

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2016 Support of the Five Star Restoration Training Grant

Announcement Type: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Catalog of Domestic Assistance Number: 66.462

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-OW-OWOW-15-03

Dates: The closing date and time for receipt of proposal submission is **January 22, 2016 by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (EST) in order to be considered for funding.** Proposals must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/>) no later than **January 22 2016, 11:59 P.M. EST in order to be considered for funding.** Questions about this RFP must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified in Section VII before **December 23, 2015.** Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at: <http://www2.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants>.

Note to Applicants: Following EPA's evaluation of proposals, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. Final applications will be requested from the eligible entity whose proposal has been successfully evaluated and preliminarily recommended for award. The entity will be provided with instructions and a due date for submittal of the final application package.

If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s) including individual consultants in your proposal as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>.

SUMMARY

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to manage the Five Star Restoration Training Grant. Specifically, EPA is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to: 1) prepare and advertise to a wide variety of potential subaward applicants a Request for Proposals (RFP), establish review criteria for evaluating and selecting subawardee proposals, and make subawards to support environmental training through voluntary, community/watershed-based wetland restoration projects that provide ecological and socioeconomic benefits to the surrounding communities and their citizens; 2) oversee and monitor subawardees for successful completion of the restoration training projects; 3) provide technical support to subawardees through peer-to-peer outreach to broaden participation in restoration training projects; 4) qualitatively and quantitatively measure and report on the environmental results of the restoration training projects accomplished through the subawards; and 5) develop a strategy to promote and grow the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program over the life of the cooperative agreement. The competitive subaward process proposed by the applicant must be on a national scale by allowing for subaward proposals for restoration training projects from across the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories. For the purpose of this announcement, wetlands include, but are not limited to, areas with any one of the following characteristics: appropriate hydrology, hydric soils or hydrophilic plants including marine systems, the continental shelf and mudflats; estuarine fresh, brackish, and saltwater systems; stream or river-corridors; lake associated systems; and palustrine systems (see Cowardin et al., at <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Documents/Classification-of-Wetlands-and-Deepwater-Habitats-of-the-United-States-2013.pdf>). Funding provided under this announcement

supports the following goal and objective of EPA's Strategic plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 – 2018: Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watershed and Aquatic Ecosystems. Information on the EPA Strategic Plan is available at <http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan.html>.

Eligible applicants under this announcement are non-profit, non-governmental organizations, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia which are capable of undertaking activities that advance wetland programs on a national basis.¹ Non-profit private universities and colleges and non-profit institutions of higher education are considered non-profit organizations and are eligible under this announcement. **Individual states, tribes, local governments, and for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply under this announcement.** Non-profit organizations described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply under this announcement.

The total federal amount of funding expected to be available under this announcement is approximately \$1,100,000, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations. EPA will fund a maximum of 75 percent of the total project cost (see Section III.B for information on the minimum non-federal 25 percent cost share /match requirement). It is anticipated that one cooperative agreement will be incrementally funded under this announcement with a four-year project period. Subawards awarded under the cooperative agreement are anticipated to have project periods ranging from one to two years. Funding for each subaward in the past has ranged from \$5,000 to \$40,000, with \$20,000 as the average amount awarded per project. Note: Applicants can identify a slightly different range and average amount for each subaward as part of their proposal narrative. The subawards funded under the cooperative agreement must be completed prior to the end of the cooperative agreement project period. The subawards need to be completed in sufficient time for the recipient to, for example, aggregate results and ensure that subawardees have been reimbursed for all incurred costs.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. FIVE STAR RESTORATION TRAINING GRANT OBJECTIVES

The Five Star Restoration Training Grant was initiated in FY 1999 to provide subawards to eligible subawardees to bring together citizen groups, corporations, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, and government agencies to undertake projects that achieve environmental training through voluntary, community/watershed-based wetland restoration projects. For the purpose of this announcement, wetlands include, but are not limited to, areas with any one of the following characteristics: appropriate hydrology, hydric soils or hydrophilic plants including marine systems, the continental shelf and mudflats; estuarine fresh, brackish, and saltwater systems; stream or river-corridors; lake associated systems; and palustrine systems (see Cowardin et al., at <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Documents/Classification-of-Wetlands-and-Deepwater-Habitats-of-the-United-States-2013.pdf>). A brief description of all the restoration training projects funded under previous Five Star Restoration Training Grants since FY 1999 and other additional information can be found on EPA's website at www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/5star/.

