

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water,
Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water

Funding Opportunity Title: Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Water Quality and
Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking
Water

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-OW-OGWDW-15-02

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.424 and 66.436

Dates: The closing date and time for receipt of application submissions is **October 26, 2015** after posting by **11:59 PM, Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) in order to be considered for funding**. Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than **11:59 PM EDT October 26, 2015, in order to be considered for funding**. Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency contact identified in Section VII before October 19, 2015. Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at:

http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/sdwa/smallsystemsrfafcm. Please note that answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) are available at http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/sdwa/smallsystemsrfafafcm; EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

Note to Applicants: Following EPA's evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s) including individual consultants in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm.

Summary:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is soliciting applications from eligible applicants as described in Section III.A to provide training and technical assistance for small public water systems to help such systems achieve and maintain compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), and to provide training and technical assistance for small publicly-owned wastewater systems, communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater systems, and private well owners to improve water quality under the Clean Water Act (CWA). Training and technical assistance activities provided to these systems, communities and private well owners should be made available nationally in rural and urban communities and to personnel of tribally-owned and operated systems. These goals support the following objectives of EPA's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 – 2018: Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.1: Protect Human Health, and Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems. (The EPA Strategic Plan is available at <http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>.)

National Priority Areas identified in this announcement are for: (1) Training and Technical Assistance for Small Public Water Systems to Achieve and Maintain Compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA); (2) Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Financial and Managerial Capacity and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water; (3) Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems and Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems to Help Improve Water Quality; and (4) Training and Technical Assistance for Private Well Owners to Help Improve Water Quality. Assisting small systems with their technical, managerial and financial capacity to achieve long-term sustainability and resiliency is a key priority for the Agency.

EPA has previously awarded financial assistance agreements to nonprofit organizations to provide technical assistance activities that are similar to those described in this announcement. As authorized by 2 CFR 200.315, EPA will provide data and materials developed under those agreements to successful applicants if necessary to avoid duplication of effort.

Eligible applicants under this competition are nonprofit organizations, nonprofit private universities and colleges, and public institutions of higher education.¹ For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply. States, municipalities or tribal governments are not eligible to apply. Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in prohibited lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

The total amount of expected federal funding available under this announcement is up to \$12,678,000, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. It is anticipated that a total of four to nine cooperative agreements, each with a project period of up to eighteen months, will be awarded under this announcement. Applicants must provide a non-federal cost-share/match that equals at least 10 percent of the total amount of federal funding requested for the project (see Section III.B of this announcement for information on the minimum non-federal 10 percent cost-share/match requirement).

The following is the expected total of awards in each of the four National Priority Areas:

1. One to three awards are anticipated under the *Training and Technical Assistance for Small Public Water Systems to Achieve and Maintain Compliance with the SDWA* National Priority Area, with an estimated total of \$8 million;
2. One to two awards are anticipated under the *Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Financial and Managerial Capacity and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water* National Priority Area, with an estimated total of \$1.8 million;

¹ In accordance with the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act at 31 USC Sec. 6101, the term “nonprofit organization” means “any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that - (A) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (B) is not organized primarily for profit; and (C) uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization.”

3. One to two awards are anticipated under the *Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems and Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems to Help Improve Water Quality* National Priority Area, with an estimated total \$1,178,000; and
4. One to two awards are anticipated under the *Training and Technical Assistance for Private Well Owners to Help Improve Water Quality* National Priority Area, with a total of \$1.7 million.

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Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objectives

EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants for projects in four National Priority Areas as discussed in further detail below. While EPA expects to make at least one award in each area, there is no guarantee. The first National Priority Area is to provide training and technical assistance to small public water systems so that they can operate and maintain their systems to achieve and maintain compliance with the SDWA. The second National Priority Area is to provide training and technical assistance to small public water systems to build their financial and managerial capacity to provide safe drinking water over the long-term. The third National Priority Area is to provide training and technical assistance to small publicly-owned wastewater systems and communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater systems to improve water quality. For the fourth National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance to private well owners to improve water quality.

Training and technical assistance activities provided to these systems, communities and private well owners should be made available nationally in rural and urban communities and to all personnel of these systems, including personnel of tribally-owned and operated systems. Eligible activities include training and technical assistance **only**. Infrastructure projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting or rehabilitating existing equipment **are not eligible** for funding under this announcement. The four National Priority Areas support Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.1: Protect Human Health, or Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems, of EPA's Strategic Plan for FY 2014 – 2018. (The EPA Strategic Plan is available at <http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>.)

As discussed in Section I.E, the statutory authorities for the awards expected to be made under this announcement are section 1442(c) of the SDWA and section 104(b)(3) of the CWA.

B. National Priority Areas

Each application submitted under this announcement must address one, and only one, of the four National Priority Areas described below. Applicants may submit more than one application package under this announcement as long as each one is separately submitted and addresses only **one** National Priority Area. The cover page of each application package must clearly indicate the National Priority Area addressed in the application. If an applicant submits an application covering more than one National Priority Area, it will be rejected.

National Priority Area 1: Training and Technical Assistance for Small Public Water Systems to Achieve and Maintain Compliance with the SDWA

Under this National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance for small public water systems to enable such systems to achieve and maintain compliance with the SDWA. For purposes of this announcement, “small public water systems” means community and non-community water systems serving a population of 10,000 persons or fewer. These public water systems include small community water systems and other small transient or non-transient non-community water systems such as hospitals, schools and restaurants. The majority of community water systems in the nation (92 percent) serve 10,000 persons and fewer. Approximately 61 percent of these systems serve 500 persons or fewer.

Many small public water systems face challenges in reliably providing safe drinking water to their customers and consistently meeting the requirements of the SDWA and the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations (NPDWRs). These challenges include, but are not limited to: (1) lack of adequate revenue or access to financing; (2) aging infrastructure; (3) retirement of experienced system operators and the inability to recruit new operators to replace them; (4) managers and operators who lack the requisite financial, technical or managerial skills; (5) lack of planning for infrastructure upgrades or the ability to respond to and recover from natural disasters (e.g., floods or tornadoes); and (6) lack of understanding of existing or new regulatory requirements and treatment technologies. As a result, some small systems may experience frequent or long-term compliance challenges in reliably providing safe water to their customers while others may be in compliance now but lack the technical capacity to maintain compliance.

For this National Priority Area, applicants should describe their proposed approach for providing training and technical assistance for personnel who operate or manage small public water systems (including decision makers such as trustees, board members or system owners), to strengthen their technical capacity and enable them to comply with the regulatory requirements applicable to their system and become more resilient to natural disasters. Training and technical assistance may be provided through face-to-face trainings and site visits or through remote learning approaches. This assistance may also include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance programs and training. Technical capacity refers to the physical infrastructure of the water system, including, but not limited to, the adequacy of the source water, the adequacy of the system’s infrastructure (i.e., source, treatment, storage and distribution), and the ability of system personnel to adequately operate and maintain the system and to apply necessary technical knowledge (e.g., certified operators).

