

OVERVIEW INFORMATION

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

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

This is the initial announcement of this funding opportunity.

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SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Synopsis of Program:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking applications proposing to manage the 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 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);
- marketing 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

Potential Funding per Award: Up to a total of \$500,000 (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:

Assistance awards under CFDA 66.510 are available to States, territories, and possessions, and Tribal nations 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 who have demonstrated unusually high scientific ability. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive grants and cooperative agreements from the EPA for this activity.

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”). If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, you need to allow approximately one week to complete the registration process. This registration, and electronic submission of your application, must be performed by an authorized representative of your organization.

Agency Contacts:

Lara Autry; phone: 919-541-5544; email: autry.lara@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 manage the 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 primary awardee will be expected to be responsible for:

- conference design and management (e.g., planning committee for sessions, exhibitor area, training sessions);
- marketing and outreach;
- location/hotel contract negotiations; and
- logistics (e.g., conference materials pre-conference, for conference, and post-conference proceedings).

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 cosponsored 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 encompass 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 27 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 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; 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. 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 agreement.

The specific Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Sub-objectives from the EPA's Strategic Plan that relate to this solicitation are:

- Goal 1: Clean Air and Global Climate Change, Objective 1.6, Enhance Science and Research, Sub-objective 2.1.1, Clean Air Research;
- Goal 2: Clean and Safe Water, Objective 2.3, Enhance Science and Research, Sub-objective 2.3.1, Drinking Water Research, Sub-objective 2.3.2, Water Quality Research;
- Goal 3: Land Preservation and Restoration, Objective 3.3, Enhance Science and Research, Sub-objective 3.3.1, Land Protection Research;
- Goal 4, Objective 4.4, Enhance Science and Research, Sub-objective: 4.4.1, Human Health Research, Sub-objective 4.4.2, Ecosystem Research, Sub-objective 4.4.3, Human Health Risk Assessment Research, Sub-objective 4.4.4, Global Climate Change Research, Sub-objective 4.4.5, Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals Research, Sub-objective 4.4.6, Safe Pesticides and Products Research, Sub-objective 4.4.7, Homeland Security Research; and
- Goal 5: Compliance and Environmental Stewardship, Objective 5.4 Enhance

Society's Capacity for Sustainability Through Science and Research, Sub-objective 5.4.1, Science and Technology for Sustainability.

The EPA's Strategic Plan can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ocfo/plan/2006/entire_report.pdf.

C. Authority and Regulations

The authority for this RFA and resulting award is contained in the Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10, Public Law 94-469, 15 U.S.C 2601; National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Section 102(2)(F); Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Public Law 92-516, 7 U.S.C 136r&136u; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, Section 311; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, Public Law 94-580, 42 U.S.C 6981; Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, Section 203; Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001, 42 U.S.C 6981; Clean Water Act, Section 104, Public Law 95-217, 33 U.S.C 1251; Clean Air Act, Section 103, Public Law 95-95, 42 U.S.C 7401; Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442, 93 U.S.C 523.

Applicable regulations include: 40 CFR Part 30 (Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations), 40 CFR Part 31 (Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments) and 40 CFR Part 40 (Research and Demonstration Grants). Applicable OMB Circulars include: OMB Circular A-21 (Cost Principles for Educational Institutions) relocated to 2 CFR Part 220, OMB Circular A-87 (Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments) relocated to 2 CFR Part 225, OMB Circular A-102 (Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments), OMB Circular A-110 (Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations) relocated to 2 CFR Part 215, and OMB Circular A-122 (Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations) relocated to 2 CFR Part 230.

D. Specific Research Areas of Interest/Expected Outputs and Outcomes

Activities under this project support EPA's 2006 – 2011 Strategic Plans, 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.
- Exhibition 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. References

1. *2006-2011 EPA Strategic Plan: Charting Our Course*, EPA/190/R/06/001. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2006.