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."

In their proposals, applicants should demonstrate their ability, and describe an approach, for serving as an intermediary organization to manage the Five Star Restoration Training Grant. Specifically, as part of their project approach in the proposal narrative, applicants should demonstrate their ability to, for example:

- 1) Prepare and advertise to a wide variety of potential subaward applicants an RFP, establish criteria for evaluating and selecting subawardee proposals, and make subawards to support environmental training through voluntary, community/watershed-based wetland restoration projects;
- 2) Oversee and monitor subawardees for successful completion of restoration training projects;
- 3) Provide technical support to subawardees through peer-to-peer outreach to broaden participation in restoration training projects;
- 4) Qualitatively and quantitatively measure and report on the environmental results of the restoration training projects accomplished through the subawards; and
- 5) Develop a strategy to promote and grow the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program over the life of the cooperative agreement.

The competitive subaward process proposed in the project approach must be on a national scale by allowing for subawardee proposals for restoration training projects across the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories (i.e., Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa). At a minimum, the projects funded as subawards should have the following components: 1) include an environmental training component; 2) include a variety of partners; 3) incorporate ecological and socioeconomic benefits; 4) be part of a watershed or community-based plan; and 5) demonstrate on-the ground, voluntary restoration for wetlands. Applicants may include any other subaward activities in the RFP for the subawards that they believe will help promote and attain the objectives and goals described in the announcement.

Eligible entities for the competitive subaward program include public and private nonprofit institutions/ organizations, federally recognized Indian tribal governments, states, local governments, U.S. territories, interstate agencies, and individuals. For the purposes of this announcement, EPA has determined that the following types of entities are *ineligible* for the competitive subaward program: for-profit entities and all federal agencies. EPA award officials will disapprove the costs of proposed subaward work to 501(c)(4) organizations identified in an application, or workplan changes requiring prior approval, if the work involves lobbying activities or would otherwise violate the principles of EPA's subaward policy.

Effective partnerships are very important to the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program. In their proposals, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program. Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles of specific partners in the project's components/tasks. If the applicant chooses to identify any partner entities who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants) please refer to the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>, before doing so as EPA will not consider their qualifications unless the applicant selects them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. Partnerships between organizations focused on wetland and ecological restoration, education, training, and socioeconomic concerns can greatly benefit from one another's experience.

B. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The statutory authority for the assistance agreement to be awarded under this announcement is section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Section 104(b)(3) of the CWA restricts the use of assistance agreements to the following activities: conducting or promoting the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. For the purposes of this announcement, proposals must be limited to activities that conduct or promote the coordination and acceleration of training relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement. The recipient of the cooperative agreement will issue subawards under the Five Star Restoration Training Grant with the training authority contained in section 104(b)(3) of the CWA and applicable federal grant regulations.

Funds received through this competition cannot be used for the purchase of land or conservation easements. Proposal tasks that are or might be required by a previous or pending permit (e.g., CWA Section 404 permit, CWA Section 402 permit, CWA Section 401 certification) or federal, state, tribal, or local government regulatory requirement(s) are not eligible for funding because they are implementation tasks. Implementation of individual mitigation projects, mitigation banks, or in-lieu-fee mitigation programs are not eligible for funding. Wetland restoration training projects cannot include wetlands constructed only for the purposes of treating wastewater or stormwater. Funds cannot be used to fund payment of taxes for landowners who have a wetland on their property. Purchase of vehicles (including boats, motor homes, etc.) and office furniture are not eligible for funding under this program. The lease of vehicles may be eligible for funding, but is contingent on justification of need in the proposal narrative. Proposed projects must comply with all state and federal regulations applicable to the project area. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.

C. EPA'S STRATEGIC PLAN AND ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

The Five Star Restoration Training Grant supports EPA's FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this announcement will support Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters; Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems. For more information on EPA's Strategic Plan go to <http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan.html>.

Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters -- Protect and restore waters to ensure that drinking water is safe and sustainably managed, and that aquatic ecosystems sustain fish, plants, wildlife, and other biota, as well as economic, recreational, and subsistence activities.

- Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems – Protect, restore, and sustain the quality of rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands on a watershed basis, and sustainably manage and protect coastal and ocean resources and ecosystems.

All proposed projects must demonstrate a linkage to the Strategic Plan 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 demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall goal of restoring watersheds and protecting aquatic ecosystems.

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

Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the assistance agreement to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:

- The number of community/watershed-based wetland restoration training projects funded through subawards.
- Development of outreach materials and tools to help local governments or community-based groups incorporate their restoration training project into the larger community activities.
- The number of individuals trained.
- Development and verification of subawardee tracking (reporting) systems.

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. 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 environmental outcomes from the assistance agreement to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:

- Number of acres or miles of created, re-established, rehabilitated, or enhanced wetlands.
- Increased community capacity for environmental stewardship.
- Change in knowledge about community/watershed-based wetland restoration.
- Change in behavior for those involved in each community/watershed-based wetland restoration training project.

As part of the proposal narrative, an applicant will be required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to the Agency's Strategic Plan. Additional information regarding EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at:

<http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements>.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. AMOUNT OF FUNDING

EPA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement under this announcement with a total federal funding level of approximately \$1,100,000. The cooperative agreement is anticipated to be incrementally funded at approximately \$250,000 for each year of the project with a maximum federal award amount of \$1,100,000 over a four-year project period, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations. The successful applicant should provide EPA with a negotiated, four-year work plan covering four distinct one-year periods of performance. Subawards awarded under the cooperative agreement are anticipated to have project periods ranging from one to two years. The subawards need to be completed in sufficient time for the recipient to, for example, aggregate results and ensure that subawardees have been reimbursed for all incurred costs. Funding for each subaward in the past has ranged from \$5,000 to \$40,000, with \$20,000 as the average amount awarded per project.

Note: Applicants can identify a slightly different range and average amount for each subaward as part of their proposal narrative.

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

EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement. In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, 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 a cooperative agreement will be funded under this announcement. When cooperative agreements are awarded, EPA will have substantial involvement with the project workplans and budget. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for the project selected may include:

1. Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
2. Collaboration during the performance of the scope of work;
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 authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient);
5. Review and comment on content of tasks/deliverables and reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision of the content of reports rests with the recipient);
6. Review of evaluation criteria in selecting subawardees (the final decision on the evaluation criteria rests with the recipient);
7. EPA staff will review the subaward RFP and may provide comments to ensure consistency with the applicant's scope of work (the recipient is responsible for the content of, and all final decisions regarding, the subaward RFP including the disposition of any EPA comments on the subaward RFP);
8. EPA staff participation in the review process for selection of subawardees (the majority of the selection panel members must be non-federal members);
9. EPA review and approval of the substantive terms of subawards to verify compliance with federal requirements (the final decision on the selection of subawardees rests with the recipient); and
10. Upon request by the recipient and subject to the availability of personnel, EPA will provide the recipient with access to EPA scientific expertise, sampling protocols, publicly available data, and other forms of technical assistance.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants under this announcement are non-profit, non-governmental organizations, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia which are capable of undertaking activities that

advance wetland programs on a national basis.² Non-profit private universities and colleges and non-profit institutions of higher education are considered non-profit organizations and are eligible under this announcement. **Individual states, tribes, local governments, and for-profit organizations are not eligible under this announcement.** Non-profit organizations described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply under this announcement. EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement including demonstrating that they are capable of undertaking activities that advance wetland programs on a national basis.

The term “interstate agency” is defined in CWA section 502 as “an agency of two or more states established by or pursuant to an agreement or compact approved by the Congress, or any other agency of two or more states, having substantial powers or duties pertaining to the control of pollution as determined and approved by the Administrator.” An intertribal consortium is a partnership between two or more tribes that is authorized by the governing bodies of those tribes to apply for and receive assistance (see 40 CFR 35.502.). The intertribal consortium is eligible only if the consortium demonstrates that all of its members meet the eligibility requirements and authorize the consortium to apply for and receive assistance in accordance with 40 CFR 35.504 at the time of proposal submission. An intertribal consortium must submit with its proposal to EPA adequate documentation of the existence of the partnership and the authorization of the consortium by its members to apply for and receive the grant (see 40 CFR 35.504.). Nonprofit organizations may be asked to provide documentation that they meet the definition of a nonprofit organization in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Cost Circular 2 CFR Part 230 (non-profit organizations). Copies of OMB circulars can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/>. Interstate agencies may be asked to provide a citation to the statutory authority, which establishes their status.

