

EPA Gulf of Mexico 2024 Funding Opportunities Q&A

The first four sections of the Q&A are FON Specific Questions. The other sections can be applied to all FONs. All questions added after the original posting date, will have “**NEW (added ____)**” so you can review additional questions as added.

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NOTE TO APPLICANTS: We are able to respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement. We are unable to respond to questions requesting input on a project idea, format of an application, or other project specific questions that may compromise the competitive process.

If you have not successfully been awarded an EPA grant previously, you may want to review the recorded webinar and/or presentation found here: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-grants-award-process-webinars>

EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM: Understanding Water Quality through Monitoring Activities

Q. How much funding is available for FON: EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM – Understanding Water Quality through Monitoring?

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$4 million (a maximum of \$750,000 per award) unless additional funding becomes available.

Q. I plan to collaborate with an individual at a university. Would that individual be eligible to receive a subaward from this funding program?

A. To determine if an individual or entity is eligible for a subaward, please go to the Q&A Document located on EPA's website at <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-08/epa-gmd-gulf-of-mexico-2024-funding-opportunities-2024.7.24.pdf>. Read the Eligibility/Project Eligibility Section.

Q. Knowing microplastic concentration in major tributaries and coastal area of the Gulf would help us understand potential impacts of this emerging contaminant in the coastal system of the Gulf. I wonder if it would be fine to include monitoring of microplastics under this funding opportunity?

A. Although micro-plastics is not a routine water quality monitoring parameter, Funding Opportunity EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM does not limit what analyses can be performed; therefore, microplastics analysis is eligible under this NOFO. All project monitoring activities must be in water bodies (lakes, streams, rivers, estuaries, tributaries) within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states (see Figure 1 and eligible counties in Appendix D of the NOFO).

Q. Has this RFP occurred in the past, if so, when? and how many times? From your website it looks like it occurred at least once before. I'm just trying to gauge if it is likely to occur in the future.

A. Yes, WQ monitoring has been in many previous NOFOs and yes, it is very likely to be eligible or required in future NOFOs. Water quality (WQ) improvement is one of GMD's four measures, so WQ monitoring is a frequently required and/or eligible activity in funding opportunities. Most NOFOs written by GMD are unique. In other words, previous NOFOs may have required, encouraged, or allowed WQ monitoring but had different requirements than our current NOFO (they have varied by program, location eligibility, monitoring type, funding amounts, etc.). Therefore, we cannot provide a definitive answer about how many times this type of NOFO has occurred in the past. Visit our website to learn more about Program priorities and to view annual reports that highlight projects previously funded <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico>.

Q. Should the various basins that are provider of water suppliers within the GMD be the only a specified water supplier or can a supplementary form or graph could be included. As a means of clarification of the scope of the geographic states for example the Texas, Oregon and California?

A. **Please confirm if this question is asking about eligible project locations.** If yes, the only eligible locations for project activities are bodies of water (rivers, streams, estuaries, tributaries, etc) in the coastal counties listed in Appendix D for the five Gulf states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Oregon and California are not eligible locations. Counties in the five Gulf states that are not listed in Appendix D are also not eligible. Gulf of Mexico Division (GMD) is our office name and does not reflect the eligible area for the NOFO. Supplementary graphs, maps, tables, or other visual depictions are allowed and not counted in the 12-page application limit. These should be included at the end of the application.

Q. Can a for profit organization be eligible for the grant proposal?

A. No

Q. The criteria require the contamination of the descriptive of the atmosphere which stem from the air or other biological mechanism and the test for the level elements of PFAS can other elements be including like the MCL?

A. Please confirm if this question is asking about eligible parameters and level of testing for water quality testing. While the NOFO lists examples, additional contaminants such as PFAS are eligible for this NOFO. The suspected mechanism and source for the contamination are not required aspects of the application, but the applicant may choose to provide the information (whether air or biological). The level of testing is also not required in the application, but the applicant may choose to provide it and the basis for it (e.g., maximum contaminant level [MCL]). Details about the level of testing could also be supplied in a Quality Assurance Project Plan which comes after a project is awarded. From Page 4, Environmental Results: “Examples of water quality parameters that could be demonstrated in monitoring activities include but are not limited to nutrients, metals, biologicals, chemicals, turbidity (and/or total suspended solids), dissolved oxygen, pH, and temperature.”)

