

Environmental Governance Capacity Building Program

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

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE: Environmental Governance Capacity Building Program

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Request for Proposals - Initial Announcement

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: EPA-OITA-2015-002

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

DATES: The deadline for proposals to be received is 11:59 pm Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EST) on August 31, 2015. Submissions must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) by August 31, 2015 **at 11:59 p.m. EST** in order to be considered for funding. Proposals received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

OVERVIEW: This notice announces a Request for Proposals (RFP) through an open competition for EPA funds for one award. The anticipated total award for the five-year period of performance is \$5 million which will be provided incrementally. EPA is soliciting proposals for a collaborative program that would enhance environmental governance capacity of institutions-environmental and/or related functions-in support of United States Government Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in several regions-Central America and Caribbean, South Americas, and the Middle East and North Africa-and/or other bilateral initiatives, including but not limited to, EPA's collaboration with China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Sub-Sahara Africa, and Brazil. The overall objective of this cooperative agreement is to assist institutions in strengthening their legal, technical, research, analytical, program implementation capacity, and policies and procedures for more effective governance through the exchange of expert knowledge, information, strategies, and tools. The proposed program will provide capacity building through the development and implementation of projects in areas, including but not limited to: *water resource management-- surface and groundwater, drinking water, and wastewater management-- solid waste management, air quality management, greenhouse gases (GHG), black carbon, climate adaptation and resiliency, emergency response capacity, environmental impact assessments (EIA), public participation/social inclusion, and environmental enforcement and compliance*. Proposals for this program should focus on: 1) experience providing expert technical environmental capacity building through activities such as workshops, meetings, video conferences, study tours, trainings, tools and technology transfer; 2) experience with partnering with USG agencies in delivering capacity building and technical assistance; and 3) familiarity with issues

involved in providing international technical capacity building. When appropriate, projects under this cooperative agreement, should be designed to be replicated--in different regions/countries around the world. The proposals for this program should also explain how the program implementation, management and logistics will be coordinated with key regional/national stakeholders. General information on EPA's international programs can be found at www.epa.gov/international.

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

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I. SECTION I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

The funding for this cooperative agreement in part originates from the framework of several U.S. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)—such as the Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), U.S.-Chile FTA, U.S.-Jordan FTA, U.S. Morocco FTA, among others--and partly from other sources (e.g. Africa bilateral work). The collective focus of these efforts is to:

- Strengthen the capacity of foreign counterpart authorities to develop and implement effective environmental and natural resource management strategies and practices;
- Strengthen environmental public outreach and information on environmental matters;
- Strengthen the technical capacity for analytical work on environmental quality management that could support regulatory institutions' decision-making processes; and
- Promote training activities and exchange experiences on the concepts, methodologies, mechanisms, and tools for effective environmental management, and development of strategies to promote good environmental governance.

B. Project Summary

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is accepting proposals for a cooperative agreement, with the objective to assist regions/countries to strengthen their environmental governance capacity. Proposals for this program should focus on providing expert technical environmental capacity building through activities such as workshops, meetings, video conferences, study tours, trainings, tools and technical transfer, among others. When appropriate, projects under this cooperative agreement, should be designed to be replicated--in different regions/countries around the world. The proposals for this program should also explain how the program implementation, management and logistics will be coordinated with key regional/national stakeholders.

C. Scope of Work:

The purpose of this solicitation is to improve environmental governance in regions/countries – that are engaged in an FTA with the U.S. or cooperate with the U.S. through other bilateral environmental initiative(s). Improving environmental governance may be accomplished through the exchange of expert knowledge of environmental quality management strategies, tools, information, and programs. The overarching component under this cooperative agreement is good environmental governance. The spectrum of the capacity building activities expected to be performed supports the following environmental areas: *(1) water resource management--surface and groundwater, drinking water, and wastewater management; (2) solid waste management; (3) air quality management, greenhouse gases (GHG), black carbon, climate adaptation and resiliency; (4) emergency response capacity; (5) environmental impact assessments (EIA); (6) public participation/social inclusion; and (7) environmental enforcement and compliance.*

