonstration projects.

(b) **Project Approach and Management:** Describe the approaches that you would use to collaborate with key project partners in the Lower Mekong region and in the U.S. and how these approaches will ensure improvements in the EIA systems in the region.

(c) **Stakeholder Involvement/Impacts:** List out all of the proposed partners that will be involved in this program and what each of the group's roles will be in the program staffing, funding, design, and implementation. Please also list all the major stakeholders who will be positively impacted by this project and how they will benefit from this project and receive relevant capacity building.

(d) **Experience in the Lower Mekong region:** Describe your work experience in the Lower Mekong and/or other relevant international experience (e.g., international experience that demonstrates a commitment to support environmental policies and environmental impact assessment programs).

(e) **Collaborations/Partnerships and Leveraging** – Describe the degree to which you intend to work in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the work and to leverage additional resources to help implement the proposed project. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance. Failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award. (*Note*: Applicants may also submit letters of support for key personnel or organizations who will be involved in the project.)

3. **Project Budget –** The proposal must include a detailed budget which clearly explains how the funds ($600,000), plus any in-kind contributions, will be used for the following categories:

(a) **Personnel**
(b) **Fringe Benefits**
(c) **Travel**
(d) **Equipment**
(e) **Supplies**
(f) **Contractual**
(g) **Other**

(h) **Total Direct Costs**
(i) **Total Indirect Costs**
(j) **Total Cost**

4. **Reporting Requirements –** Outline the process for developing quarterly updates and a detailed final report.

5. **Environmental Results – Outcomes and Outputs –** Identify the quantitative and qualitative outcomes and outputs of the project, including what measurements you will use and how you will measure, evaluate and track the results of your project to prove that you have achieved short, medium, and long-term outcomes and outputs as identified in Section I.E.

6. **Programmatic Capability and Past Performance -** Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 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 reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal 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.

Biographical Sketch
Provide resumes or curriculum vitae for all principal investigators and any other key personnel.

## C. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to confidential business information, contracts and subawards under grants, and proposal assistance and communications, can be found at:

http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm.

These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants must review them when preparing proposals for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

### D. PRE-PROPOSAL/APPLICATION ASSISTANCE AND COMMMUNICATIONS

In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft proposals, provide informal comments on draft proposals, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications/proposals. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement.

## *SECTION V. PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION*

Only eligible entities whose proposal(s) meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be reviewed according to the evaluation criterion set forth below. Applicants should explicitly address this criterion as part of their proposal package submittal. Each proposal will be rated under a points system, with a total of 100 points possible.

### A. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | WEIGHT |
|---|---|
| **Criterion 1: Technical Approach to Project**<br><br>**15 points:** The extent and quality to which the narrative proposal includes a well-conceived strategy for addressing the requirements in Section I, Parts B (Scope of Work) and D (Alignment with EPA's Strategic Plan)<br><br>**15 points:** The degree to which the applicant proposes to work in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and replicability of the work, and to leverage additional resources to help implement the proposed projects.<br><br>**10 points:** Whether the narrative proposal sets forth a reasonable time schedule for the execution of the tasks associated with the | **50 points** |

| | |
|---|---|
| project and for achieving the project goals and objectives by project end<br><br>**10 points:** Whether the costs are reasonable to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes and the proposed budget provides adequate funding detail for each major activity. | |
| **Criterion 2: Environmental Results-Outcomes and Outputs**<br><br>**10 points**: The effectiveness of the applicant's plan for tracking and measuring its progress toward achieving the expected outcomes identified in Section I.E of this announcement | **10 points** |
| **Criterion 3: Programmatic Capability**<br><br>**20 points:** Organization and staff expertise and qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project, staff technical experience and knowledge of EIA, enforcement, and involving key stakeholders.<br><br>**10 points:** Organization and staff experience working in the Lower Mekong region, and/or other relevant international EIA experience. International experience demonstrating a commitment to support policies and programs for EIA programs and environmental governance capacity building. Level of language proficiency in English, Thai, Burmese, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Khmer -- verbal and written. | **30 points** |
| **Criterion 4: Past Performance**<br><br>**5 points:** Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in the narrative proposal as described in Section IV.B of the announcement<br><br>**5 points:** History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in the narrative proposal as described in Section IV.B of the announcement, including: 1) whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements; 2) the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements; and 3) if progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported why not. | **10 points** |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Note: In evaluating applicants under 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). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance or reporting information should indicate this in the proposal to receive a neutral score for these sub-factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If the applicant does not provide any response for these items, the applicant may receive a score of 0 for these factors.* | |