Q. Should the source of waters specify the service providers whether it is a municipal or public service provider. For example, the Brownville water system of Texas?

A. The source of the [drinking] water is not required in the application, but the applicant may choose to provide it.

Q. For the component of the tribal conservation of the land should an individual area be identified and the contributed factors to the tribal agriculture and the impact of the water contamination and the identifiable aspect whether it is by air or biological?

A. Please provide further clarification about what this question is asking regarding “component of the tribal conservation of the land”. There are no tribal requirements of this NOFO other than Indian Tribes are eligible entities to apply in Sec. III.A. The application must “describe how the applicant will determine where water quality monitoring is needed, any existing data gaps, and how project activities improve understanding of water quality and provide a detailed explanation of the experimental design for water quality monitoring project(s), which includes where sampling will occur and how frequently, the parameters to be determined, and describes methods to be used for identifying water quality contaminants.” Any additional information, such as contributing factors, could be part of how the applicant determined where water quality monitoring is needed. It is not required in the application, but the applicant may choose to provide it.

Q. Would a topographically analysis be the best means illustration how each component of the datasets driven and the need for analytic tool within the GMD jurisdiction and its surrounding states of the geographic area. Due to the limitation of the number of 12 pages for the project narrative?

A. GMD cannot provide advice on what the best means are to illustrate information in the application. As noted above, supplementary graphs, maps, tables, or other visual depictions are allowed and not counted in the 12-page application limit.

Q. Can the services provide in the proposal be conduct via software as a service or platform as service?

A. **Please confirm if this question is asking about the water quality monitoring.** If it is, the NOFO specifically states that the application must perform water quality monitoring and lists the following types of tests as examples.

Perform water quality monitoring in water bodies in the Gulf Coast Region; examples are:

- o Physical assessments (temperature, pH, DO, conductivity, odor, sediment, and turbidity)
- o Nutrient assessments (nitrogen, phosphorous)
- o Biological assessments (bacterial, viral, algae/algal indicators, aquatic life)
- o Chemical assessments (mineral, metals, pesticides)

If this question is asking about the other requirements (e.g., determining where water quality monitoring is needed, how these activities will be coordinated with or complement existing or ongoing water quality monitoring efforts), the NOFO does limit how these tasks could be performed.

Q. Would we (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) be able to apply for this NOFO posted by Region 4 or will the EPA be posting something similar for Region 6?

A. Yes, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality would be able to apply for this NOFO posted by Region 4/Gulf of Mexico Division.

Q. We have developed and tested an in-situ sensor capable of determining the total concentration of microplastics (MP) in water samples. I am considering submitting a proposal focused on mapping MP concentrations within the Gulf of Mexico or its tributaries. Could you please advise if such a proposal would be responsive to the EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM call for proposals?

A. Although micro-plastics is not a routine water quality monitoring parameter, Funding Opportunity EPA-R4-GM-2024-WQM does not limit what analyses can be performed; therefore, microplastics analysis is eligible under this NOFO. All project monitoring activities must be in water bodies (lakes, streams, rivers, estuaries, tributaries) within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states (see Figure 1 and eligible counties in Appendix D of the NOFO).

Q. The NOFO states “All project monitoring activities must be in water bodies (lakes, streams, rivers, estuaries, tributaries) within the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states.” Our area is very karst with much interaction between surface and groundwater. Would monitoring the aquifer/ groundwater be considered an eligible water body for monitoring activities under this NOFO?

A. Yes, water quality monitoring may take place in any water body in the eligible coastal counties of the five Gulf states, including ground water.

Q. Do water quality monitoring activities have to be focused on filling in general gaps regionally (example: filling gaps in parameters, frequency in a region) or can they be part of a specific experimental design to better understand how land use or management practices impact water quality at a very local

scale (Example: different farm practices impact on water quality leaving parcel)? We have a couple of ideas on directions to go and would like guidance on if there is a preference for this funding opportunity.

A. GMD is unable to provide guidance on a preference for project submission, just whether it may be eligible or ineligible. As noted in the Background paragraph, sources of pollutants in water bodies are commonly from runoff from land. The application should address all requirements in I.B. Scope of Work which includes determining where WQ monitoring is needed and any existing data gaps, and the number of water segments or water bodies where water quality and/or understanding of water quality conditions will be improved.