1. Water Resource Management

a. Surface and Groundwater – Water quality and quantity are a resource challenge in many countries. EPA collaborates with foreign counterparts to develop and enhance capacity to assess surface and groundwater pollution, develop or enhance laws and regulations to protect and restore the quality of water sources, and to develop watershed management plans and approaches. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Technical capacity on surface and groundwater quality assessments;
- Technical assistance on regulation development/enhancement; and
- Technical assistance on watershed management strategies/tools.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of regulation enforcement;
- Lack of lab equipment and technical capacity to conduct appropriate quality analysis; and
- Lack/limited intergovernmental communications among regulatory entities with some level of jurisdiction over surface and groundwater management.

b. Drinking Water – The provision of safe drinking water continues to be a major challenge for developing countries and has significant impacts on peoples’ environmental health, particularly that of vulnerable groups such as children and the poor. EPA works with countries and regions to build capacity of government authorities, utilities and others in providing safe drinking water. Approaches such as enabling the development and enforcement of laws, regulations and standards, improving the operations of drinking water quality laboratories, and inclusion of the public in drinking water quality decisions have been proven to improve drinking water quality. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Technical capacity on drinking water quality assessments;
- Technical capacity on drinking water laboratory assessments;
- Technical assistance on regulation development, enhancement, and enforcement; and
- Technical assistance on water utility management.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of regulation enforcement;
- Lack of lab equipment and technical capacity to conduct appropriate quality analysis; and
- Lack/limited intergovernmental communications among regulatory entities with some level of jurisdiction on surface and groundwater management.

c. Wastewater Management: Access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation is still limited in many regions/countries around the world. The impact of serious infectious diseases associated with the daily discharge of untreated or partially treated wastewater continues to impact many communities around the world. EPA is working with countries in regions, like Central America, to harmonize environmental standards and regulations at regional level for a better domestic and industrial wastewater management. In anticipation of an increased frequency of extreme weather events in the future due to climate change, governments on all levels must improve wastewater urban management, infrastructure, and the systems that deliver and maintain clean water and manage waste disposal. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds , the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Implement and/or replicate the wastewater regulation methodology;

- Provide wastewater consultations to ensure key stakeholders are involved in the development and implementation of the model wastewater regulations;
- Provide quality assurance technical workshops (wastewater treatment plants inspection training and sampling equipment/training evaluation);
- Provide technical capacity building assistance for the enhancement of water quality laboratories in order to establish reference labs;
- Provide recommendations for equipment procurement (for water quality labs). Procurement of any equipment to enhance existing water quality lab capabilities will be based on availability of funds, and
- Provide technical capacity building on lab equipment set-up, operation, maintenance, and data management.

Some countries/regions have started the process of drafting/amending regulations addressing water quality. On wastewater management, some countries have identified priorities out of the basic elements of implementation and are pursuing modifications. Some of the modifications and/or enhancements include: the development of a database of dischargers, permit writing and issuance, identifying and establishing use of best available technology, developing regulation on biosolids, developing a train-the-trainer module for inspectors, and enhancing their enforcement and compliance mechanisms. The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of regulation enforcement;
- Lack of lab equipment and technical capacity to conduct appropriate water quality analysis; and
- Lack/limited intergovernmental communications among regulatory entities with some level of jurisdiction on wastewater management.

The goal of these activities will be to increase the replication of the wastewater model regulation program by leveraging EPA's experience in Central America.

2. Solid Waste Management

The development, implementation, enforcement and compliance, and technical capacity needs for solid waste management presents a significant challenge for regulatory institutions in many countries. The lack of regulations or inadequate enforcement creates a legacy of open dumps, jeopardizing human health and environmental quality. Through EPA's exchange of technical knowledge with other countries (e.g. CAFT-DR countries: El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic), on solid waste management, some commonalities have been identified, for example: weak infrastructure to properly manage solid waste, not enough technical capabilities within the regulatory institutions--especially at the municipal level—and environmental health risks for communities. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Solid waste management regulatory development and/or review;
- Solid waste sanitary landfill inspection protocol and audits training;
- Approaches to move countries towards Sustainable Material Management (SMM);
- Reduce, reuse, and recycle implementation strategies/tools; and
- Waste to energy approach.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of/weak solid waste regulation implementation and enforcement; and
- Lack of/weak technical capacity and infrastructure.