### B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in Section III. Only those proposals which meet all of the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by an EPA evaluation team. Each eligible proposal will be given a numerical score and will be rank-ordered according to the numerical score. Preliminary funding recommendations will be provided to the Approving Official based on this ranking. The selected applicant will be asked to submit a full application package.

### C. OTHER FACTORS

Final funding decisions will be made by the Approving Official based on the rankings and preliminary recommendation of the EPA evaluation team. In making the final funding decisions, the Approving Official may also consider programmatic priorities.

## *SECTION VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION*

### A. AWARD NOTIFICATION

EPA will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants in writing or through electronic mail. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the proposal or the project contact listed in the proposal. This notification, which informs the applicant that its proposal 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 award official. Applicants are cautioned that only an 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 grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare

and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer. The applicant selected for funding will be asked to submit additional information, including a final workplan and related information.

## B. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

1. Application Regulations: A listing and description of general EPA Regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/applicable_epa_regulations_and_description.htm.

2. Additional Provisions For Applicants Incorporated Into The Solicitation:

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to DUNS, SAM, copyrights, disputes, and administrative capability, can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm.

These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants must review them when preparing proposals for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

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

## C. 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: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/resolution.htm.

Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the agency contact below.

## D. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Quarterly progress reports and a detailed final technical report will be required. Quarterly reports summarizing technical progress, planned activities for the next quarter and a summary of expenditures are required. The final technical report shall be completed within 90 calendar days of the completion of the period of performance. The final

technical report should include: summary of the project or activity, advances achieved, and costs of the project or activity. In addition, the final technical report should discuss the problems, successes, and lessons learned from the project or activity that could help overcome structural, organizational or technical obstacles to implementing a similar project elsewhere. The schedule for submission of quarterly reports will be established by EPA at time of award.

A final project report and final Federal Financial Report (FFR) (SF-425) will be required. The FFR must accurately account for federal funds expended and identify appropriate use of federal funds.

## *SECTION VII. AGENCY CONTACT*

**For further information, contact:**
Rakhi Kasat
U.S. EPA/Office of International and Tribal Affairs
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. (MC 2650R)
Washington, D.C. 20460-0001
Email: kasat.rakhi@epa.gov
Telephone: 202-564-0458

All questions or comments must be communicated in writing via email to the contact person listed above.

## *SECTION VIII. OTHER INFORMATION (Appendices A and B)*

**Appendix A. Grants.gov Submission Instructions**

### A. REQUIREMENT TO SUBMIT THROUGH GRANTS.GOV AND LIMITED EXCEPTION PROCEDURES

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

Mailing Address:
OGD Waivers
c/o Barbara Perkins
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building

1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.
Mail Code: 3903R
Washington, DC 20460

Courier Address:
OGD Waivers
c/o Barbara Perkins
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Rm # 51267
Washington, DC 20004

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

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

EPA will only consider alternate submission exception requests based on the two reasons stated above and will timely respond to the request -- all other requests will be denied. If an alternate submission method is approved, the applicant will receive documentation of this approval and further instructions on how to apply under this announcement. Applicants will be required to submit the documentation of approval with any initial application submitted under the alternative method. In addition, any submittal through an alternative method must comply with all applicable requirements and deadlines in the announcement including the submission deadline and requirements regarding proposal content and page limits (although the documentation of approval of an alternate submission method will not count against any page limits).