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 organization(s) will be subawardees of the recipient.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

It is anticipated that a total of approximately \$500,000 will be awarded under this announcement, depending on the availability of funds and quality of applications received. The EPA anticipates funding one (1) award under this RFA. Requests for amounts in excess of a total of \$500,000, 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. The EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding becomes available after the original selection is made. Any additional selection for awards will be made no later than six (6) months after the original selection decisions.

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 plans 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: technical input on measurement tools to improve the quality of method information and understanding; involvement in the development of accreditation standards; and/or involvement through general participation and recommendations for other technical tools and opportunities that arise. **Proposals may not identify EPA cooperators or interactions; specific interactions between EPA's personnel and those of the prospective recipient for cooperative agreements will be negotiated at the time of award.**

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Assistance awards under CFDA 66.510 are available to States, territories, and possessions, and Tribal nations 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 who have demonstrated unusually high scientific ability. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive grants and cooperative agreements from the EPA for this activity.

Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122, located at 2 CFR Part 230. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to apply.

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.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No matching funds are required under this RFP. 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. 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 grant regulations (40 CFR 30.23 or 40 CFR 31.24, as applicable).
- 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.

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 or workplan and the costs need not be eligible and allowable project costs under the EPA assistance agreement. 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 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as applicable.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are criteria that if not met by the time of application submission will result in elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications from eligible entities (see Section III.A above) that meet all of these criteria will be subjected to an Administrative and

Technical Review Section V of this announcement. Applications deemed ineligible for funding consideration will be notified within fifteen calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this 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.
2. Applications must be submitted to EPA (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.
3. Applications exceeding the funding limits or project period term described herein will be returned without review.
4. 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.
5. To be eligible for funding consideration, a project's focus must consist of activities within the statutory terms of EPA's financial assistance authorities; specifically, the statute(s) listed in I.C. 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 in I.C. above. These activities should relate to the gathering or transferring of information or advancing the state of knowledge. Applications should emphasize this "learning" concept, as opposed to "fixing" an environmental problem via a well-established method. Applications 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.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/forms>); all necessary forms are included in the electronic application package.

An email will be sent by OSA to the primary contact and the Administrative Contact (see below) to acknowledge receipt of the application and transmit other important information. If you do

not receive an email acknowledgement within 30 days of the submission closing date, immediately inform the Agency 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 – Application for Federal Assistance

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 424, 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 "Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System" (DUNS) number when applying for federal grants or cooperative agreements. Organizations may receive a DUNS number by calling 1-866-705-5711 or by visiting the web site 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.whithouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>. 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 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). 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, Quality Assurance Statement, Data Plan, 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) Objectives: The approach to accomplishing the goals stated under Funding Priorities/Focus.
- (2) Approach/Activities: Outline the technical approach that you intend to use in meeting the objectives stated above.
- (3) Expected Results, Benefits, Outputs, and Outcomes: Describe the results you expect to achieve during the project (outputs) and the potential benefits of the results (outcomes) 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.
- (4) 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 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.
- (5) 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.

(6) Appendices may be included, but must remain within the 15-page limit.

b. Quality Assurance Statement (3 pages)

For projects involving environmental data collection or processing, conducting surveys, modeling, method development, or the development of environmental technology (whether hardware-based or via new techniques), provide a Quality Assurance Statement (QAS) regarding the plans for processes that will be used to ensure that the products of the research satisfy the intended project objectives. Follow the guidelines provided below to ensure that the QAS describes a system that complies with ANSI/ASQC E4, *Specifications and Guidelines for Quality Systems for Environmental Data Collection and Environmental Technology Programs*. Do not exceed three consecutively numbered, 8.5x11-inch pages of single-spaced, standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

NOTE: If selected for award, applicants will be expected to provide additional quality assurance documentation.

Address each applicable section below by including the required information, referencing the specific location of the information in the Technical Proposal, or explaining why the section does not apply.

