OVERVIEW INFORMATION

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the Science Advisor
Forum on Environmental Measurement

SUPPORT THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING CONFERENCE (NEMC) AS PART OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MEASUREMENT SYMPOSIUM

This is the initial announcement of this funding opportunity.

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-OSA-2015-01

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.510- Surveys, Studies, Investigations and Special Purpose Grants within the Office of Research and Development

Solicitation Opening Date: February 13, 2015
Solicitation Closing Date: March 31, 2015: 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time

Table of Contents

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS
- Synopsis of Program
- Award Information
- Eligibility Information
- Application Materials
- Agency Contacts

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION
- A. Introduction
- B. Background
- C. Authority and Regulations
- D. Specific Areas of Interest/Expected Outputs and Outcomes
- E. References
- F. Special Requirements

II. AWARD INFORMATION

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION
- A. Eligible Applicants
- B. Cost Sharing
- C. Other

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION
- A. Internet Address to Request Application Package
- B. Content and Form of Application Submission

C. Submission Dates and Times
D. Funding Restrictions
E. Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements
V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION
A. Technical Review
B. Funding Decisions
VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION
A. Award Notices
B. Disputes
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements
VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Synopsis of Program:
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking applications proposing to support the annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium. NEMC encompasses all environmental media (e.g., water, air, solid waste, pesticides) and all of the Environmental Protection Agency's monitoring programs with the exception of criteria pollutants in air (e.g., hazardous waste, wastewater, drinking water, source emissions, Superfund, pesticides).

NEMC serves as a forum for members of the environmental community to raise the awareness of the greater community to problems and issues that they have uncovered and work with their partners across the community to solve them. It also serves as the principal forum for the community to work together to improve the quality of environmental information, facilitate the development and use of new monitoring technologies, and make compliance monitoring more cost-effective. To support these objectives, EPA anticipates providing financial support to a technically qualified organization to manage the NEMC for a five (5) year period. The awardee will be expected to be responsible for:

- conference design and management (e.g., planning committee for sessions, exhibitor area, training sessions);
- advertising, as allowed under 2 CFR 200.421, and outreach;
- location/hotel contract negotiations; and
- logistics (e.g., conference materials pre-conference, for conference, and post-conference proceedings).

Award Information:
Anticipated Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards: One award
Anticipated Funding Amount: Approximately $500,000 total in federal funds
Potential Funding per Award: Up to a total of $500,000 in federal funds (i.e., $100,000 per year for 5 years), including direct and indirect costs, with a maximum duration of five (5) years. Cost-sharing is not required. Proposals with budgets exceeding the total award limits will not be considered.

Eligibility Information:
This solicitation is available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, other public or private nonprofit institutions, and in some cases, individuals or foreign entities. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive assistance agreements from the EPA under this program.

Application Materials:
To apply under this solicitation, use the application package available at Grants.gov (for further submission information see Section IV.E. "Submission Instructions and other Submission Requirements"). The necessary forms for submitting an application will be found on the National Center for Environmental Research (NCER) web site, http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms. If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, you need to allow approximately one month to complete the registration process. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a unique entity identifier 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. This registration, and electronic submission of your application, must be performed by an authorized representative of your organization.

If you do not have the technical capability to utilize the Grants.gov application submission process for this solicitation, send a webmail message to http://www.epa.gov/ncer/contact_us.html at least 15 calendar days before the submission deadline to assure timely receipt of alternate submission instructions. In your message provide the funding opportunity number and title of the program, specify that you are requesting alternate submission instructions, and provide a telephone number, fax number, and an email address, if available. Alternate instructions will be emailed whenever possible. Any applications submitted through alternate submission methods must comply with all the provisions of this Request for Applications (RFA), including Section IV, and be received by the solicitation closing date identified above.

Agency Contacts:
Technical and Eligibility Contact: Lara Phelps; phone: 919-541-5544; email: phelps.lara@epa.gov
Electronic Submissions Contact: Debra M. Jones; phone: 703-347-8081; email: jones.debram@epa.gov

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Introduction

EPA expects to award financial assistance under this solicitation to support the efforts of an eligible and technically qualified organization to support the annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC), as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium, which

serves as a forum to highlight and address environmental monitoring problems or issues that have been uncovered by community members. The conference has been increasing annually with approximately 600 attendees present at the 2014 meeting. The awardee will be expected to be responsible for:

- conference design and management (e.g., planning committee for sessions, exhibitor area, training sessions);
- advertising, as allowed per the regulations cited below, and outreach;
- location/hotel contract negotiations; and
- logistics (e.g., conference materials pre-conference, for conference, and post-conference proceedings).

Guidance on allowable costs associated with advertising can be found in the following regulation:

- http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=136d63ced8701a7e7dab2f407a2edbbd&node=2:1.1.2.2.1&rgn=div5#se2.1.200_1421.

In addition to providing limited financial support, Agency staff will work closely with the managing organization primarily in the areas of program content and the scheduling of the various technical and policy sessions. This is the only EPA co-sponsored conference designed to facilitate an exchange among leaders in government, academia, and the private sector on current events, policy, new monitoring technologies, and future directions across all environmental programs.