B. COST SHARING/MATCH REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must demonstrate in their proposal submission how they will contribute a minimum non-federal cost share/match of 25 percent of the total project cost (*which equals the requested total federal share and match*) in accordance with **40 CFR 35.385 and 40 CFR 35.615**. This means that EPA will fund a maximum of 75 percent of the total project cost. Cost shares/matches can be in the form of cash or can come from in-kind contributions, such as the use of volunteers and/or donated time, equipment, expertise, *etc.*, subject to the regulations governing matching fund requirements described in 2 CFR 200 and 1500, 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. The cost share/match must be for 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 work plan. All grant funds are subject to federal audit. Any restrictions on the use of grant funds (examples of restrictions are outlined in Sections I.B and III.D of this announcement) also apply to the use of cost share/matching funds. Other federal grants may not be used as cost shares/matches without specific statutory authority. Applicants that do not demonstrate how they will meet the minimum cost share/match requirement in their proposal submission will not be considered for funding.

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.”

The minimum match is determined by dividing the total project cost by four. EPA will use the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total Project Cost (\$)}}{4} = \text{minimum cost share/match (\$)}$$

For example, if the **total project cost** is \$1,466,667 the applicant must be able to provide \$366,667 in cost share/match and the total federal portion would be \$1,100,000.

OR

$$\frac{\text{Total Federal Funds Requested (\$)}}{3} = \text{minimum cost share/match (\$)}$$

For example, if the **total federal funds requested** are \$1,100,000 the applicant must be able to provide \$366,667 in cash or in-kind contributions as cost share/match.

C. THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

These are requirements which if not met by the time of proposal submission will result in elimination of the proposal from consideration for funding. Only proposals that meet all of these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of the 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.
2. An applicant must demonstrate that it can meet the cost share/match requirements in Section III.B of this announcement at the time of proposal submission.
3. Proposals must address how the applicant will establish and manage a competitive subaward program on a national scale by allowing for subaward proposals for restoration training projects from across the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories.
4. Proposals must be limited to activities that conduct or promote the coordination and acceleration of training relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. Other activities under CWA section 104(b)(3) will not be considered for funding. Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement.
5. Proposals must **substantially comply** with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.C.3 with respect to the proposal narrative, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.C.3 establishes a 12-page, single-spaced proposal narrative page limit that includes the cover page.
6. In addition, initial proposals must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) as specified in Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the proposal submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this announcement to ensure that their proposal is timely submitted.
7. Proposals submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that

it was late due to the EPA mishandling or because of technical problems attributable to Grants.gov or relevant Sam.gov system issues and not the applicant. An applicant's failure to timely submit their proposal through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with Myra Price at price.myra@epa.gov as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

8. If a proposal is submitted that includes any ineligible activities set forth in Section III.D, that portion of the proposal will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire proposal ineligible for funding.

D. INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Funds cannot be used to fund payment of taxes for landowners who have a wetland on their property.
- Funds cannot be used for the purchase of land or conservation easements.
- Proposal tasks that are or might be required by a previous or pending permit (e.g., CWA Section 404 permit, CWA Section 402 permit, CWA Section 401 certification) or federal, state, tribal, or local government regulatory requirement(s) are **not** eligible for funding because they are implementation tasks.
- Funds cannot be used for implementation of individual mitigation projects, mitigation banks, or in-lieu-fee mitigation programs.
- Wetland restoration training projects cannot include wetlands constructed for the purposes of only treating wastewater or stormwater.
- Purchase of any type of equipment including vehicles, boats, motor homes office furniture valued at \$5,000 or more is not eligible for funding.
- Lease of a vehicle(s) may be permitted, but is contingent on justification of need in the proposal narrative.
- Projects must be performed entirely within the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories (i.e., Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa).

IV. PROPOSAL 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](https://www.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](https://www.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
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.