- (1) Identify the individual who will be responsible for the quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) aspects of the research along with a brief description of this person's functions, experience, and authority within the research organization. Describe the organization's general approach for conducting quality research. (*QA is a system of management activities to ensure that a process or item is of the type and quality needed for the project. QC is a system of activities that measures the attributes and performance of a process or item against the standards defined in the project documentation to verify that they meet those stated requirements.*)
- (2) Discuss project objectives, including quality objectives, and the quantitative and/or qualitative procedures that will be used to evaluate the success of the project. Include any plans for peer or other reviews of the study design or analytical methods.
- (3) Address each of the following project elements as applicable:
 - (a) **Collection of new/primary data:**
(*Note: In this case the word "sample" is intended to mean any finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. If certain attributes listed below do not apply to the type of samples to be used in your research, simply explain why those attributes are not applicable.*)
 - (i) Discuss the plan for sample collection and analysis. As applicable, include sample type(s), frequency, locations, sample sizes, sampling procedures, and the criteria for determining acceptable data quality (e.g., precision, accuracy, representativeness, completeness, comparability, or data quality objectives).

- (ii) Describe the procedures for the handling and custody of samples including sample collection, identification, preservation, transportation, and storage, and how the accuracy of test measurements will be verified.
 - (iii) Describe or reference each analytical method to be used, any QA or QC checks or procedures with the associated acceptance criteria, and any procedures that will be used in the calibration and performance evaluation of the analytical instrumentation.
 - (iv) Discuss the procedures for overall data reduction, analysis, and reporting. Include a description of all statistical methods to make inferences and conclusions, acceptable error rates and/or power, and any statistical software to be used.
- (b) **Use of existing/secondary data (i.e., data previously collected for other purposes or from other sources):**
- a. Identify the types of secondary data needed to satisfy the project objectives. Specify requirements relating to the type of data, the age of data, geographical representation, temporal representation, and technological representation, as applicable.
 - b. Specify the source(s) of the secondary data and discuss the rationale for selection.
 - c. Establish a plan to identify the sources of the secondary data in all deliverables/products.
 - d. Specify quality requirements and discuss the appropriateness for their intended use. Accuracy, precision, representativeness, completeness, and comparability need to be addressed, if applicable.
 - e. Describe the procedures for determining the quality of the secondary data.
 - f. Describe the plan for data management/integrity.
- (c) **Method development:**
- (Note: The data collected for use in method development or evaluation should be described in the QAS as per the guidance in section 3A and/or 3B above.)*
- Describe the scope and application of the method, any tests (and measurements) to be conducted to support the method development, the type of instrumentation that will be used and any required instrument conditions (e.g., calibration frequency), planned QC checks and associated criteria (e.g., spikes, replicates, blanks), and tests to verify the method's performance.
- (d) **Development or refinement of models:**
- (Note: The data collected for use in the development or refinement of models should be described in the QAS as per the guidance in section 3A and/or 3B above.)*
- (i) Discuss the scope and purpose of the model, key assumptions to be made during development/refinement, requirements for code development, and how the model will be documented.
 - (ii) Discuss verification techniques to ensure the source code implements the model correctly.
 - (iii) Discuss validation techniques to determine that the model (assumptions and algorithms) captures the essential phenomena with adequate fidelity.
 - (iv) Discuss plans for long-term maintenance of the model and associated data.

(e) Development or operation of environmental technology:

(Note: The data collected for use in the development or evaluation of the technology should be described in the QAS as per the guidance in section 3A and/or 3B above.)

- (i) Describe the overall purpose and anticipated impact of the technology.
- (ii) Describe the technical and quality specifications of each technology component or process that is to be designed, fabricated, constructed, and/or operated.
- (iii) Discuss the procedure to be used for documenting and controlling design changes.
- (iv) Discuss the procedure to be used for documenting the acceptability of processes and components, and discuss how the technology will be benchmarked and its effectiveness determined.
- (v) Discuss the documentation requirements for operating instructions/guides for maintenance and use of the system(s) and/or process(s).