Q. How critical is it to connect water quality monitoring activities to the Gulf of Mexico water quality? Example: doing water quality monitoring upstream (still within allowable counties) that impact the Gulf but not necessarily at the scale of being able to directly measure the magnitude of impact in the Gulf of Mexico?

A. Describing how WQ activities are connected to Gulf of Mexico WQ is not required in the application, but the applicant may choose to provide it. The intent of the NOFO is that required activities in I.B would improve water quality or the understanding of WQ in water bodies that impact the Gulf of Mexico. It is not required that projects have measurable improvements to WQ in the Gulf of Mexico.

Q. Would improving existing models that could be used for decision making be a viable outcome under this NOFO?

A. Yes, improving models used for WQ understanding would be eligible.

Q. I am currently working on a grant proposal for mapping saltwater intrusion in the Florida panhandle using airborne and ground-based geophysical methods. Are state and local government agencies prohibited from applying to such a grant?

A. No; As stated in section **III.A. Eligible Entities** of the NOFO: In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.475, governmental entities, including state agencies, interstate agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, institutions of higher learning, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for funding under this NOFO.

Q. If we collect samples from our target watershed in Florida and then bring them back to Missouri for analysis, could this cause any issues? Or should the analysis be conducted in Florida instead?

A. Bringing the samples back to Missouri for analysis will not cause any issues.

[EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFW: Trash Free Waters –Micro/ Nanoplastics in the Gulf of Mexico](#)

Q. How much funding is available for FON: EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFW – TrashFree Waters – Micro/Nanoplastics in the Gulf of Mexico?

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$5 million (a maximum of \$750,000 per award) unless additional funding becomes available.

Q. In fact, I have worked on microplastic impact research for over six years including effects and transport of microplastics in aquatic ecosystems. I wonder if my microplastic monitoring work, such as the work I mentioned above for the Alabama River could be considered for this trash free waters-Micro/Nanoplastic funding opportunity?

A. Microplastics monitoring work is an eligible activity under focus area 3 of Funding Opportunity EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFW. Projects focusing only on area 3 (accessibility, availability, and coordination of research), must have a substantial education component. All project activities must take place within the Gulf of Mexico watershed AND within one or more of the five Gulf States.

Q. We have developed and tested an in-situ sensor capable of determining the total concentration of microplastics (MP) in water samples. I am considering submitting a proposal focused on mapping MP concentrations within the Gulf of Mexico or its tributaries. Could you please advise if such a proposal would be responsive to the EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFW call for proposals?

A. Microplastics monitoring work is an eligible activity under focus area 3 of Funding Opportunity EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFW. Projects focusing only on area 3 (accessibility, availability, and coordination of research), must have a substantial education component. All project activities must take place within the Gulf of Mexico watershed AND within one or more of the five Gulf States.

Q. We would like to learn more details about some specifics of this RFP before delving further into the proposal. Is it possible to set up an appointment for an audio/video call in the nearest future possible?

A. We are able to respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement. We are unable to respond to questions requesting input on a project idea, format of an application, or other project specific questions that may compromise the competitive process. We are unable to set up or conduct an audio/video call.

[EPA-R4-GM-2024-FISHER: Fisher-Led Aquatic Trash Prevention and Abatement in Urban and Inland Disadvantaged Communities](#)

Q. How much funding is available for FON: EPA-R4-GM-2024-FISHER - Fisher-Led Aquatic Trash Prevention and Abatement in Urban and Inland Disadvantaged Communities?

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$3.25 million (a maximum of \$650,000 per award, ONE PER STATE) unless additional funding becomes available.

EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFWASC: Trash Free Waters Art and Slogan Competition

Q. How much funding is available for FON: EPA-R4-GM-2024-TFWASC – Trash Free Waters Art and Slogan Competition?

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$3 million (a maximum of \$600,000 per award, ONE PER STATE) unless additional funding becomes available.

Q. Are we expected to write a plan to host the slogan competition annually for the three years of funding or should it take place once during the funding period?

A. It should take place once during the funding period.

Q. Is there a more detailed map available to show the Gulf of Mexico watershed "line" in Florida?

A. Please see this map [FL counties.png](#)

Q. Is it required to hold both a slogan and art contest, or can the grantee choose a slogan separately without holding a contest for high school students (and potentially provide that slogan in the art contest guidelines)?