3. Air Quality Management

Air emissions inventories, air quality monitoring, modeling, emission reduction strategies and policies, implementation and enforcement, and public outreach are key steps towards cleaner air. This environmental area requires an understanding of air quality management tools, as well as, the steps/process to develop a successful air quality management program including monitoring, modeling, air emissions inventory, and air quality index (AQI). Equally important is similar capacity to assess, measure, monitor, model, and mitigate emissions of greenhouse gases and black carbon. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Conduct an assessment on the country/region air quality management capabilities and make programmatic recommendations based on findings;
- Provide technical training on air quality management, including monitoring and modeling;
- Provide technical training on development of emission inventory;
- Provide technical training on development of air quality index; and
- Provide recommendations for equipment procurement (for air quality labs). Procurement of any equipment to enhance existing air quality lab capabilities will be based on availability of funds.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- The lack of knowledge of the impact of air quality on public health in the country/region;
- Concerns about sharing air quality information with the public; and
- The political buy-in on the development of an Air Quality Index.

4. Emergency Response Capacity

Hazardous substances that can harm human health or the environment can occur because of natural disasters or accidental releases from industry and other regulated

sources. Many counterpart countries are beginning to develop capacity for emergency preparedness and response. EPA shares with foreign counterparts experience and expertise in emergency preparedness, response, laws and regulations, operations and protocols, as well as equipment and capabilities for response to environmental emergencies. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Technical assistance on regulatory framework assessment;
- Technical assessment equipment and capacity for response to environmental emergencies;
- Technical training on emergency preparedness and response; and
- Technical assistance on evaluation of operations and protocol.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of or not enforced regulatory framework;
- Lack of technical capacity to implement emergency response protocols; and
- Lack of technical capacity to respond to environmental emergencies.

5. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

When appropriately implemented by countries, EIA provides a unique opportunity to integrate environmental, economic, and social concerns, both long and short term, in order to avoid and mitigate potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. The benefit of EIA is the ability of governments to set conditions for approval (e.g. for site selection, construction, operation and closure), to plan for infrastructure needs and land use, and to monitor impacts and compliance. It is an open process involving the public and stakeholders that leads to better identification of future economic, social, and environmental costs, maximize potential benefits and enhance future monitoring. EIA Review is the independent review by governments to implement minimum requirements for EIA content and analysis and, in most countries; EIA review supports decision-making and mitigation commitments. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Build capacity for all parties involved in the EIA process through appropriate training, based on internationally accepted principles and practices, and EPA's training experience;
- Share tools and information to make the EIA process more effective and efficient, and improve environmental and social performance for new development in priority sectors; and
- Recommend improvements to those selected by the country(ies) to improve the EIA process and legal frameworks. This is to be done based on availability of funds and considering the results of the Dominican Republic EIA Directors Forum on best practices and lessons learned for EIA, related

permitting, enforcement and support. Results will be made available to selected grantee.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

Lack of technical capacity to develop and review EIA within key stakeholders (e.g. Ministries of Environment);

- Limited across government cooperation on EIA review;
- Limited transparency and effective stakeholder participation and conflict resolution practice;
- Limited accountability for results by both stakeholders and governments;
- Limited resources for implementation and program improvement; and
- EIA backlogs which can unnecessarily hinder economic growth.

6. Public Participation

Public participation contributes to better decisions because decision-makers have more complete information – in the form of additional facts, values, and perspectives obtained through public input – to bring to bear on the decision process. As a result, they can incorporate the best information and expertise of all stakeholders. Decisions are more implementable and sustainable because the decision considers the needs and interests of all stakeholders, and stakeholders better understand and are more invested in the outcomes. As a result, decisions that are informed by public participation processes are seen as more legitimate and are less subject to challenge. Decision-makers who fully understand stakeholder interests also become better communicators, able to explain decisions and decision rationale in terms stakeholders understand and in ways that relate to stakeholders' values and concerns. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds for this environmental area, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Build capacity for all parties involved in the public participation process through appropriate training based on EPA's experience and the Public Participation Guide (guide can be found at www.epa.gov/international);
- Share tools and information to make the public participation process more effective and efficient; and
- Recommend improvements and support (e.g. training/strategies development), based on the availability of funds, to improve public participation in environmental decision-making.