B. Background

Initially known as the Waste Testing and Quality Assurance Symposium (WTQA), in 2003, the name was changed to the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) to reflect the fact that the conference grew to encompasses all environmental media (e.g., water, air, solid waste, pesticides) and all of the Environmental Protection Agencies (EPA's) monitoring programs with the exception of criteria pollutants in air (e.g., hazardous waste, wastewater, drinking water, source emissions, Superfund, pesticides). In 2006, NEMC joined with the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in recognition of the mutual interest of involvement and participation to hold a joint meeting under the umbrella of the Environmental Measurement Symposium. For 32 years as WTQA, NEMC, and now jointly as the Environmental Measurement Symposium, the conference's growth and diversity have made it the premier conference for the entire environmental community and one the community acknowledges is a meeting to not be missed.

With a combination of technical presentations in both oral and poster formats; a plenary session featuring leaders in government and industry discussing issues of concern to the environmental community and future regulatory and program directions that will impact the community; a table top exposition featuring new instruments, services, and supplies of interest to the environmental community; a technology innovation showcase to highlight cutting edge development; and short courses to help meet the continuing training needs of the monitoring community, the Symposium serves as a means of fostering a partnership among the regulated community, the laboratory and

consulting communities, and state and federal regulators. The meeting has been structured to meet the direct needs of the monitoring (non-EPA) community by establishing a venue that attracts a highly diversified mix of participation and attendance. The information exchanged at the conference will support advances in the quality of environmental information; facilitate the development and use of new methods development and monitoring technologies; and improve environmental monitoring which promote sustainable and livable communities and help to ensure chemical safety.

EPA has historically provided not-for-profit scientific organizations with limited financial support to make the conference possible and is willing to continue to provide such support. This is the only EPA co-sponsored conference designed to facilitate an exchange among leaders in government, academia, and the private sector on current events, policy, new monitoring technologies, and future directions across all environmental programs that EPA anticipates co-sponsoring during the period of this cooperative agreement.

The specific Strategic Goal(s) and Objective(s) from the EPA's Strategic Plan that relate to this solicitation are:

> Goal 3: Cleaning Up Communities and Advancing Sustainable Development, Objective 3.1: Promote Sustainable and Livable Communities; and
> Goal 4: Ensuring the Safety of Chemicals and Preventing Pollution, Objective 4.1: Ensure Chemical Safety.

The EPA's FY 2014-18 Strategic Plan can be found at:
http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan

C. Authority and Regulations

The authority for this RFA and resulting award is contained in the*:* Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442, 42 U.S.C. 300j-1; Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10, 15 U.S.C. 2609; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20, 7 U.S.C. 136r; Clean Air Act, Section 103, 42 U.S.C. 7403; Clean Water Act, Section 104, 33 U.S.C. 1254; and Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001, 42 U.S.C. 6981.

For activities with an international aspect, the above statutes are supplemented, as appropriate, by the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 102(2)(F).

Note that a project's focus is to consist of activities within the statutory terms of EPA's financial assistance authorities; specifically, the statute(s) listed above. Generally, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air pollution, water pollution, solid/hazardous waste pollution, toxic substances control, or pesticide control depending on which statute(s) is listed above. These activities should relate to the gathering or transferring of information or advancing the state of knowledge. Proposals should emphasize this "learning" concept, as opposed to "fixing" an environmental problem via a well-established method. Proposals relating to other topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, protection of wildlife habitats, etc.,

must describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Awards made in response to this RFA are subject to 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 1500.

D. Specific Areas of Interest/Expected Outputs and Outcomes

EPA joined in a partnership with other organizations (e.g., the regulated community, the public, state regulatory agencies, other members of the monitoring community) to annually sponsor NEMC to increase the role of the scientific community in implementation of monitoring. NEMC has three goals:

1. to serve as a forum for all interested parties to work together to solve environmental monitoring problems in a cost-effective manner;
2. to give state regulatory agencies and the public timely information about EPA activities that might affect their programs; and
3. to permit the members of the monitoring community an opportunity to exchange information and experiences in using both existing and new monitoring methods and approaches.

All NEMC Symposium attendees have the valuable opportunity to share new monitoring approaches and technologies, and contribute to discussions regarding regulatory issues and initiatives. Attendees can:

- have one-on-one discussions with key regulators about problems and issues facing the industry;
- obtain the information needed by the monitoring community to better plan for future capital purchases, research and staffing levels;
- learn how to save time and money when performing sampling and analysis techniques;
- improve the quality and efficiency of analyses; and
- learn about new technologies and regulations.

Activities under this project support EPA's 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan, as detailed under background information above. All proposed activities must address the Strategic Plan priorities and include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall protection of human health.

Environmental results are a way to gauge a project's performance and are described in terms of outputs and outcomes. Environmental outputs (or deliverables) refer to 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 specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative, but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the assistance agreement to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:

- Short courses to enhance the capabilities and capacities of communities performing

environmental data operations (e.g., laboratories, field sampling and measurement organizations).
- Technical presentations from leaders in government and industry discussing issues of concern to the community.
- Exhibitions featuring new instruments, services, and supplies of interest to the environmental community.