A. The slogan and art competition are designed to be one contest with a slogan to accompany the art.

Q. Is this the first time that this funding opportunity become available?

A. Yes

Q. Since the outreach has to be to high schools across the entire state of Texas, is this project a better fit for an already established state agency or is the EPA interested in projects developed via new collaborations?

A. All eligible entities should apply. For more information, visit our website: <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico/us-environmental-protection-agency-gulf-mexico-division-gulf-mexico-2024-funding>

Q. Some of our more rural counties do not have a school that only includes grades 9-12 (i.e. they are K-12 or 8-12). Would high school students from a K-12 school be allowed to participate, or does the competition have to only be open to students in schools that don't also include middle or elementary grades?

A. Yes, high school students (grades 9-12), from a K-12 or an 8-12 school, can participate.

Q. Are we, the applicant, responsible for including a plan to install water refill stations at the winning school(s)? And is that to be included in the grant budget?

A. Yes, you would coordinate the purchase and contract to install water refill stations at the winning school. Yes, it should be included in the grant budget.

Q. Can we engage with the homeschool community, assuming a school would be chosen for the water refill station installation?

A. Our target is public and private schools who have the capacity to accept water refill stations if they were to be the winning entity.

Q. To clarify, can there be more than one winning school? And thus, up to ten refill stations at each school?

A. Only 1 winning school per state. That winning school could receive no more than ten refill stations.

Q. I know the activities must take place in one of the five gulf states, but must the non-profit organization itself be located within one of these states or could it be located in South Carolina but have extensive contacts within one of the gulf states?

A. Although the project activities must take place in *ONE* of the five Gulf states *AND* be within the Gulf of Mexico watershed, the funding opportunity does not include any location restrictions for the applicant (organization) in the Threshold Criteria. Please also see eligibility criteria for the organization in Sec. III.A of the funding opportunity.

Q. Is there any problem with providing a tiered system of prizes, so that the refill stations are the "grand prize"?

A. There should be no tiered system of prizes for this NOFO. The only prize allowed will be the refill stations.

Q. Regarding Texas, will the proposed contest require participation from high school students across the entire state or will it focus on particular service regions? If it is the latter, could you please specify the target counties or areas?

A. This art and slogan contest covers high schools across the entire state of Texas.

Q. In order for the outreach program to showcase the winning artwork and slogans across various platforms, such as billboards, public service announcements, social media, and printed displays, should the award encompass the costs associated with acquiring the necessary media (media buys) for disseminating these promotional and advertising materials? Who will be responsible for distributing these advertising elements? Will the creative materials be supplied to the EPA for placement and distribution, or does the proposal need to outline a strategy for planning and executing the media required to promote the outreach initiative?

A. The proposal should include in the budget the costs associated with showcasing the artwork and slogans across the various platforms. The recipient of the award or contractor to that award would be responsible for the advertising elements. EPA Gulf of Mexico Division will require a copy of the winning artwork and slogan from each state in which we will highlight as well through our media outlets. The proposal should outline a strategy for planning and executing the media via the various platforms.

Q. Since the allowable time for the project is 3 years, I was wondering if we could have more than one round of competition over the project period or is only a single round of competition. I read that the winning school will get up to 10 water refill stations. If we plan to have, say 2 competitions over 2 years, can we split the water stations (5 and 5) to the two winning schools?

A. Only 1 round of competition will be allowed with the 10 water refill stations going to the winning school.

Q. The NOFO mentions that the applicant should develop a plan to continue the artwork/slogan campaign for one year. Should this one year be part of the proposal period or beyond the project?

A. This should be part of the proposal period.

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General

Q: Would applying for a smaller award than the identified maximum in each NOFO disadvantage an application?

A: No.

Q. Will there be more funding available in the future?

A. Funding for the Gulf of Mexico Program is dependent each year on allocations in the federal budget approved by Congress and the program priorities during that time.

Q. Is this funding opportunity available each year? Will it be available next fiscal year?

A. Funding for the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program is dependent each year on allocations in the federal budget approved by Congress and the program priorities during that time.

Q. We would like to take this opportunity to know if your esteemed organization provides support through grants to research education institutes like us if we collaborate with US-based researchers?