If an exception is granted, it is valid for submissions to EPA for the remainder of the entire calendar year in which the exception was approved and can be used to justify alternative submission methods for application submissions made through December 31 of the calendar year in which the exception was approved (e.g., if the exception was approved on March 1, 2015, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to EPA through December 31, 2015). Applicants need only request an exception once in a calendar year and all exceptions will expire on December 31 of that calendar year. Applicants must request a new exception from required electronic submission through Grants.gov for submissions for any succeeding calendar year. For example, if there is a competitive opportunity issued on December 1, 2015 with a submission deadline of January 15, 2015, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2016.

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

**B. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

The electronic submission of your proposal must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit a proposal through grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then go to the "Get Registered" link on the page. If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a DUNS number and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the submission deadline. Registration on grants.gov, SAM.gov, and DUNS number assignment is FREE.

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to http://www.grants.gov and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then "Apply for Grants" from the dropdown menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. Please note: To apply through grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visithttp://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity onhttp://www.grants.gov. Go to http://www.grants.gov and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-OITA01, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.931), in the appropriate field and click the Search button. Alternatively, you may be able to access the application package by clicking on the Application Package button at the top right of the synopsis page for the announcement on http://www.grants.gov. To find the synopsis page, go to http://www.grants.gov and click "Browse Agencies" in the middle of the page and then go to "Environmental Protection Agency" to find the EPA funding opportunities.

**C. TECHNICAL ISSUES WITH SUBMISSION**

1. Once the proposal package has been completed, the "Submit" button should be enabled. If the "Submit" button is not active, please call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Applicants should save the completed proposal package with two different file names before providing it to the AOR to avoid having to re-create the package should submission problems be experienced or a revised proposal needs to be submitted.

2. Submitting the proposal. The proposal package must be transferred to Grants.gov by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the proposal package. Click the "submit" button of the proposal package. Your Internet browser will launch and a sign-in page will appear. **Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your proposal is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation.** The Grants.gov support desk operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except Federal Holidays.

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

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

3. Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted proposals are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the proposal is submitted to www.Grants.Gov by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to Rakhi Kasat with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Rakhi Kasat at 202-564-0458. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting proposals that were unable to transmit due towww.Grants.gov or relevant www.Sam.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.

   (a) If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the proposal to Grants.gov, it is essential to call www.Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the deadline. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach

a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be *sure* to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Rakhi Kasat at 202-564-0458.

(b) Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the proposal cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, send an email message to Kasat.Rakhi@epa.gov prior to the proposal deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the Grants.gov case number as well as the entire proposal in PDF format as an attachment.

(c) Grants.gov rejection of the proposal package: If a notification is received from Grants.gov stating that the proposal has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal promptly send an email to kasat.rakhi@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by Grants.gov and attach the entire proposal in PDF format.

**Appendix B. EPA FY15 Planned Activities for EIA Assistance to the Lower Mekong**

# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) / USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) Environmental Leadership in the Lower Mekong Proposed FY15 Activities

## Overview

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development Regional Development for Asia (RDMA) signed an Interagency Agreement (IA) in September 2014. The IA, which will be in force from Sept 30, 2014 to Sept 29, 2018, creates a broad framework for jointly supporting environmental leadership in the Lower Mekong. The current focus of the IA is strengthening environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes in the region. This list of activities reflects priority tasks for cooperation under the IA for Sept 30, 2014-Sept 29, 2015.

## Activities

### 1. "Principles of EIA Review" Train-the Trainer Course

Objective

To deliver the first of several "Principles of EIA Review" train-the-trainer course under this program. This training will enable Lower Mekong government agencies, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders to improve the quality of decision making regarding infrastructure and development projects. When coupled with subsequent courses, partners, including the cooperating governments and institutions such as the Asian Institute for Technology's Center for Excellence, will be better able to provide their own training to meet local capacity building needs.

Description:

The "Principles of EIA Review" training course provides participants with an approach for effectively reviewing environmental impact assessments and becoming involved in the environmental impact assessment process. As such, the target audience for the course is government officials, CSOs, and other reviewers of environmental impact assessments who have a good understanding of basic scientific concepts and an awareness of environmental issues. The course is not designed to offer specialized instruction in techniques of impact assessment, analysis, or evaluation for scientists, engineers, and planners.