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to making training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories as described under Section I.C., Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis, including how they will reach out to tribally-owned and operated systems, and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. EPA encourages applications that include non-traditional or innovative approaches in addition to conventional or traditional approaches for training and technical assistance. The applicant should demonstrate how these non-traditional or innovative approaches in conjunction with conventional or traditional approaches show the potential to more effectively reach the intended audience than only conventional or traditional means.

The goal of the training and technical assistance activities under this priority area is to assist small public water systems in achieving and maintaining compliance with the SDWA and the NPDWRs. Applicants should describe how they will document and report progress toward meeting this goal as described in Section I.D., EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results. Applicants should also describe a process whereby they will consult with the appropriate regulatory authority (such as the state or territorial primacy agency or EPA regional direct implementation coordinators) in each state, tribe or territory in which the assistance is to be expended or otherwise made available prior to providing training and technical assistance in that state, tribe or territory. In particular, applicants should indicate how they will work with the state, territory or EPA to identify the systems in greatest need of assistance and identify the training topics of greatest need to the small public water systems; how they will keep those agencies, the EPA grant project officer and appropriate EPA regional coordinators informed regarding the assistance provided; and how they will document these results.

Training and technical assistance activities to support regulatory compliance may involve assisting operators and owners of small public water systems in understanding the requirements of the SDWA and specific NPDWRs and assisting them with other technical capacity topics that will help them achieve and maintain compliance. Training and technical assistance may include training on basic requirements as well as more advanced treatment and operational issues. Examples of eligible training and technical assistance activities for small public water systems that support this National Priority Area include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide operator training and technical assistance on how to comply with NPDWRs, with emphasis on regulatory requirements which present a particular challenge for small systems. Applicants should identify the specific rules which present these challenges in their applications, including any state rules that might apply;
- Provide training to operators to prepare them for the Revised Total Coliform Rule requirements;
- Provide training to decision makers and board members on SDWA requirements and their responsibilities;
- Provide training /technical assistance to diagnose and trouble-shoot system operational and compliance-related problems and identify solutions;
- Provide training /technical assistance and solutions to address microbial, nitrate/nitrite, arsenic, radionuclides and disinfection byproducts contamination;
- Provide training and technical assistance to systems to help develop and implement source water protection plans;

- Provide training and technical assistance to systems facing drought, flooding and other climate-related challenges;
- Conduct preliminary engineering evaluations to assess treatment, storage and distribution system issues, and identify low-cost alternative technology and management techniques; and/or
- Provide training for operator certification and continuing education (CEU). Applicants should describe how they would obtain state approval for CEU credits for their training courses.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this National Priority Area.

All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly the National Priority Area is addressed (see Section V). EPA anticipates awarding approximately one to three cooperative agreements under this National Priority Area ranging from approximately \$2.7 million to no more than \$8 million. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards under this priority area will be approximately \$8 million with project periods of up to eighteen months, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

National Priority Area 2: Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Financial and Managerial Capacity and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water

Under this National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance for small public water systems to build their financial and managerial capacity to provide safe drinking water over the long-term. The ability for a small system to attain and maintain financial and managerial capacity is critical to ensuring that they can reliably and sustainably provide safe water to their customers. For purposes of this announcement, “small public water systems” means community and non-community water systems serving a population of 10,000 persons or fewer. These public water systems include small community water systems and other small transient or non-transient non-community water systems such as hospitals, schools and restaurants.

Many small public water systems face challenges in providing safe drinking water and meeting the requirements of the SDWA. These challenges include, but are not limited to: (1) lack of adequate revenue or access to financing; (2) aging infrastructure; (3) retirement of experienced system operators and the inability to recruit new operators to replace them; (4) managers and operators who lack the requisite financial, technical or managerial skills; (5) lack of planning for infrastructure upgrades or to the ability to respond to and recover from disasters (e.g., floods or tornadoes); and (6) lack of understanding of existing or new regulatory requirements and treatment technologies. As a result, some small systems may experience frequent or long-term compliance challenges in reliably providing safe water to their customers while others may be in compliance now but struggle to maintain compliance.

For this National Priority Area, applicants should describe their proposed approach for providing training and technical assistance for personnel who operate or manage small public water systems (including decision makers such as trustees, board members, or system owners), to help them build their financial and managerial capacity to address current needs and to achieve long-term sustainability. Training and technical assistance may be provided through face-to-face trainings and site visits or through remote learning approaches. This assistance may also include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance programs and training. Financial capacity refers to the financial resources of the water system, including but not limited to, revenue sufficiency, user rate-setting, rate collection, non-payment shut-off policies, credit worthiness, fiscal controls, operational budgeting and planning. Managerial capacity refers to the management structure and practices of the water system, including but not limited to, ownership accountability, staffing and organization, and effective linkages and communication with customers and regulatory agencies.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to making training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories as described under Section I.C., Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis, including how they will reach out to tribally-owned and operated systems, and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. EPA encourages applications that include non-traditional or innovative approaches in addition to conventional or traditional approaches for training and technical assistance. The applicant should demonstrate how these non-traditional or innovative approaches in conjunction with conventional or traditional approaches show the potential to more effectively reach the intended audience than only conventional or traditional means.

The goal of the training and technical assistance activities is to assist small public water systems with their financial and managerial capabilities in order to reliably provide safe drinking water over the long-term. Applicants should describe how they will document and report on progress toward meeting this goal as described in Section I.D., EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results. Applicants should also describe a process whereby they will consult with the appropriate regulatory authority (such as the state or territorial primacy agency or EPA regional direct implementation coordinators) in each state, tribe or territory in which the assistance is to be expended or otherwise made available prior to providing training and technical assistance in that state, tribe or territory. In particular, applicants should indicate how they will work with the state, territory or EPA to identify the systems in greatest need of assistance and the topics of highest interest; how they will keep those agencies, the EPA grant project officer and appropriate EPA regional coordinators informed regarding the assistance provided; and how they will document these results.