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of technical capacity for meaningful public participation within key stakeholders (e.g. Ministries of Environment);
- Limited across government cooperation on public participation; and
- Limited civil society engagement in environmental decision-making.

7. Environmental Enforcement and Compliance

Without effective environmental enforcement, countries experience low levels of compliance, nullifying the objectives of the developing environmental laws and regulations. For an enforcement program to be effective, there must be adequate resources and staffing throughout the compliance continuum to ensure the enforceability of the developing laws and regulations, promote compliance, provide compliance assistance to the regulated community, conduct compliance monitoring to detect violations, prosecute in the appropriate forum violations that may be discovered, and efficiently resolve instances of noncompliance with appropriate remedies and sanctions where necessary. Many countries are trying to build their enforcement capacity by increasing staffing in the environmental ministries and elsewhere, developing their policy framework, and training inspectors, prosecutors, and program managers responsible for the planning and execution of compliance and enforcement resources. Applicant should be able to provide, in collaboration with EPA and based on the availability of funds for this environmental area, the following technical capacity in any or all designated regions/countries:

- Provide technical capacity—building upon EPA’s efforts in other countries—on best practices and tools toward the investigation and resolution of environmental violations, both criminal and administrative.
- Increase the capacity of judges to adjudicate environmental cases, based on EPA’s experience in Chile and Central America.
- Provide technical capacity for wastewater treatment system inspectors

The challenges expected to be addressed through this RFP are:

- Lack of staff and/or technical capacity within the regulatory institutions for effective environmental enforcement

D. Implementation of the program:

This program is to be implemented in close collaboration with EPA. EPA, through its already established in-country contacts, will work with the grantee in guiding the countries to establish or strengthen relationships/network with/of stakeholders, and ensure that these stakeholders are appropriately involved in the activities under this program. These stakeholders could include ministries of environment, health, transportation, education and energy; universities; financial international organizations--Inter-American Development, Bank, World Bank; NGOs; other donors, and; the private sector.

Finally, EPA expects that the grantee will be able to provide translation and interpretation, when required for workshops, training sessions, and documents. The specific language translation and/or interpretation needs may include but not be limited to: Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Arabic.

E. Statutory Authority

EPA expects to award this grant under the Clean Water Act, Section 104, 33 U.S.C. 1254; Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001, 42 U.S.C. 6981; Clean Air Act, Section 103, 42 U.S.C. 7403; Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10, 15 U.S.C. 2609; Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442 (a) and (c), 42 U.S.C. 300j-1 (a)(1);

and National Environmental Policy Act Section 102(2)(F) 42 U.S.C. 4332.

F. Alignment with EPA's Strategic Plan

All proposals must support Goal 4 of EPA 2014-2018 Strategic Plan: Ensuring the Safety of Chemicals and Preventing Pollution; Objective 4.1: “Ensuring Chemical Safety”, which states “Reduce the risk and increase the safety of chemicals that enter our products, our environment, and our bodies.

International capacity-building plays a key role in protecting human health and the environment by providing technical cooperation to help countries reduce air pollution, better manage air quality, and reduce the global use and emission of mercury. EPA’s strategic plan is available on line at <http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>

G. Measuring Environmental Results

Measuring Environmental Results: Outputs and Outcomes: Pursuant to EPA order 5700.7, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA requires that all grant recipients adequately address environmental outputs and outcomes. Outputs and outcomes differ both in their nature, and in how they are measured.

Anticipated Outputs: The term "output" means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work products related to an environmental goal and 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.

According to the definitions above, expected *outputs* from the activities funded under this solicitation may include but are not limited to the following:

- Number of countries developing/amending/enforcing environmental policies including but not limited to: drinking water, wastewater management, solid waste, management, and air pollution management;
- Number of people trained;
- Number of countries with active public participation processes for environmental matters;
- Increased—within regulatory institutions and other related key stakeholders-- capacity on environmental enforcement and compliance; and
- Number of national/regional air quality monitoring networks developed/enhanced

Anticipated Outcomes: The term "outcome" means the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental programmatic goal objective. Outcomes may be

environmental, behavioral, health-related or programmatic in nature, but must be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period;

Expected *outcomes* from projects funded under this solicitation may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased technical capacity to prosecute environmental crimes;
- Enhanced environmental regulatory and enforcement (e.g. increase awareness, policy development, update and/or implementation of regulations, behavioral change) in the areas of: drinking water, wastewater management, solid waste management, and air pollution management;
- Improved capacity in EIA preparation and review and/or reductions on EIA backlogs;
- Enhanced air quality monitoring capabilities; and
- Increased public participation awareness in environmental matters.