Environmental outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective, and are used as a way to gauge a project's performance and take the form of output measures and outcome measures. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related or programmatic in nature. Outcomes may be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within an assistance agreement funding period. Outcomes may be short-term (e.g., changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills), intermediate (e.g., changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (e.g., changes in condition of the natural resource).

Examples of anticipated environmental outcomes from the assistance agreement to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:
- Increased awareness of the important role environmental organizations have in reporting data of known and documented quality to protect human health and the environment.
- Improved communication of important method information, understanding, and flexibility.
- Increased knowledge within the environmental sector of issues and concerns affecting measurement, monitoring, and laboratory communities across the nation.

E. Reference

1. *2014-2018 EPA Strategic Plan*, http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan

F. Special Requirements

Agency policy and ethical considerations prevent EPA technical staff and managers from providing applicants with information that may create an unfair competitive advantage. Consequently, EPA employees will not review, comment, advise, and/or provide technical assistance to applicants preparing applications in response to EPA RFAs. EPA employees cannot endorse any particular application.

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a consortium and submit a single application for this assistance agreement. The application must identify which organization will be the recipient of the assistance agreement and which organizations(s) will be subawardees of the recipient.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

It is anticipated that a total of approximately $500,000 in federal funds will be awarded under this announcement, depending on the availability of funds, quality of applications received, and

other applicable considerations. The EPA anticipates funding approximately one (1) award under this RFA. Requests for amounts in excess of a total of $500,000 in federal funds, including direct and indirect costs, will not be considered. The total project period requested in an application submitted for this RFA may not exceed five (5) years.

The EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards under this RFA. The EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

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.

EPA intends to award only a cooperative agreement under this announcement.

When a cooperative agreement is awarded, EPA will have substantial involvement with the project work plan and budget. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for the project selected may include: theme of the conference; areas for abstract submission; identifying co-chairs for technical sessions; scheduling of the sessions and agenda development; and plenary and keynote speaker identification, among similar activities associated with the content planning for the conference. **Proposals may not identify EPA cooperators or interactions; specific interactions between EPA's personnel and those of the prospective recipient for the cooperative agreement will be negotiated at the time of award.**

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

This solicitation is available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, other public or private nonprofit institutions, and in some cases, individuals or foreign entities. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive assistance agreements from the EPA under this program.

Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that: 1) Are operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest; 2) Are not organized primarily for profit; and 3) Use its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible to apply.

National laboratories funded by Federal Agencies (Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers, "FFRDCs") may not apply. FFRDC employees may cooperate or collaborate with eligible applicants within the limits imposed by applicable legislation and regulations. They may participate in planning, conducting, and analyzing the research directed by the applicant, but may not direct projects on behalf of the applicant organization. The institution, organization, or governance receiving the award may provide funds through its assistance agreement from the EPA to an FFRDC for research personnel, supplies, equipment, and other expenses directly related to the research. However, salaries for permanent FFRDC employees may not be provided through this mechanism.

Federal Agencies may not apply. Federal employees are not eligible to serve in a principal leadership role on an assistance agreement, and may not receive salaries or augment their Agency's appropriations in other ways through awards made under this program.

The applicant institution may enter into an agreement with a Federal Agency to purchase or utilize unique supplies or services unavailable in the private sector to the extent authorized by law. Examples are purchase of satellite data, chemical reference standards, analyses, or use of instrumentation or other facilities not available elsewhere. A written justification for federal involvement must be included in the application. In addition, an appropriate form of assurance that documents the commitment, such as a letter of intent from the Federal Agency involved, should be included.

Potential applicants who are uncertain of their eligibility should contact Lara Phelps, phone (919) 541-5544, email: phelps.lara@epa.gov.

B. Cost sharing

No cost share/matching funds are required under this RFA. 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 technical proposal (See Section IV of the announcement). Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

> **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 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (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 project budget, the technical proposal should include a statement indicating that the applicant is expected to produce the proposed leveraging consistent with the terms of the RFA and the applicant's technical 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. Other

Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or they will be rejected. In addition, where a page limitation is expressed in Section IV with respect to parts of the application, pages in excess of the page limit will not be reviewed. Applications must be submitted through grants.gov or by other authorized alternate means (see Section IV.E. "Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements" for further information) on or before the solicitation closing date and time in Section IV of this announcement or they will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Also, applications exceeding the funding limits or project period term described herein will be returned without review. Further, applications that fail to demonstrate a public purpose of support or stimulation (e.g., by proposing research which primarily benefits a Federal program or provides a service for a Federal agency) will not be funded.

Applications that are found administratively acceptable will be subjected to a review for relevancy to EPA's Office of Research and Development/Office of the Science Advisor's objectives to: (1) support the quality of environmental information; (2) facilitate the development and use of new methods development and monitoring technologies; and (3) make monitoring better, cheaper, faster, and smaller. Applications that do not address all of the aforementioned objectives will be found to lack relevance and will be rejected.

Applications deemed ineligible for funding consideration will be notified within fifteen calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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 applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

Formal instructions for submission through Grants.gov follow in Section E.

A. Internet Address to Request Application Package

Use the application package available at Grants.gov (see Section E. "Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements"). Note: With the exception of the current and pending support form (available at http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms), all necessary forms are included in the electronic application package.