Training and technical assistance activities to support financial and managerial capacity development may involve assisting system managers, decision makers and others in understanding sustainable management practices such as asset management, fiscal planning, rate-setting, workforce recruitment and retention, planning for climate impacts, and water system partnership options that are necessary to promote system compliance and sustainability over the long-term. Examples of eligible training and technical assistance activities for small public water systems that support this National Priority Area include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide training and technical assistance to improve the knowledge and skill competency of drinking water system personnel in the areas of managerial and financial capacity;
- Provide training sessions for water system managers and board members in asset management, fiscal planning, communicating effectively with system customers and other sustainable management topics;
- Provide training and technical assistance in asset management program implementation;
- Provide training and technical assistance to develop financial assessments and rate analyses;
- Conduct energy audits and water loss analyses to recommend potential energy and water efficiencies and cost savings;
- Provide training and technical assistance in water conservation program implementation, including utilizing EPA's WaterSense program;
- Work with systems to conduct analyses on the potential benefits of partnerships and collaboration with other systems, including shared operators and treatment, restructuring and consolidation, thereby enabling them to become financially sustainable and to provide safe and affordable water to their communities; and/or
- Assist systems to access and manage multiple infrastructure funding sources to address public health risks and achieve compliance.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this National Priority Area.

All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly the National Priority Area is addressed (see Section V). EPA anticipates awarding approximately one to two cooperative agreements under this National Priority Area, ranging from approximately \$900,000 to no more than \$1.8 million each. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards under this priority area will be approximately \$1.8 million with project periods of up to eighteen months, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

National Priority Area 3: Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems and Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems to Help Improve Water Quality

Under this National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance to: (a) small publicly-owned wastewater systems; and (b) communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater systems. Under this priority area, the application must address **the two elements** further described below. For the purposes of this announcement, "small publicly-owned wastewater systems" are defined as wastewater systems or treatment facilities that have permitted and actual flows of less than 1 million gallons per day (MGD) and are: owned by a public entity (such as a municipality) or not-for-profit entity (such as regional sewer districts), and/or serve tribal communities (with the exception of systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities). "Onsite/decentralized systems" are defined as: publicly-owned or privately-owned onsite or clustered systems used to collect, treat, and disperse or reclaim wastewater from a small community, tribe or service area that are publicly or privately-owned and/or serve tribal communities (with the exception of systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities).

For this National Priority Area, applicants should describe their proposed approach for providing training and technical assistance to small publicly-owned wastewater systems and to communities served by onsite/decentralized wastewater systems as described in the above paragraph. Training and technical assistance may be provided through face-to-face trainings and site visits or through remote learning approaches. This assistance may include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance programs, evaluation of treatment and/or infrastructure alternatives, preliminary engineering evaluations, assessments of management approaches and their effectiveness, and assistance in improving sustainability, including improved water and energy efficiency, education of local officials, identification of funding alternatives, and/or use of green infrastructure among other activities.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to making training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories as described under Section I.C., Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis, including how they will reach out to tribally-owned and operated systems, and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. EPA encourages applications that include non-traditional or innovative approaches in addition to conventional or traditional approaches for training and technical assistance. The applicant should demonstrate how these non-traditional or innovative approaches in conjunction with conventional or traditional approaches show the potential to more effectively reach the intended audience than only conventional or traditional means.

The goals of the training and technical assistance activities are to assist small publicly-owned wastewater systems and onsite/decentralized wastewater systems to improve operational performance over the long-term, thereby improving public health and water quality. Applicants should describe how they will document and report on progress toward meeting this goal as described in Section I.D., EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results. Applicants should also describe a process whereby they will consult with the appropriate regulatory authority (such as the state or territorial primacy agency or EPA regional direct implementation coordinator) in each state, tribe or territory in which the assistance is to be expended or otherwise made available prior to providing training and technical assistance in that state, tribe or territory. In particular, applicants should indicate how they will work with the state, territory or EPA to identify the systems in greatest need of assistance; how they will keep those agencies, the EPA grant project officer and appropriate EPA regional coordinators informed regarding the assistance provided; and how they will document these results.

All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly both elements of this National Priority Area are addressed (see Section V). EPA anticipates awarding approximately one to two cooperative agreements under this National Priority Area, ranging from approximately \$600,000 to no more than \$1,178,000 each. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards under this priority area will be approximately \$1,178,000 with project periods of up to eighteen months, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

Applicants with expertise in one of the elements may partner with another (other) eligible organization(s) to submit an application which addresses the two elements of this National Priority Area. Please carefully review Section IV.E for information regarding applications that include partners as subawardees.

Applications for awards under this National Priority Area must address both of the following two elements:

Element (a): Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems

Small publicly-owned wastewater systems often face many common challenges including: (1) frequent turnover of operations personnel; (2) personnel who lack necessary technical, financial or managerial skills; (3) limited rate bases; (4) aging infrastructure; (5) lack of knowledge of increasingly stringent discharge limits; and (6) lack of knowledge of newer techniques to reduce discharges, assess and improve operations, and analyze infrastructure alternatives to meet water quality goals.

Training and technical assistance activities for small publicly-owned wastewater systems under this element should focus on two major themes: (1) promoting the sustainable and effective management of wastewater systems; and (2) improving system performance. Applicants should describe in detail their approach for training, for example, assisting facility managers, utility boards, and wastewater operators in sustainable utility operations (for details and examples, see <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/>). “Sustainability” topics may include, for example: asset management, energy management, rate design, improved communications with local officials, effective utility management, identifying funding sources or other topics that help facilities maintain long-term managerial, financial and operational success. Applicants should also describe their approach to reaching target audiences of small publicly-owned wastewater systems, especially small facilities that are out of compliance with discharge permits.

Applicants should describe in detail their approach for utilizing and sharing existing information and materials on pollution prevention, facility operation and maintenance, effective utility management, wastewater treatment alternatives, infrastructure funding opportunities and efficient water use with the communities and facilities being assisted. Applicants should describe in detail an approach for providing on-site training and technical assistance, while also providing products and assistance for a broader (e.g., nationwide) audience. Examples of training and technical assistance activities that support this element are on-site trainings or technical solutions that focus on improving performance at local facilities (e.g., training on nutrient removal technologies or training on rate structures and energy efficiency opportunities or training using existing materials, including, but not limited to documents and tools developed by EPA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Indian Health Service (IHS). and other federal agencies, on assessment of sustainability and proper management of small and rural systems. Such trainings or technical solutions could then be adapted into webinars, developed into guidebooks for transfer to small wastewater systems nationwide, or supported as a “train-the-trainer” approach to increase the reach of the materials.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of Element (a) of this National Priority Area.

Element (b): Training and Technical Assistance for Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems

Onsite/decentralized systems face significant maintenance and management challenges, including: (1) lack of information on system location, performance, age and maintenance history; (2) improper design or siting; (3) lack of owner knowledge of proper maintenance techniques; (4) lack of life cycle management; and (5) lack of owner/service provider knowledge of advanced treatment and dispersal technologies.