(f) Conducting surveys:

(Note: The data to be collected in the survey and any supporting data should be described in the QAS as per the guidance in section 3A and/or 3B above.)

Discuss the justification for the size of the proposed sample for both the overall project and all subsamples for specific treatments or tests. Identify and explain the rationale for the proposed statistical techniques (e.g., evaluation of statistical power).

- (4) Discuss data management activities (e.g., record-keeping procedures, data-handling procedures, and the approach used for data storage and retrieval on electronic media). Include any required computer hardware and software and address any specific performance requirements for the hardware/software configuration used.

c. References

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

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 as an “Optional Document” 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 each budget year under the “Grant Program, Function or Activity” heading. Each column reflects a separate budget year. For example, Column (1) reflects budget year 1. The total budget will be automatically tabulated in column (5).

If a subaward, such as a subagreement with an educational institution 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 see Section IV. D below if your organization intends to identify specific contractors, including consultants, and subawardees in your proposal.

Please note that institutional cost-sharing is not required. However, if cost-sharing is proposed, a brief statement concerning cost-sharing should be added to the budget justification.

Please note that when formulating budgets for proposals/applications, applicants must not include management fees or similar charges in excess of the direct costs and indirect costs at the rate approved by the applicants cognizant audit agency, or at the rate provided for by the terms of the agreement negotiated with EPA. The term "management fees or similar charges" refers to expenses added to the direct costs in order to accumulate and reserve funds for ongoing business expenses, unforeseen liabilities, or for other similar costs that are not allowable under EPA assistance agreements. Management fees or similar charges may not be used to improve or expand the project funded under this agreement, except to the extent authorized as a direct cost of carrying out the scope of work.

b. Budget Justification [*2 pages in addition to the Section IV.B.5. page limitations, not including additions under Nos. (6) and (7) below to support contracts and subawards*]

Describe the basis for calculating the personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, and other costs identified in the itemized budget. 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, and total cost for the budget period.
- (2) Fringe Benefits: Identify the percentage used and the basis for its computation.
- (3) Travel: Specify the estimated number of trips, locations, and other costs for each type of travel. Explain the need for any travel, paying particular attention to travel outside the United States.
- (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. (Personal property items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 are considered supplies.)

- (5) Supplies: "Supplies" means tangible property other than "equipment." Identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). 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 40 C.F.R. Part 30 or 40 C.F.R. 31.36, as appropriate. Please see Section IV. D below for more details.
- (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. 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 itemized budget and budget justification, not to exceed one additional page each, included as part of the proposal. Subawards may not be used to acquire services from consultants or commercial firms. Please see Section IV. D below for more details.
- (8) Indirect Costs: If indirect costs are included in the budget identify the cognizant federal audit agency and the approved indirect rate. If your organization does not have a cognizant federal audit agency, please note that in the proposal and provide a brief explanation for how you calculated your indirect cost rate. EPA will negotiate an indirect rate if necessary.

7. Resumes

Provide resumes for each important co-worker. You may include resumes from staff of subawardees such as universities. Do not include resumes of consultants or other contractors unless you have selected them in compliance with the Procurement Standards of 40 C.F.R. Part 30 or 40 C.F.R. 31.36. Please see Section IV.D below for more details. 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 each important co-worker. 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 work 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 work. 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 funding restrictions described in Section IV. D. as well.

b. 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.

In accordance with 40 CFR 2.203, applicants may claim all or a portion of their application/proposal package as confidential business information. EPA will evaluate confidentiality claims in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2. Applicants must clearly mark applications/proposals or portions thereof that they claim as confidential. If no claim of confidentiality is made, EPA is not required to make the inquiry to the applicant

otherwise required by 40 CFR 2.204(c)(2) prior to disclosure. However, competitive proposals/applications are considered confidential and protected from disclosure prior to the completion of the competitive selection process.