This will be the first course of several Train-the-Trainer sessions over the next four years. Ideally, it will be a regional delivery to participants from each country. In subsequent years, the trained facilitators will be part of the facilitation team when the course is offered in their country, and will be able to understand and assist with the logistical needs for the course.

Timing:
May 2015 (TBC)

Location:
Participants at the first EIA Directors meeting in December 2014 agreed that Vietnam would be appropriate for the first delivery.

Potential Partners:
NGO Partner TBD through EPA Cooperative Agreement
Asia Institute of Technology Learning Center for Environmental and Social Sustainability

**2. Energy Technical Review Guidelines**

Objective:
To adapt and share the energy EIA Technical Review Guideline with Lower Mekong Countries. The EIA technical review guidelines will standardize approaches, accelerate reviews, and provide helpful references to reviewers on international best practices in the sector.

Description:
Three EIA Technical Review Guidelines were developed to better ensure proposed projects undergoing review by government officials, non- governmental organizations and the general public successfully identify, avoid, prevent and/or mitigate potential adverse impacts and enhance potential beneficial impacts throughout the life of the projects. The guidelines include extensive discussion on the role of the public in the EIA process and how to improve public participation in environmental decisions. The Guidelines were originally developed for use in Central America, and will need some adaptation for the Lower Mekong countries.

In the first EIA Director's meeting in December 2014, the EIA directors and their associated partners in the Lower Mekong identified the Energy Technical Review Guidelines as a priority for adaptation and translation. EPA will work with one country, either Cambodia or Laos, to assess the Guideline's applicability and determine what customization will be required. In subsequent years, EPA expects to adapt and share the other two guidelines on Mining and Tourism based on demand from the countries.

Once EPA's cooperative agreement partner is in place, we will lay the groundwork for a workshop in FY16 in which the lead country (Cambodia or Laos) would co-present guidelines with EPA and other countries would bring energy EIA case studies to discuss. The ultimate outcome will be a regionally appropriate guidelines incorporating standards and regulations from each country into regionally appropriate guides

Timing:
TBD

Location:
Cambodia or Laos

Potential Partners:
NGO Partner TBD through EPA Cooperative Agreement
Cambodia or Laos Government

**3. Support for Cambodia EIA Reforms**

Objective
Provide support to Cambodia's efforts to reform their EIA law in cooperation with the Cambodian Ministry of Environment, the Vishnu Law Group, and other partners. EPA participated in a private sector forum on EIA convened by MPE, the Cambodian Ministry of Environment, and Vishnu Law Group on December 5, 2014. The activity provided the opportunity to build strategic partnerships with the Cambodian government in the areas of public participation and stakeholder engagement, particularly with the private sector. It also provided EPA with a greater understanding of the changes to the Cambodian law and the interaction between the ministry and the private sector. EPA is also reviewing and commenting on the draft law and will engage in ongoing discussions with the partners as the law is revised.

Description:
In collaboration with MPE, Vishnu and the Ministry invited government and civil society representatives from Vietnam, Lao PDR and Burma to observe this event. Following this, on December 6, Vishnu hosted these participants for a one-day program to reflect on the Forum and overall lessons learned from the ongoing public participation process. Participants had the opportunity to discuss basic aspects of EIA, including ways it can be strengthened and harmonized throughout the region, and tools that can be developed to facilitate the conduct of EIA. EPA served as a resource person and help facilitate the discussions.

In January, 2015 EPA distributed the draft EIA law to experts throughout the Agency for review and comment. In February 2015 EPA will consolidate and transmit the comments to MoE and Vishnu and will address any questions that may arise.

Timing:
December 6, 2014: Private Sector Forum
March 2015: Provide comments on EIA Law to MoE and Vishnu Law Group

Location:
Cambodia

Partners:
Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE)
Cambodia MoE
Vishnu Law Group

**4. Forums: EIA Policy and Practice in the Lower Mekong**

Objective:
Build capacity through participation in the design and implementation of 1-3 government training/forums with AECEN and MPE around EIA policy and practice. The activity will provide the opportunity to build strategic partnerships with each government to provide technical assistance and build capacity of EIA staff and managers in the implementation and enforcement of EIA processes, including in the areas of public participation and stakeholder engagement, in the Lower Mekong region.