A. The Gulf of Mexico Division does not fund real research but rather demonstration projects.

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Submitting an Application

Q. Where do I start?

A. The applicant should start by closely reading the funding announcement and determining whether the project is within the scope requested. If so, the applicant should determine whether their organization is eligible by reviewing Section III, Eligibility Information. Carefully consider the Scope of Work and the Environmental Results (Sections I.B). Read Content of Application (Section IV.B and Appendix C) and Evaluation Criteria (Section V.A) to ensure your application includes all required information.

Q. What kind of materials do I need to submit for the application?

A. To be considered for a GMD Grant, EPA requires that each submission contain a set of common elements that are described in Section IV.B (Content of Application Submission.) Section IV.D goes into detail about every item that must be included in the application package.

Q. What is the application submission deadline?

A. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Appendix A) on or before the application submission deadline.

Q. How will EPA review applications?

A. Please see Section V of the RFA.

Q. Are applicants required to follow the format detailed in Appendix C of the RFA?

A. It is highly recommended that the applicant explain each aspect of the application clearly and address each topic by following the format provided in Appendix C., include the headings as given, and do not reorder the paragraphs, or the applicant risks the possibility of information being left out, or being overlooked, and/or not being fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored.

Q. Can someone be PI on one application and co-PI on another? Are multiple submissions from one organization generally encouraged or discouraged?

A. There is no limit to the number of applications an individual can be involved in nor the number of applications an organization can submit. We do, however, receive a high volume of applications and are only able to fund a small percentage.

Q. May a logic model be used to summarize some of the application components?

A. A logic model can be used to address some of the project components but it must be included within the 12-page limit of the application narrative.

Q. Is the budget narrative included within the 12-page narrative?

A. Yes, the budget narrative should be included within the 12-page limit of the application narrative. The budget table does not count towards that 12-page limit.

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Eligibility/Project Eligibility

Q. Could you please confirm if the eligibility entities for a subaward are the same as the eligible entities for the pass-through entity?

A. Eligibility to receive subawards is determined by EPA's Subaward Policy: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients>. From Sec. 7, eligible entities are as follows:

- (a) Generally, unless prohibited or limited by statute, a non-Federal entity or individual is eligible to receive a subaward even if it is not eligible to receive an assistance agreement from EPA directly as long as the subaward is consistent with applicable regulations, policies, and EPA guidance. Federally Funded Research and Development Centers are eligible subrecipients provided the substance of the transaction is consistent with the guidance at 2 CFR 200.331 and Appendix A: Distinctions Between Subrecipients and Contractors.
- (b) As provided in 2 CFR Part 25, Appendix A, Federal agencies are subrecipients for the purposes of the System for Award Management and Universal Identifier Requirements when they receive "subawards" from pass-through entities. Federal agencies may also be subrecipients for the purposes of 2 CFR Part 200 as indicated in the definition of Subrecipient in 2 CFR 200.1. Nonetheless, Federal agencies must have statutory authority to provide services to non-Federal entities on a reimbursable basis or otherwise receive and use funds from non-Federal entities under subawards. Examples of statutes available to all Federal agencies for receipt and use of EPA financial assistance funds are the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act for services to state and local governments, the Federal Technology Transfer Act for Cooperative Research and Development and Agreements, and the Omnibus Territories Act for reimbursable services agreements with U.S. Territories.
- (c) For-profit organizations and individual consultants, with very few exceptions, are contractors rather than subrecipients under the standards in 2 CFR 200.331 and EPA's guidance; they are typically ineligible for subawards from pass-through entities. As provided in the National Term and Condition for Subawards, EPA's Award Official must approve subawards to these entities on the basis of either precise descriptions of the subawards in the EPA approved budget and work plan or on a transaction by transaction basis. See Appendix A: Distinctions Between Subrecipients and Contractors for additional guidance.
- (d) (d) Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities are ineligible for EPA subawards based on the Agency's policy for interpreting the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C.1611.