8. SECTION II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Amount of Funding Available

The total estimated funding expected to be available for the award under this competitive funding opportunity is approximately \$5,000,000. EPA anticipates an initial award of up to \$700,000, with an estimated total award of \$5 million, to be provided incrementally, over the five years performance period of the cooperative agreement, subject to the availability of funds, quality of evaluated proposals, and other applicable considerations.

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

B. Funding Type

This award will be funded through a cooperative agreement and will include substantial interaction with EPA. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial EPA involvement for this project may include:

- Close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- EPA collaboration regarding scope of work, organizational structure, staffing, mode of operation and other management process (assuming the principal purpose is not to acquire goods or services for the government, in which case

a contract would be required): in accordance with 2CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, as appropriate;

- Joint operational involvement, participation, and/or collaboration between EPA and the recipient;
- EPA review of project phases or the substantive provisions of proposed contracts found within the scope of the agreement;
- EPA involvement in the selection of key recipient personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient);
- Agency approval of recipient plans prior to award;
- Normal monitoring activities such as site visits, performance reporting, financial reporting and audit;
- Review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient); and
- Agency review of performance after completion.

C. Start Date/Project Duration

EPA anticipates that the start date of this project would be no later than October 30, 2015, and the period of performance will not exceed five years (60 months). Should the award of funds be delayed, EPA will work with the applicant to adjust the proposed project start and end dates as needed.

D. Miscellaneous

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement. EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selection is made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

9. SECTION III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Who may apply?

Assistance under this program is generally available to States and local governments, territories and possessions, foreign governments, international organizations, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, other public or private nonprofit institutions, which submit proposals proposing projects with significant technical merit and relevance to EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs' mission.

Non-profit organization, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain,

improve and/or expand its operations. Note that 2 CFR Part 200 specifically excludes the following types of organizations from the definition of “non-profit organization” because they are separately defined in the Circular: (i) colleges and universities; (ii) hospitals; (iii) state, local and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments; and (iv) those non-profit organizations that are excluded from coverage of this Circular in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Circular. While not considered to be a “non-profit organization(s)” as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, colleges and universities, hospitals, state, local and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments are, nevertheless, eligible to submit proposals under 2 CFR Part 200 and this RFP.

For-profit organizations are not an eligible entity for this funding opportunity. Additionally, non-profit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

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

Voluntary cost share 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 cooperative agreement regulations (2 CFR 200.306).
- A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
- The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary

cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.

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

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

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

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

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

b. In addition, initial proposals must be submitted through www.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 Section IV) on or before the proposal [application] submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this announcement to ensure that their proposal/application is timely submitted.

c. Proposals submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues. An applicant's failure to timely submit their proposal/application through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with **Orlando Gonzalez at Gonzalez.orlando@epa.gov** as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

2. The applicant must demonstrate that it is eligible to apply for financial assistance under this announcement as described in Section III.A. above.

3. All applicants must have personnel and/or access to partners proficient in languages including but not limited to: English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic – verbal and written – in order to communicate effectively with the counterparts, EPA, and other key stakeholders, and to communicate results and write reports, including a final case study report and related documents. Applicants not demonstrating proficiency in those languages will not be considered.

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

5. Ineligible activities: If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

10. SECTION IV. PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please see Appendix A for:

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

A. Proposal Submission Deadline

Your organization's Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) must submit your complete proposal package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) **no later than August 31, 2015**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your proposal and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Please submit *all* of the proposal materials described in Section IV.B below using the grants.gov proposal package that you downloaded using the instructions in Appendix

A. For additional instructions on completing and submitting the electronic proposal package, click on the “Show Instructions” tab that is accessible within the proposal package itself.