An email will be sent by EPA to the Principal Investigator (PI) and the Administrative Contact (see below) to acknowledge receipt of the application and transmit other important information. The email will be sent from receipt.application@epa.gov; emails to this address will not be accepted. If you do not receive an email acknowledgement within 10 calendar days of the submission closing date, immediately inform the Technical/Eligibility Contact shown in Section VII of this solicitation. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed. See Section E. "Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements" for additional information regarding the application receipt acknowledgment.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

The application is made by submitting the materials described below. **Applications must contain all information requested and be submitted in the formats described.**

1. Standard Form 424

The applicant must complete Standard Form 424. Instructions for completion of the SF424 are included with the form. (However, note that EPA requires that the entire requested dollar amount appear on the SF424, not simply the proposed first year expenses.) The form must contain the signature of an authorized representative of the applying organization.

Applicants are required to provide a unique entity identifier when applying for federal grants or cooperative agreements. Organizations may receive a unique entity identifier, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free request line at 1-866-705-5711, or visiting the website at: http://www.dnb.com.

Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," does not apply to the Office of Research and Development's research and training programs unless EPA has determined that the activities that will be carried out under the applicants' proposal (a) require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), or (b) do not require an EIS but will be newly initiated at a particular site and require unusual measures to limit the possibility of adverse exposure or hazard to the general public, or (c) have a unique geographic focus and are directly relevant to the governmental responsibilities of a State or local government within that geographic area.

If EPA determines that Executive Order 12372 applies to an applicant's proposal, the applicant must follow the procedures in 40 CFR Part 29. The applicant must notify their state's single point of contact (SPOC). To determine whether their state participates in this process, and how to comply, applicants should consult http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/. If an applicant is in a State that does not have a SPOC, or the State has not selected research and development grants for intergovernmental review, the applicant must notify directly affected State, area wide, regional and local entities of its proposal.

EPA will notify the successful applicant(s) if Executive Order 12372 applies to its proposal prior to award.

2. Key Contacts

The applicant must complete the "Key Contacts" form found in the Grants.gov application package. An "Additional Key Contacts" form is also available at http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms. The Key Contacts form should also be completed for major sub-agreements (i.e., primary investigators). Do not include information for consultants or other contractors. Please make certain that all contact information is accurate.

3. Table of Contents

Provide a list of the major subdivisions of the application indicating the page number on which each section begins.

4. Abstract (1 page)

The abstract is a very important document in the review process**.** Therefore, it is critical that the abstract accurately describes the technical work being proposed and conveys all the essential elements of the work.

The abstract should include the information described below (a-h).

a. Funding Opportunity Title and Number for this proposal.
b. Project Title: Use the exact title of your project as it appears in the application. The title must be brief yet represent the major thrust of the work.
c. Project Lead: Point of contact, telephone number, e-mail address.
d. Institution: The institution applying for assistance must be clearly identified.
e. Project Period and Location: Show the proposed project beginning and ending dates and the geographical location(s) where the work will be conducted.
f. Project Cost: Show the total dollars requested from the EPA (include direct and indirect costs for all years).
g. Project Summary: The executive summary of the technical work that is being proposed and expected outcomes.
h. Supplemental Keywords: Without duplicating terms already used in the text of the abstract, list keywords to assist database searchers in finding your research. A list of suggested keywords may be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms.

5. Technical Proposal and References

a. Technical Proposal (15 pages)

Applications should focus on a limited number of objectives that adequately and clearly demonstrate that they meet the RFA requirements. Explicitly state the main focus of your overall proposal and the results you expect to achieve.

The technical proposal must not exceed fifteen (15) consecutively numbered (bottom center), 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size requirements, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal.

The description must provide the following information:

1. Approach to logistics:
   - conference design and management (e.g., planning committee for sessions, exhibitor area, training sessions);
   - advertising, as allowed under 2 CFR 200.421, and outreach;
   - location/hotel contract negotiations; and
   - logistics (e.g., conference materials pre-conference, for conference, and post-conference proceedings).
2. Approach to ensure NEMC goals to:
   - serve as a forum for all interested parties to work together to solve environmental monitoring problems in a cost-effective manner;
   - give state regulatory agencies and the public timely information about EPA activities that might affect their programs; and

- permit the members of the monitoring community an opportunity to exchange information and experiences in using both existing and new monitoring methods and approaches.

3. Approach to ensure attendees have opportunities to:
   - have one-on-one discussions with key regulators about problems and issues facing the industry;
   - obtain the information needed by the monitoring community to better plan for future capital purchases, research and staffing levels;
   - learn how to save time and money when performing sampling and analysis techniques;
   - improve the quality and efficiency of analyses; and
   - learn about new technologies and regulations.
4. Expected Results, Benefits, Outputs, and Outcomes: Describe the expected outputs and outcomes resulting from the project and describe the plan for tracking and measuring progress toward achieving these expected outputs and outcomes, including those identified in Section I of this announcement (see Section I.D). This section should also discuss how the activities, products, and/or services of this effort will lead to solutions of environmental problems and improve the public's ability to protect the environment and human health. In addition, this section should address the approach to sustain continued participation and growth of NEMC as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium.
5. Programmatic Capability, Past Performance, and Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds:
   - 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 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.
   - Provide information on your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your

staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

- Describe the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

6. Voluntary cost share/match and leveraged funds (See Section III.B also): Demonstrate how you will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support the proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes, but is not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award.