Under this element, applicants should describe in detail their approach to providing training and technical assistance on aspects of decentralized system planning, installation, operation and maintenance, and management approaches. Applicants should also describe in detail their approach for utilizing and sharing existing information and materials on appropriate treatment and dispersal options and funding opportunities to the appropriate identified audience(s). Applicants may use documents and tools developed by EPA for these trainings. Such trainings or technical solutions could be adapted into webinars, developed into guidebooks for transfer to communities nationwide or supported as a "train the trainer" approach to increase the reach of the materials.

Examples of training and technical assistance activities for onsite/decentralized wastewater systems that support this element include, but are not limited to, the following:

- preliminary needs analysis;
- consideration of alternatives for treatment options, including advanced treatment, nutrient control, low impact development and other green infrastructure practices;
- project planning and design;
- development of maintenance schedules;
- assistance identifying and applying for funding sources;
- assistance forming responsible management entities (RMEs) and supporting the development of a long-term business plan;
- training of community leaders, service providers and regulatory officials to assist in consideration of alternatives, highlight the importance of management, facilitate certification of installers and operators;
- outreach to individual system owners and the general public during the planning process to gain trust and support for solutions; and/or
- outreach to individual system owners and the general public on proper maintenance techniques.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of Element (b) of this National Priority Area.

National Priority Area 4: Training and Technical Assistance for Private Well Owners to Help Improve Water Quality

Under this National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance to private drinking water well owners. For the purposes of this announcement, a "private well" is defined as: a well owned by a homeowner or group of homeowners that supplies drinking water to fewer than 25 people or contains fewer than 15 service connections.

Approximately 30 million Americans receive their drinking water from private wells. Private well owners face many challenges in providing safe water. Protection of private wells does not fall under the authority of the SDWA, so these well owners often face challenges in obtaining the assistance they need to keep their wells in good working order and to protect the quality of their water supply. These challenges include where to go or whom to contact for accurate and timely information and technical assistance on all aspects of private well ownership, including well construction, operation, maintenance, well testing, local and state health and other relevant regulations or programs, local ground water quality and quantity concerns, and well emergency contacts and procedures.

For this National Priority Area, applicants should describe their approach to providing training and technical assistance to private well owners. Training and technical assistance may be provided through face-to-face meetings and site visits or through remote learning approaches. This assistance may also include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance programs and training.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to making training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories as described under Section I.C., Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis, including how they will reach out to tribally-owned and operated systems, and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. EPA encourages applications that include non-traditional or innovative approaches in addition to conventional or traditional approaches for technical assistance and training. The applicant should demonstrate how these non-traditional or innovative approaches in conjunction with conventional or traditional approaches show the potential to more effectively reach the intended audience than only conventional or traditional means. Applicants will be evaluated on the extent to which the proposal includes non-traditional or innovative approaches in addition to conventional approaches (see Section V.A.)

The goals of the training and technical assistance activities are to assist private well owners with information they need to protect their drinking water supply and improve water quality. Applicants should describe how they will document and report on progress toward meeting this goal as described in Section I.D., EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results. Applicants should also describe a process whereby they will consult with the appropriate regulatory authority (such as the state or territorial primacy agency or EPA regional direct implementation coordinators) in each state, tribe or territory in which the assistance is to be expended or otherwise made available prior to providing training and technical assistance in that state, tribe or territory. In particular, applicants should indicate how they will work with the state, territory or EPA to identify the well owners in greatest need of assistance; how they will keep those agencies, the EPA grant project officer and appropriate EPA regional coordinators informed regarding the assistance provided; and how they will document these results.

Examples of eligible training and technical assistance activities for private wells that support this National Priority Area include, but are not limited to, the following:

- developing and/or providing online and hard copy information and materials on topics of interest to private well owners, such as well construction, well maintenance and

operation, well testing, ground water quality and protection, state regulations impacting private wells, water rights, and how to respond to well contamination emergencies;

- providing information, technical assistance and training to other organizations with activities that affect private well owners;
- adequately manning a hotline with a toll-free number for private well owners to call for timely assistance and advice on private well matters;
- providing electronic newsletters or using social media to provide topical or emergency information quickly to private well owners with internet access; and/or
- educating private well owners through face-to-face visits regarding potential or actual threats to their wells and whom to contact for help.

EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this National Priority Area.

All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V including how well and thoroughly the National Priority Area is addressed (see Section V). EPA anticipates awarding approximately one to two cooperative agreements under this National Priority Area, ranging from approximately \$850,000 to no more than \$1.7 million each. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards under this priority area will be \$1.7 million with project periods of up to eighteen months, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

C. Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis

Applications for projects under all of the National Priority Areas described above should demonstrate the applicant's ability and approach to making training and technical assistance available on a national basis. Applicants should make training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories (i.e., Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa), including to tribally-owned and operated systems, through a combination of face-to-face/on-site and remote training and technical assistance approaches. The training and technical assistance may include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance, or some other program design that makes training and technical assistance available nationally. Applicants should describe how they will reach out to tribally-owned and operated systems (including providing and maintaining current contact information in a publicly-available technical assistance database), and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. Please note the "Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis" evaluation criteria in Section V.

Applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V, including the demonstrated ability and described approach to making training and technical assistance available nationally in the maximum number of states and U.S. territories through face-to-face/on-site and/or remote training and technical assistance. EPA will give priority consideration to applications that describe a thorough, quality, and flexible approach that tailors the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience in as many states and U.S. territories as possible. A tailored approach should describe how the applicant will use the most appropriate techniques and materials to address the needs of various

audiences, such as system managers versus operators or private well owners, as well as the unique needs of populations determined by geographical, socio-economic, system-type, educational or other factors. The applicant should take into consideration how state and local regulations and policies impact the implementation of national standards. The approach should also demonstrate how the applicant would balance the use of face-to-face/onsite techniques which often result in a high level of understanding and knowledge retention for participants, but are usually more expensive and resource-intensive, with the need to provide assistance in a maximum number of states and U.S. territories through remote techniques. Training and technical assistance may take the form of:

- 1) Face-to-face and on-site technical assistance which includes, for example, classroom training, workshops, site visits and circuit-riders or other multi-state and/or regional approaches to provide on-site technical assistance; and
- 2) Remote technical assistance which includes, for example, webcasts, video conferencing, hotlines, online courses, and other forms of distance learning.

Training and technical assistance may also include developing and disseminating (through web posting and other means) various resources such as training and educational materials or tools that can be used nationally and/or with state or territorial-specific variations, as appropriate. Applicants should indicate in their applications an estimate as to what portion of their training and technical assistance would be face-to-face and on-site versus remote training and technical assistance.