Proposals submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from grants.gov) within 30 days of the proposal deadline, please contact Orlando Gonzalez at (202) 564-6440 or orlando.gonzalez@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

B. Content of Proposal Submission

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

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

Mandatory Documents:

- 1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)**
- 2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)**
- 3. Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)**
- 4. Narrative Proposal (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in below).**
- 5. Biographical sketch**

Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

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

Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)

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

Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)

Complete the form. There are no attachments.

Narrative Proposal:

The Narrative Proposal must be limited to no more than 15 single spaced pages of English text, including the cover page. **Excess pages will not be reviewed or considered.** Proposals should specify activities that would be accomplished with the initial funding for this cooperative agreement (\$700,000). The document should be readable in PDF format and consolidated into a single file. It should include the following components:

1. Cover Page -- Include the following information:

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

2. Narrative Workplan: The narrative work plan must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III, including the eligibility requirements in Section III, Part C, and address each of the evaluation criteria disclosed in Section V. Part B. The narrative work plan should not exceed 15 pages in length. Maps, charts or photographs may be included within the 15-page limit, but must be included in the document and cannot be submitted as separate attachments.) The proposal must include:

- **Project Approach and Management:** Outline clearly the approach you will take with the available funding of \$700,000 dollars for the tasks outlined in Section I, how you will complete these tasks, and how your proposal meets the criteria. Explain specifically how you plan to ensure sustainability and replicability in the projects.
- **Project Tasks and Schedule:** Outline the steps to be taken and the significant milestones to be achieved to complete the project, as well as the estimated schedule of these achievements with dates. This section should also include a discussion of a communication plan for distributing the project results to interested parties.
- **Project Goals/Outcomes/Outputs** - specify the quantitative and qualitative outcomes and outputs of the project, including what measurements you will use and how you will measure, evaluate and track the results of your project

to prove that you have achieved short, medium, and long-term outcomes and outputs.

- **Stakeholder Involvement/Impacts** - List out all of the proposed stakeholder groups that will be involved in this project and what each of the group's roles will be in the project staffing, funding, design, and implementation. Please also list all the major stakeholders who will be positively impacted by this project and how they will benefit from this project.
- **Collaborations/Partnerships and Leveraging** – Describe the degree to which you intend to work in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the work and to leverage additional resources to help implement the proposed project. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance. Failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award. (*Note:* Applicants may also submit letters of support for key personnel or organizations who will be involved in the project.)

3. Project Budget - The proposal must include a detailed budget which clearly explains how funds (\$700,000) will be used for the following categories:

- **Personnel**
- **Fringe Benefits**
- **Contractual Costs**
- **Travel**
- **Equipment**
- **Supplies**
- **Other**
- **Total Direct Costs**
- **Total Indirect Costs: must include documentation of accepted indirect rate**
- **Total Cost**

4. Key Personnel: The applicant should submit an appendix with the resumes of key personnel who will be significantly involved in the project (not to be included in 15 page limit).

5. Reporting Requirements: Outline the process for developing quarterly updates (schedule to be established by EPA) and a detailed final report.

6. Environmental Results: Identify the expected quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the project (**See Section I.G**), including what measurements will be used to track your progress towards achieving the expected outcomes and how the results of the project will be evaluated. Identify the expected project outputs

and how progress towards achieving the expected outputs will be tracked and measured.

7. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance: Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements. In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

8. Voluntary cost share/match and other 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.

C. Submission Dates and Times:

The deadline for all proposals to be submitted is August 31, 2015, at 11:59 p.m., EST. All proposals must be date/time stamped via www.grants.gov, by 11:59 p.m., EST, on August 31, 2015. Late proposals will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

D. Additional Provisions For Applicants Incorporated Into the Solicitation:

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

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

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

II. SECTION V. PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION

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

A. Proposal Evaluation Criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
<p>Criterion 1: Technical Experience and Knowledge</p> <p>30 points: Under this criterion the applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the narrative proposal describes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Technical experience and knowledge on water resource management--surface and groundwater, drinking water, and wastewater management-- solid waste management, air quality management, greenhouse gases (GHG), black carbon, climate adaptation and resiliency, contaminated site remediation, emergency response capacity, environmental impact assessments (EIA), public participation/social inclusion in environmental matters, and environmental enforcement and compliance. (10 pts.)b) Major and/or current experience with any other environmental improvement or projects, including training and capacity building, both in the U.S. or outside the U.S. (10 pts)c) Qualified technical capacity for carrying out the work, and	<p>25 points</p>