7. Appendices may be included, but must remain within the 15-page limit.

b. References

References cited are in addition to other page limits (e.g., technical proposal).

6. Budget and Budget Justification

a. Budget

Prepare a master budget table using "SF-424A Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs" (aka SF-424A), available in the Grants.gov electronic application package and also at http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms. Only complete "Section B-Budget Categories". Provide the object class budget category (a. - k.) amounts for budget years 1-4 under the "Grant Program, Function or Activity" heading. Each column reflects a separate budget year. For example, Column (1) reflects budget year 1. Provide a separate 424A with the total budget for years 1-4 in Column (1) and year 5 in Column (2). Column 5 of the second 424A will display the overall project total.

If a subaward is included in the application, provide a separate SF-424A and budget justification for the subaward. Include the total amount for the subaward under "Other" in the master SF-424A.

Applicants may not use subagreements to transfer or delegate their responsibility for successful completion of their EPA assistance agreement. Therefore, EPA expects that subawards or subcontracts should not constitute more than 40% of the total direct cost of

the total project budget. If a subaward/subcontract constitutes more than 40% of the total direct cost, additional justification may be required before award, discussing the need for the subaward/subcontract to accomplish the objectives of the research project. Please refer to http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm#Contracts_subawards if your organization intends to identify specific contractors, including consultants, and subawardees in your proposal.

Although institutional cost-sharing is not required, applicants who propose to use voluntary cost share must include the costs or contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424A.

b. Budget Justification *[2 pages in addition to the Section IV.B.5. page limitations, not including additions under No. (7) below to support subawards]*

Describe the basis for calculating the personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, and other costs identified in the SF-424A. The budget justification should not exceed two consecutively numbered (bottom center), 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

Budget information should be supported at the level of detail described below:

(1) Personnel: List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, total cost for the budget period, and project role. Compensation paid for employees engaged in grant activities must be consistent with payments for similar work within the applicant organization. Note that for salaries to be allowable as a direct charge to the award, a justification of how that person will be directly involved in the project must be provided. General administrative duties such as answering telephones, filing, typing, or accounting duties are not considered acceptable.

Below is a sample computation for Personnel:

Position/Title	**Annual Salary**	**% of Time Assigned to Project**	**Cost**
Project Manager	$70,000	50%	$ 35,000
Env. Specialist	$60,000	100%	$ 60,000
Env. Health Tech	$45,000	100%	$ 45,000
Total Personnel			**$140,000**

Note this budget category is limited to persons employed by the applicant organization ONLY. Those employed elsewhere are classified as subawardees, contractors or consultants. Contractors and consultants should be listed under the "Contractual" budget heading while subawards made to eligible subrecipients are listed under the "Other" budget heading.

(2) Fringe Benefits: Identify the percentage used and the basis for its computation. Fringe benefits are for the personnel listed in budget category

(1) above and only for the percentage of time devoted to the project. Fringe benefits include but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pensions and unemployment benefit plans. The applicant should not combine the fringe benefit costs with direct salaries and wages in the personnel category.

(3) Travel: Specify the estimated number of trips, purpose of each trip, number of travelers per trip, destinations, and other costs for each type of travel. Explain the need for any travel, paying particular attention to travel outside the United States.

Below is a sample computation for Travel:

Purpose of Travel	**Location**	**Item**	**Computation**	**Cost**
Recipient travel	DC	Lodging	4 people x $100 per night x 2 nights	$800
		Airfare	4 people x $500 round trip	$2,000
		Per Diem	4 people x $50 per day x 2 days	$400
Total Travel				**$3,200**

(4) Equipment: Identify all tangible, non-expendable personal property to be purchased that has an estimated cost of $5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year. Details such as the type of equipment, cost, and a brief narrative on the intended use of the equipment for project objectives are required. Each item of equipment must be identified with the corresponding cost. General-purpose equipment (office equipment, etc.) must be justified as to how it will be used on the project. (Property items with a unit cost of less than $5,000 are considered supplies.)

(5) Supplies: "Supplies" means tangible property other than "equipment." Identify supplies to be used under the project. This may include: software, office supplies, and laboratory supplies such as reagents, chemicals and glassware. Specifically identify computers to be purchased or upgraded.

(6) Contractual: Specify the amount you anticipate expending for services/analyses or consultants and specify the purpose of the contracts and estimated cost. **Any procurement of services from individual consultants or commercial firms (including space for workshops) must comply with the competitive procurement requirements of 2 CFR Part 200.317-200.326. Please see http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm#Contracts_subawards for more details.**

Examples of Contractual costs include:

(a) Consultants – Consultants are individuals with specialized skills who are paid at a daily or hourly rate. EPA's participation in the salary rate (excluding overhead) paid to individual consultants retained by recipients or by a recipient's contractors or subcontractors is limited to

the maximum daily rate for a Level IV of the Executive Schedule (formerly GS-18), to be adjusted annually.