All applications should also include a discussion of how the applicant will transfer results, effective compliance strategies and resources developed (such as tools, videos and training materials) to interested stakeholders such as other small systems, states, territories, tribes, local governments and private well owners through the development and dissemination of training and educational materials, websites or other means.

D. EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results

The training and technical assistance projects to be funded under this announcement support EPA's FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan (available at <http://www2.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>). All assistance agreements awarded under this announcement will support Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.1: *Protect Human Health*, or Objective 2.2: *Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems* of EPA's Strategic Plan for FY 2014 - 2018. This announcement is consistent with EPA's priority to assist small systems with technical assistance and training to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and long-term system sustainability.

All proposed projects must address the Strategic Plan priorities and include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall protection of human health and the environment by ensuring safe drinking water and preventing water pollution. For National Priority Area 1 and National Priority Area 2, outputs and outcomes should directly address the goal of helping small public water systems achieve and maintain compliance with the SDWA and provide safe drinking water

in the long-term. For National Priority Area 3 and National Priority Area 4, outputs and outcomes should address the goal of improving water quality.

Environmental outputs (or deliverables) refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective, that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 1, *Training and Technical Assistance for Small Public Water Systems to Achieve and Maintain Compliance with the SDWA*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of small public water system managers and operators receiving training and technical assistance in regulatory requirements, basic water system operations and advanced treatment issues.
- An increased number of small public water systems conducting diagnostic and troubleshooting analyses to determine factors affecting performance and compliance with applicable national primary drinking water standards.
- An increased number of small public water system operators receiving training utilizing hands-on and other training approaches which maximize understanding and knowledge retention.
- An increased number of small public water systems receiving technical assistance in developing and implementing source water protection plans.

Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 2, *Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Financial and Managerial Capacity and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of small public water system managers and operators receiving training and technical assistance in financial and managerial capacity concepts and practices.
- An increased number of board members and other small system decision makers receiving training on asset management and other sustainable management and financial concepts.
- An increased number of small public water systems implementing asset management programs.
- An increased number of small public water systems receiving energy audits and water loss analyses.
- An increased number of small public water systems developing plans to implement water system partnerships, such as shared treatment and operators, restructuring, consolidation, or other collaboration or partnership actions with other water systems.

Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 3, *Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems and Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems to Help Improve Water Quality*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

For training and technical assistance for small publicly-owned wastewater systems:

- An increased number of system managers, board members and other decision makers receiving training on sustainable utility management, and based on an assessment of their operations, training on asset management and other sustainable management and financial concepts.
- An increased number of small publicly-owned wastewater systems receiving or performing energy audits and taking actions to improve energy efficiency based on audit results.

For training and technical assistance for onsite/decentralized wastewater systems:

- An increased number of community leaders, system operators, or onsite/decentralized Responsible Management Entities receiving training or technical assistance on analyzing treatment alternatives, management requirements, or homeowner education.
- An increased number of onsite/decentralized wastewater systems that have been inventoried, inspected, or have maintenance schedules or manuals for new or upgraded systems.

Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 4, *Training and Technical Assistance for Private Well Owners to Help Improve Water Quality*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of private well owners receiving technical assistance and training on topical issues.
- An increased number of private well owners who receive information in electronic and hard copy formats.
- An increased number of private well owners who receive information on how to respond to emergencies.
- Increased information, technical assistance, and training to other organizations with activities that affect private well owners.

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

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 1, *Training and Technical Assistance for Small Public Water Systems to Achieve and Maintain Compliance with the SDWA*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increase in the knowledge and competency of small public water system operators in the areas of regulatory requirements and water system operations.

- A measurable improvement in the performance of small public water systems where operational changes or other recommendations were implemented following a system diagnostic evaluation.
- An increased number of small public water systems in compliance with the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations or making substantial progress toward compliance as indicated by measured performance, reduced enforcement priority status or other factors.
- An increase in the knowledge and competency of small public water system operators in source water protection or disaster preparedness.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 2, *Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Financial and Managerial Capacity and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of small public water systems in compliance with the SDWA or making substantial progress toward compliance as indicated by measured performance, reduced enforcement priority status or other factors.
- An increase in the knowledge and capacity of small public water systems in the areas of financial and managerial capacity.
- Increased number of small public water systems which have adopted asset management programs as part of their standard operating and management practices.
- An increased number of small public water systems reducing water loss or increasing their energy efficiency and/or achieving cost savings because of taking efficiency actions after conducting an energy audit or water loss analysis.
- An increased number of small public water systems participating in water system partnerships, such as shared treatment and operators, restructuring, consolidation, or other collaboration or partnership actions with other water systems.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 3, *Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems and Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems to Help Improve Water Quality*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

For training and technical assistance for small publicly-owned wastewater systems:

- An increased number of small publicly-owned wastewater systems that have adopted sustainable management plans and practices, including but not limited to asset management programs.
- An increased number of small publicly-owned wastewater systems in compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements or making substantial progress toward compliance as indicated by measured performance, reduced enforcement priority status or other factors.
- An increased number of small publicly-owned wastewater systems increasing their energy efficiency and/or achieving cost savings because of taking efficiency actions after conducting an energy audit.

For training and technical assistance for onsite/decentralized wastewater systems:

- A decreased number of public health-related or public nuisance-related complaints associated with malfunctioning onsite/decentralized wastewater systems.
- An increased number of onsite/decentralized wastewater systems that are managed under RMEs.
- An increase in system owners, particularly homeowners, engaging in active management of onsite/decentralized wastewater systems.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for National Priority Area 4, *Training and Technical Assistance for Private Well Owners to Help Improve Water Quality*, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increase in the knowledge of private well owners in such topics as proper well construction, well operation and maintenance, well testing, relevant state regulations or programs, or ground water protection.
- An increased number of private wells that are protected from contamination during emergencies.
- An improvement in the quality and quantity of ground water that supplies private wells.

As part of the Project Narrative, an applicant will be required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to the Agency's Strategic Plan and to the goal of enabling small public water systems to achieve and maintain compliance with the SDWA, or the goal of improving water quality. In addition, applicants will have to describe their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes. Additional information regarding EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/epa_order_5700_7a1.pdf.

E. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for the awards expected to be made under this announcement is, as appropriate, section 1442(c) of the SDWA or section 104(b)(3) of the CWA. Section 1442(c) of the SDWA authorizes EPA to provide grants for training personnel who manage or operate public water systems, and for training personnel for occupations involving the public health aspects of providing safe drinking water. Section 104(b)(3) of the CWA authorizes EPA to make grants to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of training, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution.