- (e) (e) EPA program office staff should ensure that pass-through entities are aware of limitations on subrecipient eligibility contained in statutes or regulations. EPA program offices may communicate 5 applicable limitations to potential pass-through entities in announcements for competitive awards, program guidance for continuing environmental program grants or other noncompetitive awards, and programmatic terms and conditions.
- (f) In consultation with OGD's National Policy, Training and Compliance Division and the Office of General Counsel or Office of Regional Counsel, as appropriate, Program offices may establish policies limiting eligibility for subawards to the extent permitted by statute or regulation. EPA program offices must communicate applicable policies to potential pass-through entities in announcements for competitive awards, program guidance for continuing environmental program grants or other noncompetitive awards, and programmatic terms and conditions

Q. Would an organization, based in non-Gulf State, be eligible to apply.

A. Per Secs. I.B and III.D of the RFA, projects must be located within eligible states and/or counties of the Gulf states (see Priority Areas and maps in Sec. I.B. and Appendix D). The RFA does not include any location restrictions for the applicant (organization) in the Threshold Criteria. Please also see eligibility criteria for the organization in Sec. III.A.

Q. How can I tell if I am eligible to apply for a grant?

A. Please refer to Section III.A. of the RFA.

Q. I am a nonprofit but do not have a 501c3. Am I eligible to apply?

A. Consistent with the definition of Nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status; such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law.

Q. What is ineligible for funding?

A. Section III in the RFA identifies eligible and ineligible entities and activities. EPA also conducts a threshold eligibility review of all applications (Section III.E). Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

Q. A funding idea was submitted and GMP was asked for input and/or requested a phone call to discuss project. The following response was provided to all potential applicants who requested input on their specific project idea or design.

A. In order to ensure a fair competitive process, the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program does not provide specific input on project ideas to applicants.

Q. Would a small business with classification of certain NSAIC meet the criteria for eligibility for this proposal?

A. For-profit organizations are not eligible entities for this funding opportunity. Additional information regarding eligible entities can be found in Section III.A. of the funding opportunity.

Q. I am wondering whether the lead organization must be a university within the five Gulf States, or if any university can lead the project as long as it has a partner from a Gulf State.

A. Any university can lead the project as long as the activities take place in the locations specified in each NOFO. Refer to section I.B. to determine eligible project locations.

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Environmental Outputs and Outcomes

Q. What are "Outputs and Outcomes"?

A. Outputs and outcomes are explained in Section I.C. of the RFA. The terms outputs and outcomes are derived from the EPA's focus on environmental results (EPA Policy Order 5700.7 Environmental Results). Therefore, EPA's priority is to support projects that are likely to achieve **quantifiable** outputs and outcomes. Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined "outputs" and "outcomes".

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Project Monitoring

Q: Will a QAPP need to be developed and approved by EPA for each project funded through this RFA?

A. Please see the RFA Section VIII.A. for additional information about required QAPPs.

Q. What is the definition of Environmental Data?

A. EPA's Environmental Data Definition: Environmental information or data is defined as any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology.

Q. We are currently working on our application for the RFA and have run into a question about the Environmental Data Statement. Based on the information provided in the RFA and links, we have drafted the following statement:

"We acknowledge that if funded for this project, we will be required and are prepared to demonstrate competency to assess the quality of work to meet project requirements and acknowledge that a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required."

Is this what this section is requiring, or do we need to provide further demonstration of competency (ex. provide current accreditation or certification certificate with scope of accreditation and accrediting body plus contact information) attached to the application?

A. A statement, such as what is written, is all that is needed. It is a step designed to ensure that the applicant is fully aware that if environmental information data collection is planned and the award is over \$200k, that a QAPP will be required. In addition, please include QAPP development and approval in the milestones schedule of the application.

Q. There is a statement in the RFA that says: If the organization does not have an EPA approved Quality Management Plan, please note that this must also be developed and approved by EPA. Inquiry through pre-awards and grant management for our organization has not turned up such a plan. Our assumption is that this is a document not specifically related to the current grant application, but an institutional-type document. Would you please provide more information on this requirement, including directions for preparing such a plan?

A: As noted, the QMP is meant to be an institutional level document (organization-specific policies and procedures) and not a project-specific document. Recipients may be required to submit both a QMP and a QAPP. Instructions for development of both documents can be found at this [link](#). There is no expectation for either document to be developed prior to notification of award.

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Match Requirement

Q. Is there a match requirement?

A. No matching funds are required under this competition.

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Contracts and Subawards

Q. Can grant funding be used by the applicant to make subawards, acquire contract services, or fund partnerships?

A. Yes, funds can be used for contracts and subawards in accordance with the additional provisions instructions which can be found on [the EPA Solicitation Clauses](#) page. 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 "partnership". The recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds and reporting requirements.