(b) Equipment Rental – When there is a need to rent equipment for use on the project, provide information on the type of equipment to be rented, the purpose or use on the project, the length of time needed and the rental rate. Renting or leasing of equipment will require a lease vs. purchase cost analysis prior to approval.

(c) Facility Rental – When it is necessary to rent office or other facilities spaces for project implementation, and the space(s) are located off-site from the organization's main facility in space not owned by the applicant organization, the cost of the rent may be charged against the award as a contractual expense if the space is used specifically for the project. The budget justifications should provide details on the monthly rental charge and if the rent is pro-rated to the project.

(d) Service or Maintenance Contracts – Costs should be in direct correlation to the use of the equipment for the project (i.e., if a particular machine is used 50% of the time for the project, the project should only be charged 50% of the service/maintenance costs). Provide details of the type of equipment and the amount of the service contract to be paid from EPA funds.

(e) Speaker/Trainer Fees – Information on speakers should include the fee and a description of the services they are providing.

(7) Other: List each item in sufficient detail for the EPA to determine the reasonableness of its cost relative to the research to be undertaken. "Other" items may include publication costs, long distance telephone charges, and photocopying costs. Note that subawards, such as those with other universities for members of the research team, are included in this category. Subawards must have a separate 424A and budget justification, not to exceed one additional page each. **Subawards may not be used to acquire services from consultants or commercial firms. Please see http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm#Contracts_subawards for more details.**

(8) Indirect Costs: Indirect costs are those incurred by the applicant 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 negotiated indirect cost rate (e.g., fixed, predetermined, final or provisional), or must have submitted a proposal to their cognizant agency. If indirect costs are included in the budget, identify the cognizant agency and the approved indirect rate. If your organization does not have a cognizant agency, please note that in the budget justification and provide a brief explanation for how you calculated your indirect cost rate.

7. Resumes

Provide resumes for the project lead and each important co-worker. You may include resumes from staff of subawardees, such as universities. Do not include resumes of consultants or other contractors. The resume for each individual must not exceed two consecutively numbered (bottom center), 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

8. Current and Pending Support

Complete a current and pending support form (provided at http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms) for the project lead and each important co-worker. Do not include resumes of consultants or other contractors. Include all current and pending work regardless of source.

Note to all prospective applicants requiring multiple Current and Pending Support Form pages: Due to a limitation in Adobe Acrobat's forms functionality, additional pages cannot be directly inserted into the original PDF form and preserve the form data on the subsequent pages. Multiple page form submissions can be created in Acrobat 8 and later using the "PDF Package" option in the "Create PDF from Multiple Files" function. If you have an earlier version of Adobe Standard or Professional, applicants will need to convert each PDF page of the form to an EPS (Encapsulated Post Script) file before creating the PDF for submission. The following steps will allow applicants with earlier versions of Adobe Standard or Professional to create a PDF package:

1. Populate the first page of the PDF, and save it as an EPS (Encapsulated Post Script) file.
2. Reopen the form, and populate it with the data for page 2. Save this page as a different EPS file. Repeat for as many pages as necessary.
3. Use Acrobat Distiller to convert the EPS files back to PDF.
4. Open Acrobat Professional, and combine the individual pages into a combined PDF file.

9. Guidelines, Limitations, and Additional Requirements

a. Letters of Intent/Letters of Support

Letters of intent to provide resources for the proposed research or to document intended interactions are limited to one brief paragraph committing the availability of a resource (e.g., use of a person's time or equipment) or intended interaction (e.g., sharing of data, as-needed consultation) that is described in the technical proposal. Letters of intent are to be included as an addition to the budget justification documents. EPA employees are not permitted to provide letters of intent for any application.

Letters of support do not commit a resource vital to the success of the proposal. A letter of support is written by businesses, organizations, or community members stating their support of the applicant's proposed project. EPA employees are not permitted to provide letters of support for any application.

Note: Letters of intent or support must be part of the application; letters submitted separately will not be accepted. Any letter of intent or support that exceeds one brief paragraph (excluding letterhead and salutations), is considered part of the technical proposal and is included in the 15-page technical proposal limit. Any transactions between the successful applicant and parties providing letters of intent or support financed with EPA grant funds are subject to the contract and subaward requirements described here http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm#Contracts_subawards.

b. Funding Opportunity Number(s) (FON)

At various places in the application, applicants are asked to identify the FON.

The Funding Opportunity Number for this RFA is:
Support the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) as Part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium, EPA-OSA-2015-01

c. Confidentiality

By submitting an application in response to this solicitation, the applicant grants the EPA permission to make limited disclosures of the application to technical reviewers both within and outside the Agency for the express purpose of assisting the Agency with evaluating the application. Information from a pending or unsuccessful application will be kept confidential to the fullest extent allowed under law; information from a successful application may be publicly disclosed to the extent permitted by law.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications **must be transferred to Grants.gov no later than 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time** on the solicitation closing date. Applications transferred after the closing date and time will be returned to the sender without further consideration. EPA will not accept any changes to applications after the closing date.