Section II. Award Information

A. Amount of Funding

The total estimated amount of federal funding expected to be available under this announcement is up to \$12,678,000, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. It is anticipated that approximately one to three cooperative agreements will be awarded in National Priority Area 1 and one to two cooperative agreements will be awarded in each of the National Priority Areas 2, 3 and 4, as described in Section I.B of this announcement. It is anticipated that awards made under National Priority Area 1 will total approximately \$8 million; awards made under National Priority Area 2 will total approximately

\$1.8 million; awards made under National Priority Area 3 will total approximately \$1,178,000; and awards made under National Priority Area 4 will total \$1.7 million. Cooperative agreements funded under this announcement will have up to an eighteen-month project period. See Section I for more information on award ranges for each National Priority Area.

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

EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than anticipated. While EPA expects to make awards in each National Priority Area, EPA reserves the right not to do so. In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

B. Type of Funding

It is anticipated that cooperative agreements will be funded under this announcement under which EPA will have substantial involvement with the project work plans and budget. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement may include:

1. Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
2. Collaboration during performance of the scope of work, including participation in training and technical assistance activities such as attending specific trainings and workshops;
3. In accordance with the applicable regulations at 2 CFR 200 Subpart D (200.317 through 200.326) as appropriate, review of proposed procurements;
4. Review of qualifications of key personnel (EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient);
5. Provide compliance data and EPA-produced technical assistance tools; and
6. Review and comment on tasks/deliverables and reports prepared under the cooperative agreement(s) (the final decision on the content of these reports rests with the recipient).

Section III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants under this competition are nonprofit organizations, nonprofit private universities and colleges, and public institutions of higher education.² For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply. States, municipalities, tribal governments, and individuals are not

² In accordance with the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act at 31 USC Sec. 6101, the term "nonprofit organization" means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that - (A) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (B) is not organized primarily for profit; and (C) uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization."

eligible to apply. Nonprofit 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. EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

All applicants must demonstrate in their application submission how they will contribute a minimum non-federal cost-share/match of 10 percent of the total amount of federal funding requested for the project. The non-federal cost-share/match may be provided in cash or can come from in-kind contributions, such as use of volunteers and/or donated time, equipment, expertise, etc., and is subject to the regulations governing matching fund requirements described in 2 CFR 200.306, as applicable. In-kind contributions often include salaries or other verifiable costs and this value must be carefully documented. In the case of salaries, applicants may use either minimum wage or fair market value. Cost-share/match must be used for eligible and allowable project costs. Cost-share/matching funds are considered grant funds and are included in the total award amount and should be used for the reasonable and necessary expenses of carrying out the workplan. All grant funds are subject to federal audit. Any restrictions on the use of grant funds also apply to the use of cost-share/match. Other federal grants may not be used as cost-share/match without specific statutory authority. **Applicants that do not demonstrate how they will meet the minimum cost-share/match requirement in their application submission will not be considered for funding.**

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the time of application submission will result in the elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications that meet all of these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. 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.

1. An applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III.A of this announcement at the time of application submission.
2. Applications must address one, and only one, of the four National Priority Areas listed in Section I.B, although eligible organizations may submit more than one application as long as each one is separately submitted and addresses only one National Priority Area. Applications that address more than one National Priority Area in a single application will not be reviewed. In addition, applications for National Priority Area 3 must address the two elements of that priority as described in Section I.B.
3. Applications for awards under National Priority Area 1 cannot exceed \$8 million; applications for awards under National Priority Area 2 cannot exceed \$1.8 million; applications for awards under National Priority Area 3 cannot exceed \$1,178,000; and applications for awards under National Priority Area 4 cannot exceed \$1.7 million; Applications exceeding the amount for the National Priority Area it addresses will be rejected.

4. An applicant must demonstrate that it can meet the cost-share/match requirement in Section III.B of this announcement at the time of application submission.
5. Applications must **substantially comply** with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.C.2 with respect to the Project Narrative, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.C.2 establishes a 12-page, single-spaced Project Narrative page limit that does not include the cover page.
6. Applications 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 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 application is timely submitted.
7. Applications 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 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 application via e-mail with Adrienne Harris at smallsystemsRFA@epa.gov as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
8. 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.

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

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 application 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 application materials through an alternate method.

Mailing Address:

OGD Waivers
c/o Barbara Perkins
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building

9-10-15

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 application 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 application 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 application 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.

All applications must be prepared and include the information as described in Section IV.C. (Content of Application Package Submission).

B. Grants.gov Application Submission Instructions

Your organization's authorized official representative (AOR) must submit your complete application electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than **October 26, 2015 by 11:59 PM, EDT.**

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then go to the "Get Registered" link on the page. If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a 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 application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on <http://www.grants.gov>. Go to <http://www.grants.gov> and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, **EPA-OW-OGWDW-15-02** or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.436 and CFDA 66.424), 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.

Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's authorized official representative (AOR) must submit your complete application electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than **11:59 PM EDT October 26, 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 application materials described below using the Grants.gov application package that you downloaded using the instructions above. For additional instructions on completing and submitting the electronic application package, click on the "Show Instructions" tab that is accessible within the application package itself.

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below.

Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A).
- SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs.
- Grants.gov Lobbying Form - Certification Regarding Lobbying.
- EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54.
- EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.
- Project Narrative. See Section IV.C.2

Optional Documents – See Section IV.C of announcement:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities - SF-LLL, if applicable.
- Other Attachments Form - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable.
- Other Attachments Form - Biographical Sketches.
- Other Attachments Form – Letters of Support.

Applications 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 7 days of the application deadline, please contact Adrienne Harris at (202) 250-8793. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

Technical Issues With Submission

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

2. Submitting the application. The application package must be transferred to Grants.gov by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the “submit” button of the application package. Your Internet browser will launch and a sign-in page will appear. Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE 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 application are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the application 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 Adrienne Harris at smallsystemsRFA@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Adrienne Harris at 202-250-8793. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications 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 application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call www.Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be sure to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Adrienne Harris at 202-250-8793.

b. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, send an email message to Adrienne Harris at smallsystemsRFA@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the Grants.gov case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.

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

C. Content of Application Package Submission

Applicants should read the following section very carefully. A complete application package must include the following documents described below.