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.

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 as a modification on www.grants.gov.

Solicitation Closing Date: August 16, 2010; 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).

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 project work plans and budget. EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process.

Collaborative applications involving more than one institution must be submitted as a single administrative package from one of the institutions involved. EPA awards funds to one eligible applicant as the recipient even if other eligible applicants are named as partners or co-applicants or members of a coalition or consortium. The recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds.

Funding may be used to provide subgrants or subawards of financial assistance, which includes using subawards or subgrants to fund partnerships, provided the recipient complies with applicable requirements for subawards or subgrants including those contained in 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as appropriate. Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses to the extent required by the procurement provisions of the regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as appropriate. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractors (including consultants) in their proposal/application. However, if they do, the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific subawardee/subgrantee, contractor, or consultant in the proposal/application EPA selects for funding does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward/subgrant and/or

competitive procurement requirements as appropriate. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the proposal based solely on the firm's role in preparing the proposal/application.

Successful applicants cannot use subgrants or subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products from for-profit organizations to carry out its assistance agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subawardee or subgrantee must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance under Subpart B Section .210 of OMB Circular A-133, and the definitions of subaward at 40 CFR 30.2(ff) or subgrant at 40 CFR 31.3, as applicable. EPA will not be a party to these transactions. Applicants acquiring commercial goods or services must comply with the competitive procurement standards in 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR Part 31.36 and cannot use a subaward/subgrant as the funding mechanism.

Section V of the announcement describes the evaluation criteria and evaluation process that will be used by EPA to make selections under this announcement. During this evaluation, except for those criteria that relate to the applicant's own qualifications, past performance, and reporting history, the review panel will consider, if appropriate and relevant, the qualifications, expertise, and experience of:

- A. an applicant's named subawardees/subgrantees identified in the proposal/application if the applicant demonstrates in the proposal/application that if it receives an award that the subaward/subgrant will be properly awarded consistent with the applicable regulations in 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31. For example, applicants must not use subawards/subgrants to obtain commercial services or products from for profit firms or individual consultants.
- B. an applicant's named contractor(s), including consultants, identified in the proposal/application if the applicant demonstrates in its proposal/application that the contractor(s) was selected in compliance with the competitive procurement standards in 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR 31.36 as appropriate. For example, an applicant must demonstrate that it selected the contractor(s) competitively or that a proper non-competitive sole-source award consistent with the regulations will be made to the contractor(s), that efforts were made to provide small and disadvantaged businesses with opportunities to compete, and that some form of cost or price analysis was conducted. EPA may not accept sole source justifications for contracts for services or products that are otherwise readily available in the commercial marketplace.

EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subawardees/subgrantees and/or named contractor(s) during the proposal/application evaluation process unless the applicant complies with these requirements.

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, call 1-800-490-9194 or send a webmail message to <http://es.epa.gov/cgi-bin/ncercqamail.pl> at least 15 calendar working 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 e-mailed 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 appropriate electronic application package available through the Grants.gov site must be used for electronic submissions. To begin the application process, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on the “Apply for Grants” tab on the left side of the page. Then click on “Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package” to download the compatible Adobe viewer and obtain the application package. For more information on Adobe Reader please go to <http://www.grants.gov/help/help.jsp>.

Note: Grants.gov is aware of a corruption issue when Adobe Reader application packages are saved in different versions of Adobe Reader. It is recommended that applicants uninstall earlier versions of Adobe Reader and then install the version available and compatible through Grants.gov.

The application package may be quickly accessed from https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms_apps_idx.html using the appropriate FON. *Be sure to download the electronic application package for the appropriate FON.* Please register for announcement change notification emails. Note: With the exception of the current and pending support form (available at <http://epa.gov/ncercqamail.pl>), all necessary forms are included in the electronic application package.