Q. May EPA grant recipients enter into agreements with federal agencies to carry out tasks/activities under the grant work plan?

A. Reimbursable Agreement- Grant recipients may enter into reimbursable agreements with federal agencies as long as those federal agencies are authorized under applicable federal laws to enter into such agreements with federal grant recipients. This is the mechanism by which a grant recipient can work with a federal agency as a partner. Reimbursable agreements do not have to be competed, but grant recipients must provide a brief explanation as to why they are selecting a federal agency to carry out the work.

Q. If awarded a grant, can a grantee sole source a subcontract to a for profit entity?

A. A for profit can be selected as a sole source subcontractor, but the burden of proof is on the applicant or recipient to demonstrate why this is the only entity able to complete the task.

Q. We would like to have a placeholder of \$XXX for a contractor to provide _____ for our project. We plan to go through a competitive process to hire a contractor, but it will not be able accomplished prior to the application deadline. Is it okay to include a placeholder amount and wait to ensure the project is funded prior to beginning the competitive process?

A. Yes.

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Standard Form (SF) 424 and SF 424 A

Q. Are there definitions to describe the amounts that should be entered for 18? And is there a description of what is asked for # 19?

A. The following answers pertain to the SF-424.

Please find instructions for the SF-424 here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf424-fid.html?formId=713>

Additional information for question 19 can be found here:

<https://www.fws.gov/policy/library/rgeo12372.pdf>;

<https://19january2021snapshot.epa.gov/grants/fact-sheet-applicants-intergovernmental-review-process.html>; and <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>

Q. How do we answer question 19 in the SF 424?

A. Mark A and submit your application to your intergovernmental review state point of contact if **BOTH** of the following are true of your project:

1. Project involves land use planning or construction associated with demonstration projects.
2. Please follow this link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>. If your state is listed on this link, your project will need to be submitted to your state for review and select a or b as applicable.

Otherwise, select C.

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Budget

Q: Are equipment purchases allowable if they directly related to executing the project? (Added 3/13/24)

A: Yes.

Q: May interns/seasonal staff be hired using these funds? (Added 3/13/24)

A: Yes

Q: Does the EPA have any issue with the applicant purchasing materials and providing to subawardees to enable ordering in bulk? (Added 3/13/24)

A: No.

Q. Are preaward costs eligible?

A. In certain circumstances, costs incurred within 90 days prior to the grant award may be eligible for reimbursement. However, this does not include any costs associated with responding to this solicitation or in finalizing the application package. If costs are incurred before the award, they are incurred at the applicant's own risk.

Q. What are indirect or overhead costs?

A. Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs (source: Indirect Cost Overview, Dept. of Education). In order to charge indirect costs to the grant, the applicant must have an up-to-date approved indirect cost rate agreement with its cognizant agency (the federal agency the applicant receives the most funding from). EPA does recognize indirect cost agreements negotiated with other federal agencies.

Q: Should the indirect cost agreement come from the cognizant agency (the federal agency they receive the most federal funding from) OR MUST it be a negotiated EPA agreement (regardless of who they receive the most federal funding from).

A: A federally approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) is negotiated by the cognizant federal government on behalf of the entire federal government, and the cognizant federal agency is assigned to the agency providing the most direct federal funding to the recipient. Therefore, if you have a negotiated indirect cost rate with another federal agency, you would use that. If you do not have a NICRA, you can use the 15% de minimis applied to the modified total direct cost base or negotiate one with your cognizant agency.

Q. What if we don't have an indirect cost rate agreement?

A. Any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely.

Q. We want to apply for the 15% de minimis indirect cost rate. Where do we send out application to use the 15% de minimis?

A. The applicant does not need to apply to use the 15% Federal de Minimis. Any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. For more information, please see: 2 CFR 200.414 (f) https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=se2.1.200_1414&rgn=div8. NOTE: The regulations here state and 10% de minimis. The 2 CFR Part 200 will be updated in October and will increase to 15% so we have been given permission by EPA's OGC to allow applicants to use that rate (since it will go into effect prior to making awards).