1. Application Materials

- a. **Signed Standard Form (SF) 424 - Application for Federal Assistance.** Complete the form. There are no attachments. Please be sure to include the organization fax number and email in Block 5 of the SF 424. The organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included in 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.
- b. **SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.** The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of the SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22. If indirect costs are requested, a copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement must be submitted as part of the application package. In Section B, Budget Categories column (1) should be filled out for federal funds, column (2) should be filled out for non-federal cost-share/match, and column (5) should be filled out for total project cost (combined federal funds and non-federal cost-share/match).
- c. **Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B).** Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- d. **EPA Lobbying Form - Certification Regarding Lobbying.** Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- e. **EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54.** Complete the form. Attach additional forms as needed.
- f. **EPA Form 4700–4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.** Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- g. **Project Narrative. See Section IV.C.2** (Project Narrative) for details on specific information that must be included. When developing the Project Narrative, applicants should refer to Section I.B of the announcement which provides a project description for the National Priority Areas.
- h. **Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL).** This form is required if your organization is involved in lobbying. Complete this form if your organization is involved in lobbying activities.
- i. **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (if indirect costs are included in your proposed project budget). Complete this form if indirect costs are included in the proposed project budget. You must submit a copy of your organization’s Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as part of the application package if your proposed project budget includes indirect costs.

- j. **Biographical Sketches.** Submit a biographical sketch of each major project manager, support staff member, or other major project participant (see Section IV.C.2.C.6.b).
- k. **Letters of Support.** Applicants may provide up to 15 letters of support from potential recipients of technical assistance to demonstrate that the applicant's proposed approach is responsive to the potential recipients' needs.

2. Project Narrative

NOTE: The Project Narrative must include sections A-C below. The Project Narrative is limited to no more than twelve (12) typewritten, single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the executive summary, but not the cover page.

Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative.

Additional pages beyond the 12 page limit will not be considered. The Project Narrative will be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 12 page single-spaced page limit; excess pages will not be reviewed. Supporting materials, which are limited to no more than a cover page, biographical sketches, letters of support, and full resumes as described below, are not included within the page limit.

The application's Project Narrative must be typewritten and must include the information listed below. If a particular item is not applicable, clearly state this in the Project Narrative.

A. **Cover Page (not included in page limit)** including:

- 1. Project title;
- 2. National Priority Area from Section I.B addressed in the application (**applicants must address only one National Priority Area per application package**);
- 3. Name of applicant;
- 4. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number); and
- 5. Total project cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested, the non-federal cost-share/match, and the total project cost).

B. **Executive Summary (included in the 12 page limit):** Provide a brief summary of the proposed project (should not exceed one page). This should include a brief description of the proposed project and the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.

C. **Workplan (included in the 12 page limit):** The workplan must address the following elements:

- 1. **National Priority Area:** Describe your approach for addressing one of the four National Priority Areas in Section I.B of this announcement. Highlight and describe any non-traditional or innovative approaches that are proposed in addition to conventional or traditional approaches for addressing the training and technical assistance objectives. Describe how these non-traditional or innovative

approaches in conjunction with conventional or traditional approaches show the potential to more effectively reach the intended audience than conventional or traditional means only. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the applicant in carrying out the project elements. Describe the process for consulting with the appropriate regulatory authority in each state, tribe or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities. Include a process for reporting back to those authorities, to the EPA grant project officer and to the appropriate EPA regional coordinators regarding the assistance provided and documented results. If you are addressing National Priority Area 3, also describe your approach for addressing the two elements of that priority.

2. **Provision of Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis:** Describe the proposed approach to making face-to-face/on-site and/or remote training and technical assistance available nationally in a maximum number of states and U.S. territories (see Sections I.B and C). The proposed approach may also include developing training materials, developing and maintaining websites, or developing and providing educational materials that can be used in each state/territory and/or with state/territory-specific variations, as appropriate. Describe how the approach is thorough, flexible and tailored to the specific needs of each target audience. Describe your approach for reaching out to tribally-owned and operated systems (including providing and maintaining current contact information in a publicly-available technical assistance database) and how you will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. Provide a brief description of how you will transfer results, effective compliance strategies and resources developed (such as tools and training materials) to interested stakeholders such as other small systems, states, territories, tribes, local governments, and private well owners through the development and dissemination of training and educational materials, websites or other means.
3. **Environmental Results and Measuring Progress:**
 - a. Stated Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan - List the objective of the project and the linkage to the EPA Strategic Plan Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.1, Protect Human Health or Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems (see Section I.D of this announcement).
 - b. Results of Activities (Outputs) - Describe the anticipated products/results which are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project, and describe an approach for tracking and reporting your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.D of this announcement).
 - c. Projected Environmental Improvement (Outcomes) - List the anticipated environmental improvements that will be accomplished as a result of the project. These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment or public health which are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and

reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s)
(examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.D of this announcement).

4. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period (up to eighteen months). The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks and an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.
5. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF 424A such as “other” and “contractual.”
 - a. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs and total cost. All subgrant funding should be located in the “other” cost category. Total costs must include both federal and cost-share/matching (non-federal) components. For each cost category, indicate what portion of the cost will be paid by EPA and what portion of the cost will be covered by the minimum non-federal cost-share/match as required in Section III.B. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the allowability of costs for each project component/task, as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs (both federal and non-federal components).
6. **Programmatic Capability/Experience/Community Support:**
 - a. Organizational Experience - Provide a brief description of your organization and experience related to the proposed project, and your organization’s infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
 - b. Staff Expertise/Qualifications - Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their experience/expertise/qualifications and knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state and local regulations and policies relevant to the training or technical assistance. Include an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (based on 2080 hours per year/FTE). If you choose to identify any partner organizations who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants) please refer to Section IV.G before doing so as EPA will not consider their qualifications unless you select them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. A biographical sketch must be submitted for each major project manager, support staff member or other major project participant. Biographical sketches are not counted in the page limit. Full resumes may be included as an appendix to the application narrative and are not counted in the page limit.

- c. Community Support - Applicants may provide up to 15 letters of support from potential recipients of technical assistance to demonstrate that the applicant's proposed approach to service delivery is responsive to the potential recipients' needs. **To ensure that the Agency can efficiently evaluate these letters of support, EPA will only consider letters that are included with the application itself. Letters of support (up to 15 maximum) do not count against the 12 page limit on the Project Narrative.**
7. **Past Performance:** Briefly describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and:
- a. Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
 - b. Describe your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports
 - c. Describe how you documented and/or reported on whether you were making progress towards achieving the expected results (i.e., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If you were not making progress, please indicate whether, and how, you documented why not.

Note: In evaluating an applicant's past performance, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and/or from current and prior federal agency 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 information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V. Failure to provide any programmatic past performance or reporting information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, may result in a zero score for these factors (see also Section V).

8. **Quality Assurance/Quality Control:** Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) (not included in the page limit) – If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.A Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) of this announcement for additional information).

Note: The applicant should also provide in the Project Narrative any additional information, to the extent not already addressed above, that addresses the selection criteria in Section V.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications submitted electronically through Grants.gov must be **received by 11:59 PM EDT October 26, 2015**. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

E. 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 and contracts and subawards, 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 this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

Section V. Application Review Information**A. Selection Criteria**

All eligible applications, based on the Section III threshold eligibility review, will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and weights below (100 total point scale). Points will be awarded based on how well and thoroughly each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the application package.