<p>should include convincing information that the applicant has the necessary experience in coordinating/managing all the environmental areas to be addressed under this cooperative agreement (5 pts)</p>	
<p>Criterion 2: Project Approach and Management Plan</p> <p>25 points: Under this criterion the applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the narrative proposal describes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How the project would be managed, including partnerships with key organizations and stakeholders, and the applicant’s plan for carrying out the project, with a timeline included for each phase of the project. (5 pts) b) The plan to build the technical capacity of the countries/regions so that they can sustain the management of the environmental areas—as enhanced through this cooperative agreement—and replicate the training(s), when applicable, in the future. (5 pts) c) The plan to measure and track progress toward achieving the expected outcomes identified in Section E. (5 pts.) d) The management plan for providing technical assistance for the environmental areas identified. (5 pts) e) The approaches that will be used and how those approaches will ensure activities for improvement on: water resource management--surface and groundwater, drinking water, and wastewater management-- solid waste management, air quality management, greenhouse gases (GHG), black carbon, climate adaptation and resiliency, contaminated site remediation, emergency response capacity, environmental impact assessments (EIA), public participation/social inclusion, and environmental enforcement and compliance. (5pts) 	<p>25 points</p>
<p>Criterion 3: International Experience</p> <p>10 points: Under this criterion the applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the narrative proposal describes the following:</p> <p>The applicant’s relevant international experience which demonstrates a commitment to support policies and programs for good environmental governance management. The proposal should describe the applicants ‘and/ or its partners’ level of language proficiency in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Arabic - verbal and</p>	<p>10 points</p>

written.	
<p>Criterion 4: Programmatic Capability and Past Performance:</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their:</p> <p>I. Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in the narrative proposal as described in Section IV.C of the announcement. (5 pts)</p> <p>II. History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in the narrative proposal as described in Section IV.C of the announcement including whether the applicant submitted 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. (5 pts)</p> <p>III. Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project. (5 pts)</p> <p>IV. Staff expertise and qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. (5 pts)</p> <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under items I and II of this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). 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 sub-factors (items I and II above-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.</p>	<p>20 points</p>
<p>Criterion 5: Leveraging:</p>	<p>(5 pts)</p>

<p>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.</p>	
<p>Criterion 6: Budget:</p> <p>Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the proposed project budget to determine whether,</p> <p>I. (5 pts) costs are reasonable to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes,</p> <p>II. (5 pts) the proposed budget provides a detailed breakout of the approximate funding used for each major activity.</p> <p>An applicant’s budget and budget narrative must account for both federal funds and any non-federal funds (e.g., any required or voluntary cost share/match if applicable). Applicants must precisely describe in their budget narrative how they will account for any required or voluntary cost share/match, if applicable, and what role EPA funding will play in the overall project.</p>	<p>(10 pts)</p>
<p>Criterion 7: Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds:</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.</p>	<p>(5 pts)</p>

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals will first be evaluated against the threshold eligibility criteria listed in Section III. Only those proposals which meet all of the threshold eligibility criteria will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by an EPA evaluation

team. Each proposal will be given a numerical score and will be rank-ordered according to the numerical score. Preliminary funding recommendations will be provided to the Approving Official based on this ranking. The selected applicant will be asked to submit a full proposal package.

12. SECTION VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification:

EPA anticipates notification to successful applicant will be made in writing or through electronic mail. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the proposal or the project contact listed in the proposal. This notification, which informs the applicant that its proposal has been selected and is being recommended for award, is **not** an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the award official for headquarter awards. Applicants are cautioned that only an award official is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. A listing and description of general EPA Regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at:
http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/applicable_epa_regulations_and_description.htm
2. To the extent required by Federal, state, and local laws, successful applicants must abide by the competition requirements for all procurements under grants (this includes contracts for goods and services). Successful applicants must also conduct a price and cost analyses to the extent required by federal, state, or local procurement requirements before awarding any contracts.
3. Use of cooperative agreement funds: An applicant that receives an award under this announcement is expected to manage assistance agreement funds efficiently and effectively and make sufficient progress towards completing the project activities described in the work-plan in a timely manner. The assistance agreement will include terms/conditions implementing this requirement.