The electronic submission of your application package must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and authorized to sign for Federal assistance. Most submission problems can be avoided by communicating with the AOR well before the solicitation closing date and allowing sufficient time for following the guidance provided below. Note for organizations not currently registered: the registration process may take a week or longer to complete. We recommend you designate an AOR and begin the registration process as soon as possible.

For more information, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on “Get Registered”.

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”). Grants.gov provides an on-screen notification of successful initial transfer as well as an e-mail 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 OSA is the e-mail acknowledgement sent by OSA to the Primary Contact. **If an email acknowledgment from OSA (not support@grants.gov) has not been received within 30 days of the solicitation closing date, immediately inform the Agency Contact shown in Section VII of this solicitation. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.***
3. Application Package Preparation. The application package consists of a. through c. below.
 - (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 (c) below.
 - (c) Project Narrative Attachment Form (click on “Add Mandatory Project Narrative”): Attach a single electronic file labeled “Application” that contains the items described in Section IV.B.3. through IV.B.9.a (Table of Contents, Abstract, Technical Proposal, Quality Assurance Statement, References, Budget (see “Note” below) and 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.).

Note: Do not attach the SF-424A budget table if it has been completed as an “Optional Document” in the Grants.gov electronic application package.

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. 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 per day, seven days per 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 consideration. All e-mails, as described below, are to be sent to autry.lara@epa.gov with the Funding Opportunity Number 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 e-mail 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. 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 e-mail 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 that includes any materials provided by Grants.gov and attach the entire application in PDF format.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Administrative Review:

Only eligible entities whose application(s) meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be subject to a review for relevancy to EPA's mission to support advancement of environmental science. Applications may be rejected if they are found to lack relevance. Examples include:

1. Application is deficient technically with no chance for consideration.
2. Application fails to advance the objectives stated in the solicitation even if successfully performed.
3. Application fails to demonstrate a public purpose of support and stimulation (i.e., it implies the primary purpose is to provide direct support to the Federal government).

B. Technical Review

All applications that are found administratively acceptable and relevant shall be reviewed by a technical review panel using the criteria below. This review is designed to evaluate each application's merit. Reviewers are asked to individually assign a score to each application.

Individual reviewers consider an application's merit based on the criteria below. Criteria 1 – 5 are listed in descending order of importance:

1. **Technical Approach/Personnel:** Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate: the adequacy of technical approach to prepare for operation and sustainability in running the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium; and the strength of the qualifications and experience of the organization and key personnel for program operations. (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 projects outputs and outcomes, including those identified in Section I of this announcement. (20 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 completing federally and/or non-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 and/or non-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 and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the project. (20 points)

4. **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. (15 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; and the proposed budget provides a detailed breakout of the approximate funding used for each major activity. (15 points)

C. Funding Decisions

Final funding decisions are made by the Office of the Science Advisor (OSA) Director based on the results of the Administrative Review and Technical Review. In addition, in making the final funding decisions, the OSA Director may also consider program balance and 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 and an electronic version of the revised technical proposal. They 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 Primary Contact to obtain these materials. Before or after an award, applicants may be required to provide additional quality assurance documentation.

Non-profit applicants that are recommended for funding under this announcement are subject to pre-award administrative capability reviews consistent with Sections 8b., 8c. and 9d. of EPA Order 5700.8 - Policy on Assessing Capabilities of Non-Profit Applicants for Managing Assistance Awards (http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/award/5700_8.pdf). In addition, non-profit applicants that qualify for funding may, depending on the size of the award, be required to fill out and submit to the Grants Management Office the Administrative Capabilities Form with supporting documents contained in Appendix A of EPA Order 5700.8.

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.

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

Expectations and responsibilities of cooperative agreement holders are summarized in this section, although the terms grant and grantee are also used. See <http://www.epa.gov/ncer/guidance> for the full terms and conditions associated with an award, including which activities require prior approval from the EPA.