Q. How do I ensure I'm putting the costs in the correct budget categories?

A. There are several guidelines used for federal budgets. The recorded webinar and presentation found here <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-grants-award-process-webinars> provides an overview of the grant application process, including what should be included in the budget categories and the cost principles EPA utilizes. In addition, Appendix C of the RFA provides a link to EPA's Interim Budget Guidance as well as helpful hints and sample language. If you have a question about a particular item, please feel free to email the question to gmp-rfp@epa.gov.

Q. Can these projects fund international travel?

A. It depends on the relevance of the travel to the project. In any case where international travel is requested, however, the award will need to go through an additional layer of review and approval.

Q. We plan to use EPA's suggested budget template to complete our budget. Should we put both subawardees and subcontractors in the "Contractual" section?

A. Subcontractors are entered in the Contractual category, and subawardees (subrecipients) are entered in in the "Other" budget category.

Q. Please advise if the suggested Budget Table template should also be used by lower tier subawardees, then rolled up into our Budget Table template?

A. We recommend GMD's budget table template for the applicant, but any subrecipient information can be presented in the way that makes the most sense for the application. Subawards generally do not require the same level of detail in the budget (per object class category) as the applicant. Subaward budgets may simply be a total anticipated cost as long as subaward activities are clearly described.

Q. Does this opportunity allow funding to be used for staff position? Is there a cap on the personnel costs? I can't seem to find details of what costs (and how much) are eligible under this funding opportunity.

A. In Appendix B of the RFA, there is a link to [EPA budget development guidance](#). It does not discuss a cap on personnel costs, because there isn't one that is directed, but all costs should be reasonable based on the activities that will take place during the project period and should only cover the identified project period. Projects that allocate more than 50% of the total budget to funds subawards and subrecipient activities may be reviewed more favorably.

Q: I am using the suggested budget template and need to add another line for Contractual services (beyond the ones in the Additional Lines C-H) but it will not allow me to.

A: Contact mills.calista@epa.gov and gmp-rfp@epa.gov for questions regarding the budget template.

Q: The excel spreadsheet for the budget table template requires a password.

A: The template is secured to ensure formulas are not modified. Instructions for using the template are located in Tab 1 Budget Guidelines. Tab 2 is an example of the required line-item budget. To create applicant-specific line-item budget, please edit Tab 4 to reflect all planned expenditures. Enter project specific information in the yellow cells and the spreadsheet will auto calculate. Additional lines are available in tabs 5 and 6 if needed.

Q: Can the budget template be edited to add match/cost share?

A: As stated in Section III.C. on page 12 of the RFA: "There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement as a condition of eligibility under this RFA." Because matching/cost share funds are not required, it will not be part of the evaluation process and it is not necessary to include in the application. A budget template that includes match was not released with this RFA.

Q. What are the key pieces of information necessary (questions to answer) to justify the selection of a sole-sources contract?

A. Please see the following screen shot. If the applicant decides to sole source a contract, identify what activities the contractor will be responsible for and why they are the only contractor capable of providing this work (that would be the justification for a sole source contractor). For contracts that are bid out, please include that a contractor will be competitively selected and which activities the contractor will be responsible for. The applicant should not bid out contracts until the award is final.

a. The applicant should list the proposed contract activities along with a brief description of the scope of work or services to be provided, proposed duration, and proposed procurement method (competitive or non-competitive) in its budget narrative.

b. EPA does not require applicants to identify contractors (including consultants) in the work plan, and the terms of EPA's competitive announcements warn applicants not to do so unless they have already complied with the 2 CFR Part 200 Procurement Standards. Refer to the Sole Source Guidance in Subsection C. 3. Of the

[Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#)

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Other Questions

Q. Can references cited be added as supporting material or must literature cited fit into the page limit?

A. A references cited page may be added as supporting material and would not be included in the page limit.

Q. Is it a disadvantage for the lead organization to be one that has a current GMP award?

A. It is neither an advantage or disadvantage. All applications will be evaluated based on the criteria identified in the RFA.

Q. Where should the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement be uploaded into the Grants.gov package?

A. The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement can go in the “Optional Attachments Form” section.

Q. How do I submit an additional question that has not been addressed in this document?

A. GMD is able to respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement. Submit questions via email to gmp-rfp@epa.gov.

Q. For the resumes, is there a required format or a page limit?

A. There is neither a required format nor a page limit.

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