C. Additional Provisions For Applicants Incorporated Into The Solicitation:

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to DUNS, SAM, copyrights,

disputes, and administrative capability, can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm.

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

D. Disputes

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/resolution.htm>.

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

F. Reporting Requirements:

Quarterly progress reports and a detailed final technical report will be required. Quarterly reports summarizing technical progress, planned activities for the next quarter and a summary of expenditures are required. The final technical report shall be completed within 90 calendar days of the completion of the period of performance. The final technical report should include: summary of the project or activity, advances achieved, and costs of the project or activity. In addition, the final technical report should discuss the problems, successes, and lessons learned from the project or activity that could help overcome structural, organizational or technical obstacles to implementing a similar project elsewhere. The schedule for submission of quarterly reports will be established by EPA at time of award.

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

13. SECTION VII. AGENCY CONTACT

Orlando Gonzalez
Office of International and Tribal Affairs
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W. (M.C. 2670R)
Washington, D.C. 20460-0001
Email: gonzalez.orlando@epa.gov / Telephone: 202-564-6446

14. SECTION VIII. Appendix A

A. Requirement to Submit Through Grants.Gov and Limited Exception Procedures

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

Mailing Address:

OGD Waivers
c/o Barbara Perkins
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.
Mail Code: 3903R
Washington, DC 20460

Courier Address:

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

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

Funding Opportunity Number (FON)

Organization Name and DUNS

Organization's Contact Information (email address and phone number)

Explanation of how they lack the technical capability to apply electronically through Grants.gov because of 1) limited internet access or 2) no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials through www.Grants.gov.

EPA will only consider alternate submission exception requests based on the two reasons stated above and will timely respond to the request -- all other requests will be denied. If an alternate submission method is approved, the applicant will receive documentation of this approval and further instructions on how to apply under this announcement.

Applicants will be required to submit the documentation of approval with any initial proposal submitted under the alternative method. In addition, any submittal through an

alternative method must comply with all applicable requirements and deadlines in the announcement including the submission deadline and requirements regarding proposal content and page limits (although the documentation of approval of an alternate submission method will not count against any page limits).

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

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

B. Grants.gov Submission Instructions

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

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on “Applicants” on the top of the page and then “Apply for Grants” from the dropdown menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. Please note: To apply through grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download

the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>

You may also be able to access the proposal package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on <http://www.grants.gov>. Go to <http://www.grants.gov> and then click on “Search Grants” at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-OITA-2015-002, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.931), in the appropriate field and click the Search button. Alternatively, you may be able to access the application package by clicking on the Application Package button at the top right of the synopsis page for the announcement on <http://www.grants.gov>. To find the synopsis page, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click “Browse Agencies” in the middle of the page and then go to “Environmental Protection Agency” to find the EPA funding opportunities.

Proposal Submission Deadline: Your organization’s AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than **11:59 p.m., EST, on August 31, 2015**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Please submit all of the proposal materials described in Section IV.B. “*Content of Proposal Submission*”, using the grants.gov application package that you downloaded using the instructions above. For additional instructions on completing and submitting the electronic application package, click on the “Show Instructions” tab that is accessible within the application package itself.

Proposals submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically.

If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Orlando Gonzalez, at 202-564-6446. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

C. Technical Issues with Submission

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

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

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

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

3. Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted proposals are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the proposal is submitted to www.Grants.Gov by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to Orlando Gonzalez with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Orlando Gonzalez at 202-564-6446. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting proposals that were unable to transmit due to www.Grants.gov or relevant www.Sam.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.
 - (a) If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the proposal to Grants.gov, it is essential to call www.Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the deadline. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be *sure* to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Orlando Gonzalez at 202-564-6446.
 - (b) Unsuccessful transfer of the proposal package: If a successful transfer of the proposal cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, send an email message to gonzalez.orlando@epa.gov prior to the proposal deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the

Grants.gov case number as well as the entire proposal in PDF format as an attachment.

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