(22 points)	<p>1) National Priority Area Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing one of the National Priority Areas described in Section I.B of this announcement. In conducting this evaluation, the following factors will be taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The extent and quality of the overall approach to addressing one of the four National Priority Areas. (13 points) ii. The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates an effective process for consultation with the appropriate regulatory authority in each state, tribe, or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities, and for keeping these authorities informed regarding the implementation and outcome of training and technical assistance activities. (5 points) iii. The extent to which the applicant includes non-traditional or innovative approaches in addition to conventional approaches in addressing the training and technical assistance objectives of one of the four National Priority Areas. (4 points)
(23 points)	<p>2) Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for making training and technical assistance available nationally in a maximum number of states and U.S territories (see Section I.C. of this announcement) taking into account the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates the ability to provide training and technical assistance in a maximum

	<p>number of states and U.S territories through face-to-face/onsite training and/or through remote means. (7 points)</p> <p>ii. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an effective process for reaching out to tribally-owned and operated systems and providing training and technical assistance to these systems. (7 points)</p> <p>iii. The extent and quality to which the applicant's strategy utilizes flexibility to tailor the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience in as many states and U.S. Territories as possible. (6 points)</p> <p>iv. The extent and quality of an approach to transfer results, effective compliance strategies, and resources developed to interested stakeholders nationally. (3 points)</p>
(10 points)	<p>3) Environmental Results and Measuring Progress</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on each of these sub-criteria:</p> <p>i. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to EPA's Strategic Plan. (5 points)</p> <p>ii. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section I.D of this announcement). (5 points)</p>
(15 points)	<p>4) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criteria:</p> <p>i. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (7 points)</p> <p>ii. The reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. Total costs must include both federal and cost-share/match (non-federal) components. Describe the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs (both federal and non-federal components). (8 points)</p>
(20 points)	<p>5) Programmatic Capability/Experience/Community Support</p> <p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project. (8 points) ii. Staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state and local regulations and policies relevant to the training or technical assistance. (8 points) iii. Degree of support from potential recipients of technical assistance (e.g., demonstrated through letters of support or other means). (4 points)
(10 points)	<p>6) 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) similar in size and scope to the proposed project performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements). (4 points) ii. History of meeting reporting requirements under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) similar in size and scope to the proposed project performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements. (3 points) iii. Extent and quality to which they adequately documented and/or reported on their progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outcomes and outputs) under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements), and if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately documented and/or reported why not. (3 points)

	<p>Note: In evaluating applicants under (i), (ii) and (iii) above, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including Agency files and/or prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the application and they will receive a neutral score for the factor (i.e., 2 points for item (i), 1.5 points for item (ii), and 1.5 points for item (iii)).</p> <p>Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, may result in a zero score for the factor (i.e., 0 points for item (i.), 0 points for item (ii.), and 0 points for item (iii.)).</p>
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B. Review and Selection Process

All applications received via Grants.gov by the submission deadline will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

A panel(s) comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications by National Priority Area based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. Four separate ranking lists, one per National Priority Area, will be developed based on the panel evaluations. The ranking list for each National Priority Area will be provided to the Selection Official(s) who make(s) the final funding decisions. In making the final funding decisions for each National Priority Area, the Selection Official(s) will consider the application score/ranking and may also take into account geographic distribution of funds and programmatic priorities such as ensuring that small systems receive training and technical assistance that facilitates compliance with important federal and state regulations. As noted above, while EPA expects to make awards in each National Priority Area, it reserves the right not to do so.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Following EPA's evaluation of the applications, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified regarding their status. The notification will be made to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance. The notification of recommendation for award is not an authorization to begin performance, nor is it a guarantee that the award will be made. The official notification of an award will be made by Grants and Interagency Agreements Management Division.

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. For example, statutory authorization, funding or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA Award Official, 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 cooperative agreement can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a cooperative agreement can take up to 90 days or longer.

EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final grant amount and workplan narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy including the Assistance Agreement Competition Policy, EPA Order 5700.5A1. An approvable final workplan narrative is required to include:

1. Components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component;
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment;
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule; and
5. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.

B. 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 this solicitation to obtain the provisions

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by regulations at 2 CFR 200 and 1500, as applicable. A description of the Agency's substantial involvement in the cooperative agreement will be included in the final assistance agreement.

D. Reporting

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved. Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted quarterly and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 90 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the work plan consistent with 2 CFR 200 and 1500, and 40 CFR Part 45, as appropriate.

E. Intergovernmental Review

This program may be eligible for coverage under E.O. 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." An applicant should consult the office or official designated as the single point of contact in his or her state for more information on the process the state requires to be

followed in applying for assistance, if the state has selected the program for review. Further information regarding this can be found at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

F. 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 person listed in Section VII of the announcement.

Section VII. Agency Contact

Note to Applicants: In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement. Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified in Section VII as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be resolved prior to submitting a proposal. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination. Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified below by **October 19, 2015** and written responses will be posted on EPA's website at http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/sdwa/smallsystemsrfafaq.cfm. Please note answers to FAQs are available at http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/sdwa/smallsystemsrfafaq.cfm; EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

Agency Contact:

Adrienne Harris

E-mail: smallsystemsRFA@epa.gov

Section VIII. Other Information

A. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)

Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements may apply to these grants (see 2 CFR 1500.11). QA/QC requirements apply to the collection of environmental data. Environmental data are any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology. Environmental data include information collected directly from measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process. EPA can assist

successful applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the successful applicant may work with the EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. See Section VII., Agency Contact for Agency Contact information for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff.

If water quality data is generated, either directly or by subaward, the successful applicant must ensure all water quality data is transmitted into the Agency's Storage and Retrieval (STORET) Data Warehouse annually or by project completion using either WQX or WQXweb in accordance with an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan. Water quality data that are appropriate for STORET include physical, chemical, and biological sample results for water, sediment and fish tissue. The data include toxicity data, microbiological data, and the metrics and indices generated from biological and habitat data. The Water Quality Exchange (WQX) is the water data schema associated with the EPA, State and Tribal Exchange Network. Using the WQX schema partners map their database structure to the WQX/STORET structure. WQXweb is a web-based tool to convert data into the STORET format for smaller data generators that are not direct partners on the Exchange Network. More information about WQX, WQXweb, and the STORET Warehouse, including tutorials, can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/storet/wqx/>.

B. Data Sharing

All recipients of these assistance agreements may be required to share any data generated through this funding agreement as a defined deliverable in the final workplan.