It should be noted that this schedule may be changed without prior notification because of factors not anticipated at the time of announcement. In the case of a change in the solicitation closing date, a new date will be posted on the EPA/NCER web site (http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/) and a modification posted on www.grants.gov.

Solicitation Closing Date: March 31, 2015: 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time (applications ***must*** be submitted to Grants.gov by this time, see Section IV.E "Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements" for further information).

NOTE: Customarily, applicants are notified about evaluation decisions within six months of the solicitation closing date. Awards are generally made 9-12 months after the solicitation closing date.

D. Funding Restrictions

All award decisions are subject to the availability of funds. In accordance with the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act, 31 U.S.C. 6301 et seq., the primary purpose of an assistance agreement is to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by federal statute, rather than acquisition for the direct benefit or use of the Agency. When a cooperative agreement is awarded, EPA will have substantial involvement with the recipient's scope of work. EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process.

EPA award recipients may incur allowable project costs 90 calendar days before the Federal awarding agency makes the Federal award. Expenses more than 90 calendar days pre-award require prior approval of EPA. All costs incurred before EPA makes the award are at the recipient's risk. EPA is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive a Federal award or if the Federal award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs.

Collaborative applications involving more than one institution must be submitted as a single administrative package from one of the institutions involved.

Each proposed project must be able to be completed within the project period and with the initial award of funds. Applicants should request the entire amount of money needed to complete the project. Recipients should not anticipate additional funding beyond the initial award of funds for a specific project.

E. Submission Instructions and Other Submission Requirements

Please read this entire section before attempting an electronic submission through Grants.gov.

If you do not have the technical capability to utilize the Grants.gov application submission process for this solicitation, send a webmail message to http://www.epa.gov/ncer/contact_us.html at least 15 calendar days before the submission deadline to assure timely receipt of alternate submission instructions. In your message provide the funding opportunity number and title of the program, specify that you are requesting alternate submission instructions, and provide a telephone number, fax number, and an email address, if available. Alternate instructions will be emailed whenever possible. Any applications submitted through alternate submission methods must comply with all the provisions of this RFA, including Section IV, and be received by the solicitation closing date identified above.

Note: Grants.gov submission instructions are updated on an as-needed basis. Please provide your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) with a copy of the following instructions to avoid submission delays that may occur from the use of outdated instructions.

1. Preparing for Submission. The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through grants.gov, go to 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 unique entity identifier 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 unique entity identifier 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 drop-down menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. Please note: To apply through grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit http://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 on http://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-OSA-2015-01, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.510), 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.

2. Acknowledgement of Receipt. The complete application must be transferred to Grants.gov no later than 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date (see "Submission Dates and Times"). Applications submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Grants.gov provides an on-screen notification of successful initial transfer as well as an email notification of successful transfer from Grants.gov to EPA. While it is advisable to retain copies of these Grants.gov acknowledgements to document submission, *the only official documentation that the application has been received by EPA is the email acknowledgement sent by EPA to the Principal Investigator and the Administrative Contact*. This email will be sent from receipt.application@epa.gov; emails to this address will not be accepted. ***If an email***

acknowledgment from receipt.application@epa.gov ***has not been received within 10 calendar days of the solicitation closing date, immediately inform the Technical/ Eligibility Contact shown in Section VII of this solicitation. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.***

3. Application Package Preparation. Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov) no later than March 31, 2015, 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time. 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 application 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 application package, click on the "Show Instructions" tab that is accessible within the application package itself.

   The application package consists of the following mandatory documents.

   (a) Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424): Complete the form except for the "competition ID" field.

   (b) EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54: Complete the form. If additional pages are needed, see (d) below.

   (c) SF-424A Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs: Only complete "Section B-Budget Categories". Provide the object class budget category (a. - k.) amounts for budget years 1-4 under the "Grant Program, Function or Activity" heading. Each column reflects a separate budget year. For example, Column (1) reflects budget year 1. Provide a separate 424A with the total budget for years 1-4 in Column (1) and year 5 in Column (2). Column 5 of the second 424A will display the overall project total.

   Although institutional cost-sharing is not required, applicants who propose to use voluntary cost share must include the costs or contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424A.

   (d) Project Narrative Attachment Form (click on "Add Mandatory Project Narrative"): Attach a single electronic PDF file labeled "Application" that contains the items described in Section IV.B.3. through IV.B.9.a (Table of Contents, Abstract, Technical Proposal, References, Budget Justification, Resumes, Current and Pending Support, and Letters of Intent/Support) of this solicitation. *In order to maintain format integrity, this file must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat PDF.* Please review the PDF file for conversion errors prior to including it in the electronic application package; requests to rectify conversion errors will not be accepted if made after the solicitation closing date and time. If Key Contacts Continuation pages (see http://epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms) are needed, place them before the Table of Contents

(Section IV.B.3.).

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

4. Submitting the application. The application package must be transferred to Grants.gov by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the "submit" button of the application package. Your Internet browser will launch and a sign-in page will appear. ***Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date.*** 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.

5. Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the application is submitted to Grants.Gov by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning each late submission on a case-by-case basis as to whether it should be forwarded for peer review. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to jones.debram@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line.