Periodic meetings of EIA directors (such as the one in December 2014) will help EPA ensure that the EIA Directors' priorities are represented in the ongoing work plan, as well as help set timelines and partners for implementation of the various activities forecast in future years.

Description:

General: The topics for these meeting(s) will be selected through both an analysis of a survey conducted through the AECEN network and the program priorities for MPE and EPA. The outcome of the September scoping and the results of the December meeting will be used in the survey design and agenda setting. EPA will share experiences from the U.S. and best practices from other countries worldwide. EPA hopes to avoid duplicative meetings and unnecessary travel by coordinating with other partners such as MEP, AECEN, AIT, or others to leverage existing activities/meetings.

EIA Practitioners Meeting (December 2014): On December 1-3, 2014, MPE and AECEN convened a meeting in Bangkok for EIA practitioners from governments and civil society to discuss EIA policy and practice as a tool for advancing sustainable development. Key topics included the regional context for EIA laws and policies, public participation and stakeholder engagement, roles and responsibilities in the EIA process, key gaps to be addressed to improve EIA implementation, and regional opportunities for EIA reforms. EPA presented and discussed the proposed FY15 activities, and had an EIA directors' meeting for our workplanning purposes on the margins of the meeting to ensure agreement with EPA's identified priorities. EPA anticipates hosting similar meetings annually with the EIA Directors, their staff, and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Timing:

EIA Practitioners Meeting: December 1-3, 2014
Timing of other meetings TBD

Location:
EIA Practitioners Meeting (December 2014): Bangkok, Thailand
Other locations TBD

Partners:
Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE)
NGO Partner TBD through EPA Cooperative Agreement

**5. Lower Mekong Subregion (LMS) EIA Comparative Analysis**

Objective:
Assist in the design/review of a comparative analysis of LMS country EIA. This task will help EPA assess the EIA capacity and training needs for partner countries/ institutions and identify opportunities to provide targeted technical assistance to achieve the Sustainable Mekong Program's objectives.

Description:
The Mekong Partnership for the Environment is preparing a comparative analysis of existing environmental impact assessment (EIA) regulations and policies in five Lower Mekong Subregion (LMS) countries – Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam. The analysis will specifically look at national-scale policies and regulations that address public participation in and inform the environmental review process for large-scale infrastructure development projects in LMS countries in order to: determine the degree to which existing policies are already harmonized; identify gaps; and recommend options for promoting a standardized approach to EIA. EPA will provide comments to the scope of work for the project, and review and comment on the draft analysis.

Timing:
TBD

Location:
N/A

Partners:
Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE)

**6. Public Participation in EIA Policy Consultations**

Objective:
Review public participation in EIA policies (guidelines, implementation documents, etc.) of partner countries as requested and consider applicability of EPA's Public Participation Guide in the region. EPA will provide technical

assistance and build capacity in the areas of public participation and stakeholder engagement in the Lower Mekong region.

Description:
Vietnam's, Cambodia's and Thailand's environmental ministries have made general requests for assistance on public participation in their EIA procedures. EPA noted the ability to support specific requests at the December 2014 meeting with EIA directors, and will reiterate this offer in subsequent communication with each country describing the workplan and available support. For example, EPA could provide comment on public participation in EIA policies of partner countries through remote exchange of information or, if possible, as part of other meetings or trips, particularly under Activity 4. In addition, EPA will consider opportunities to share EPA's Public Participation Guide, including a possible workshop or short course on the principles of the Guide in FY16. EPA will formally request proposals from EIA directors in the third quarter as part of a general program update. Written proposals will be considered and if they meet the objectives of the project and are within existing resource constraints, the proposed project will be conducted.

Timing:
FY16, Third Quarter: Proposals for support requested

Location:
TBD

Partners:
TBD