- 1. Approval of Changes after Award:** Prior written approval is required from the EPA if there will be a significant change from the work described in the application. Examples of these changes are contained in 40 C.F.R. 30.25. Note: prior written approval is also required from the EPA Award Official for incurring costs more than 90 calendar days prior to award.
- 2. Human Subjects:** A grant applicant must agree to meet all EPA requirements for studies using human subjects prior to implementing any work with these subjects. These requirements are given in 40 CFR § 26. Studies involving intentional exposure of human subjects who are children or pregnant or nursing women are prohibited by Subpart B of 40 CFR § 26. For observational studies involving children or pregnant women and fetuses please refer to Subparts C & D of 40 CFR § 26. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations at 45 CFR § 46.101(e) have long required "... compliance with pertinent Federal laws or regulations which provide additional protection for human subjects." EPA's regulation 40 CFR § 26 is such a pertinent Federal regulation.

Therefore, the applicant's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval must state that the applicant's study meets the EPA's regulations at 40 CFR § 26. No work involving human subjects, including recruiting, may be initiated before the EPA has received a copy of the applicant's IRB approval of the project and the EPA has also provided approval. Where human subjects are involved in the research, the recipient must provide evidence of subsequent IRB reviews, including amendments or minor changes of protocol, as part of annual reports.

- 3. Animal Welfare:** A grant recipient must agree to comply with the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-544), as amended, 7 U.S.C. 2131-2156. The recipient must also agree to abide by the "U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals used in Testing, Research, and Training" (50 Federal Register 20864-20865. May 20, 1985).
- 4. Data Access and Information Release:** After award, all data (including primary and secondary or existing data) must be made available to the 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 Project Officer in a standard exchange format no later than the due date of the cooperative agreement'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://epa.gov/quality/exmural.html#genreqts>. These procedures may apply to data generated by grant recipients if those data are disseminated as described in the Guidelines.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-110 located at 2 CFR Part 215 has been revised to provide public access to research data through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) under some circumstances. Data that are (1) first produced in a project that is supported in whole or in part with federal funds and (2) cited publicly and officially by a federal agency in support of an action that has the force and effect of law (i.e., a regulation) may be accessed through FOIA. If such data are requested by the public, the EPA must ask for it, and the grantee must submit it, in accordance with A-110 and the EPA regulations at 40 C.F.R. 30.36.

- 5. Reporting:** A cooperative agreement recipient must agree to provide annual progress reports, with associated summaries, and a final report with an executive summary.

The recipient agrees to submit a draft final report to the EPA Project Officer for comment at least 90 days prior to the end of the approved project period. The recipient shall

prepare the final project report in accordance with the EPA Project Officer's instructions and submit the final project report within 90 days after the end of the project period.

- 6. Acknowledgement of EPA Support:** EPA's full or partial support must be acknowledged in 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 or another as specified by EPA's project officer:

This publication [article] was made possible by EPA grant number _____. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the grantee and do not necessarily represent the official views of the EPA. Further, the EPA does not endorse the purchase of any commercial products or services mentioned in the publication.

A graphic that may be converted to a slide or used in other ways, such as on a poster, is located at http://epa.gov/ncer/guidance/star_images.html. EPA expects recipients to use this graphic in oral and poster presentations.

- 7. Exchange Network:** EPA, states, territories, and tribes are working together to develop the National Environmental Information Exchange Network, a secure, Internet- and standards-based way to support electronic data reporting, sharing, and integration of both regulatory and non-regulatory environmental data. States, tribes and territories exchanging data with each other or with EPA, should make the Exchange Network and the Agency's connection to it, the Central Data Exchange (CDX), the standard way they exchange data and should phase out any legacy methods they have been using. More information on the Exchange Network is available at www.exchangenetwork.net.

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.

Lara Autry; phone: 919-541-5544; email: autry.lara@epa.gov