   Please note that if the application you are submitting is greater than 70 MB in size, please call or send an email message to the Electronic Submissions Contact listed for this RFA. The Agency may experience technical difficulty downloading files of this size from Grants.gov. Therefore, it is important that the Agency verify that the file can be downloaded. The Agency will provide alternate submission instructions if the file cannot be downloaded.

   (a) If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal

and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be *sure* to obtain a case number from Grants.gov.

(b) Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission issues, send an email message by 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time on the solicitation closing date. The email message must document the problem and include the Grants.gov case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.

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

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Technical Review

All eligible applications shall be reviewed by a technical review panel including EPA and non-EPA reviewers using the criteria below. This review is designed to evaluate each application's merit and the capability of the applicant to complete the project as proposed. Each application will be rated under a points system, with a total of 100 points possible. The individual scores of the reviewers will be averaged resulting in a final technical review score.

The following criteria will be used in the evaluation process:

1. Technical Approach/Personnel: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate as described in Section IV.B.5.a, 1-3, the adequacy of technical approach to prepare for operation and management of the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium. The strength of the expertise/qualifications of the organization's key personnel for program operations will also be evaluated under this criterion. (30 points)

2. Environmental Results – Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Measures: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the effectiveness of the applicant's plan for tracking and measuring its progress toward achieving the expected project's outputs and outcomes, including those identified in Section I of this announcement and the adequacy of the technical approach to sustain continued participation and growth of the NEMC as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium. (25 points)

3. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance: Applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account the following: (i) past performance in successfully managing and completing federally funded projects similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project; (ii) history of meeting

reporting requirements on prior or current assistance agreements with federal organizations and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not; and (iii) organizational experience, plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the project, and resources. (20 points)

4. Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds: Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (10 points)

5. Budget: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the proposed project budget to determine whether, costs are reasonable to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes. (10 points)

6. Leveraging: Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent they demonstrate that they will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded, to support the proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes, but is not limited, to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Applicants will also be evaluated based on the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how they 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 funds/resources will play to support the proposed project activities. (5 points)

B. Funding Decisions

Final funding decisions are made by the Office of the Science Advisor (OSA) Deputy Director based on the results of the Technical Review. In addition, in making the final funding decisions, the OSA Deputy Director may also consider available funds. Applicants selected for funding will be required to provide additional information listed below under "Award Notices." The application will then be forwarded to EPA's Grants and Interagency Agreement Management Division for award in accordance with the EPA's procedures.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notices

The applicant to be recommended for funding will be required to submit additional certifications, if requested. The applicant may also be asked to provide responses to comments or suggestions offered by the technical reviewers and/or submit a revised budget. The EPA Project Officer will contact the Principal Investigator to obtain these materials.

The official notification of an award will be made by the Agency's Grants and Interagency Agreement Management Division. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; preliminary selection by the Deputy Director in the Office of the Science Advisor 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.

B. Disputes

Disputes related to this assistance agreement competition will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures set forth in 70 FR 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/resolution.htm. Questions regarding disputes may be referred to the Eligibility Contact identified below.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to unique entity identifier, 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 applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

Expectations and responsibilities of EPA cooperative agreement holders are summarized in this section.

1. **Approval of Changes after Award:** Prior written approval of changes may be required from EPA. Examples of these changes are contained in 2 CFR 200.308. Note: prior written approval is also required from the EPA Award Official for incurring costs more than 90 calendar days prior to award.

2. **Data Access and Information Release:** After award, all data first produced under the award must be made available to the EPA Project Officer without restriction and be accompanied by comprehensive metadata documentation adequate for specialists and non-specialists alike to be able to understand how and where the data were obtained and to evaluate the quality of the data. If requested, the data products and their metadata must be provided to the EPA Project Officer in a standard exchange format no later than the due date of the grant's final report or the publication of the data product's associated results, whichever comes first.

   Congress, through OMB, has instructed each federal agency to implement Information Quality Guidelines designed to "provide policy and procedural guidance...for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity

of information, including statistical information, disseminated by Federal agencies." The EPA's implementation may be found at http://www.epa.gov/quality/informationguidelines/. These procedures may apply to data generated by grant recipients if those data are disseminated as described in the Guidelines.

3. **Reporting:** A grant recipient must agree to provide annual progress reports and a final report with an executive summary.

4. **Acknowledgement of EPA Support:** EPA's full or partial support must be acknowledged in journal articles, oral or poster presentations, news releases, interviews with reporters and other communications. Any documents developed under this agreement that are intended for distribution to the public or inclusion in a scientific, technical, or other journal shall include the following statement:

   This publication [article] was developed under Assistance Agreement No._____ awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to [*name of recipient*]. It has not been formally reviewed by EPA. The views expressed in this document are solely those of [*name of recipient or names of authors*] and do not necessarily reflect those of the Agency. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this publication.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Further information, if needed, may be obtained from the EPA official indicated below. Information regarding this RFA obtained from sources other than this Agency Contact may not be accurate. Email inquiries are preferred.

Technical and Eligibility Contact: Lara Phelps; phone: 919-541-5544; email: phelps.lara@epa.gov
Electronic Submissions Contact: Debra M. Jones; phone: 703-347-8081; email: jones.debram@epa.gov