

**Deployment of Innovative Water Technologies for Very Small Drinking Water Systems, Areas Served
by Private Wells and Source Waters Request for Applications (RFA)
Informational Webinar Questions and Answers
December 8, 2020**

Q: For nonprofits in the USA, can they use the dollars for an overseas project? Can a US nonprofit, building a clean water system in another country utilize this funding for this type of project?

A: International organizations can be listed as collaborators on applications, but projects should produce data and methods that can immediately and/or with little to no translation be utilized by the U.S. public, states and tribes to better assess or manage environmental problems. If the project is solely focused on water systems overseas, it may not score as highly in programmatic or relevance review.

Q: There was a comment about "identifying areas of the treatment train where new methods are needed" In other words what does "identify" mean here?

A: Research Area B asks applicants to identify the key areas (e.g., contaminants of concern, infrastructure issues) in need of innovation for the drinking water treatment process in very small public drinking water systems and areas served by private wells. New methods to deploy innovative technologies across states should consider economic costs while improving public health.

Q: What is the definition of the Very Small Drinking Water Systems here?

A: A very small drinking water system is defined as serving 500 persons or fewer.

Q: Can you talk about in-kind match and what type of documentation would be required?

A: Applicants are required to contribute a minimum non-federal cost share of 35 percent of the total project amount. For example, if applicants request the full federal amount (\$1,000,000), the minimum non-federal cost share/match would be \$538,462. The cost share funds can come from cash or may include in-kind contributions that directly support the project's objectives. This includes the use of volunteers and/or donated time, equipment, etc. It can also come from inside your organization, such as PI salary. No specific documentation is required, however the cost share/match plan must clearly be outlined in the application and budget justification. Please see pg. 18 of the RFA for information on cost share requirements. Applications without cost share/match will not be reviewed.

Q: Is inclusion of a minority serving institution (MSI) as a partner/collaborator required in a proposal?

A: Inclusion of minority-serving institutions is NOT required.

Q: Does the RFA deal with only drinking water?

A: Yes, the focus is on drinking water.

Q: Could you elaborate more on technologies approved by state regulatory agencies (for example, involving multiple states)?

A: The overall intent of the RFA is to develop processes, methods, models, frameworks, and tools to enable states to share and facilitate adoption of proven, cost-effective, technologies for very small drinking water systems so that these technologies could be easily adopted by multiple states. One example of a current model is the "10 States Standards". The Great Lakes – Upper Mississippi River

Board of State and Provincial Public Health and Environmental Managers publish consistent guidelines for the design, review and approval of plans and specifications for public wastewater collection and treatment facilities in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Engineers can then use the Recommended Standards to determine water facility needs and treatment processes during the design phase of a project. Awareness of previous work and incorporation of relevant elements is essential for ensuring the quality, quantity, and value-added of outputs from the current project.

Q: Just to clarify, by existing protocol, you mean existing treatment systems, correct?

A: The RFA is seeking to deploy existing testing protocols for drinking water treatment technologies across multiple states/systems.

Q: Does the existing protocol have to be a protocol that has been used before by the applicant or an agency or an accepted testing method already developed lets say by EPA?

A: The existing protocol does not have to be one developed by the applicant or by EPA. Development and cataloging of effective case studies will be important to this research. Applicants could look at generic models for multi-state cooperation from other programs or domains that may have applicability in this case.

Q: Is incorporation of novel water treatment technologies in the existing water treatment system one of the expectations?

A: Applicants should not focus on establishing new technologies or testing protocols that generate performance data. Rather, applicants should focus on determining how states consider sources of performance data and other information to make decisions to allow innovative water technologies to be used.

Q: For non-public water systems, (i.e., those that are less than 25 people and 15 connections) the states wouldn't have the same authority to state whether a treatment technology was approved. Are you assuming that a technology that was approved for public water systems could also be used by non-public water systems? or are you suggesting that a different approach be used by non-public water system?

A: Although very small public (and non-public) drinking water systems and private wells are regulated differently, there are similarities in the challenges they face and in treatment options. For non-public systems, states could still play a role in information sharing, whether or not they have authority to implement new technologies in those systems.

Q: If a drinking water system were plagued with recurring HABs but greater than 500 clients is that ineligible?

A: A drinking water system larger than 500 persons could be considered relevant to the research if the project makes clear how the findings would apply to very small systems (<500 persons). Treatment technologies for HABs are widespread across many states in drinking water systems of various sizes, so using it as a case study could be relevant. Size of drinking water system is not an eligibility criteria.

Q: Can a single person work on more than one proposal? If so, what roles are restricted in duplicating?

A: Yes. You must ensure that the research proposed in each application is significantly different from any other that has been submitted to EPA or from any other financial assistance you are currently receiving from EPA or another federal government agency.

Q: Are multi-institutional teams encouraged or even required?

A: Multi-institutional teams are not required but are allowable under this RFA. Applicants are required to develop a Collaboration and Engagement Plan (pg. 12-13 and 33-34 of the RFA) which includes a description of strategies for obtaining collaboration and support from partners which can include states, tribes, academia, industry groups, non-for-profit organizations, associations, and/or local communities/community-based organizations. This may require multi-institutional teams and establishment of subawards, which are allowable and described on pg. 32 of the RFA. Additional information on funding subawards, partnerships, and contracts, can be found on the following link: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses#contractssubawards>.

Q: What start date should be used on the application?

A: EPA expects awards to be made by September 2021; therefore, start dates of September – October 2021 would be appropriate.

Q: Can EPA employees or other federal researchers be collaborators on the proposed research?

A: EPA employees are not allowed to participate in an application or provide any kind of letters of support or intent. Other federal agencies may provide limited support as described in the RFA. EPA could convert the award to a cooperative agreement after the award is made. EPA employees will be contacted after that takes place to negotiate ways in which EPA can collaborate with grantees. Please see pg. 18 of the RFA for more information on cooperative agreements and the anticipated Federal involvement proposed by EPA. Please do not include any letters of support or intent from EPA employees.