B. Grants.gov Proposal Submission Instructions

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 need to ensure that the AOR who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose DUNS number is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the DUNS number listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization’s SAM account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

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-OWOW-15-03 or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.462), 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 AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than **11:59 PM EST January 22, 2016**. 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.

Application Materials:

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3. Proposal Narrative (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in Section IVC.3 of the announcement

Optional Documents:

4. Other Attachments, if applicable

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from Grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Myra Price, at (202) 566-1225. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

c. 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 Myra Price with the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-OW-OWOW-15-03 in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Myra Price at 202-566-1225. 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 Myra Price at 202-566-1225.

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 price.myra@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 Myra Price with the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-OW-OWOW-15-03, 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 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Applicants should read the following section very carefully and address all requirements.

All proposal packages must include the following three documents:

1. Signed Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance

Complete the form and have it signed. Please be sure to include the organization fax number and e-mail address in Block 5 of the SF 424.

Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at

no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or by visiting the web site at www.dnb.com.

2. Standard Form 424A (SF-424A), Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs

Complete the form. 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 (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the total indirect amount should also be indicated on line 22. 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 (federal funds and non-federal cost share/match).

3. Proposal Narrative

Note: The Proposal Narrative must include sections A-E below. The Proposal Narrative is limited to no more than twelve (12) typewritten single-spaced 8.5 x 11 inch pages (a page is one side of paper) (**except** for documents specifically excluded from the page limit as noted below). 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 proposal narrative. Additional pages beyond the 12 page limit will not be considered. Supporting materials (such as letters of support from potential partners and annotated resumes) are not included within the page limit for the proposal narrative. Any documentation pertaining to Quality Assurance/Quality Control and Invasive Species Control is also not included in the page limit for the proposal narrative.

The Proposal Narrative must be typewritten and must include the information listed below in items A-E. If a particular item is not applicable, clearly state this in the Proposal Narrative.

- A. Cover Page including:
 - a. Project title;
 - b. Name of applicant;
 - c. List of all potential partners associated with the project;
 - d. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number);
 - e. Total project cost,(specify the amount of federal funds requested, the non-federal cost share/match, and the total project cost); and
 - f. Abstract/project summary (recommended 75 words or less): Provide a brief description of the proposed project.
- B. Project description containing:
 - a. Project Goals and Objectives (describe a plan for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outputs and outcomes which would include the following elements):
 - i. Stated Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan – Provide the objective of the project and describe the linkage to the EPA Strategic Plan Goal 2: Protecting America’s Waters, Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems (see Section I.C);
 - ii. Results of Activities (Outputs) – Describe the anticipated products/results which are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project, and an approach for tracking and reporting your progress

- toward achieving the expected project output(s) (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.C); and
- iii. Anticipated Environmental Improvement (Outcomes) - List the anticipated environmental improvements to be accomplished as a result of this project. These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment which are a result from the accomplishment of project 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.C).
- b. **Project Approach:** Describe your approach for serving as an intermediary organization to manage the Five Star Restoration Training Grant (see Section I.A). The competitive subaward process proposed in the project approach must be on a national scale by allowing for subawardee proposals for restoration training projects across the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories. The project approach should demonstrate the applicant's ability to:
 - i. prepare and advertise an RFP, establish criteria for evaluating and selecting subawardee proposals, and make subawards to support environmental training through voluntary, community/watershed-based wetland restoration projects that: 1) include an environmental training component; 2) include a variety of partners; 3) incorporate ecological and socioeconomic benefits; 4) be part of a watershed or community-based plan; and 5) demonstrate on-the ground, voluntary restoration for wetlands;
 - ii. oversee and monitor subawardees for successful completion of restoration training projects;
 - iii. provide technical support to subawardees through peer-to-peer outreach to broaden participation in restoration training projects;
 - iv. qualitatively and quantitatively measure and report on the environmental results of the restoration training projects accomplished through the subawards; and
 - v. develop a strategy to promote and grow the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program over the life of the cooperative agreement.
 - c. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a milestone schedule that covers each year of the total grant period request (up to four years for the cooperative agreement and one to two years for the subawards) and provides a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks. The milestone schedule should show timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks including, but not limited to, major annual outreach activities, release of the subaward RFP, and the approximate time of award of the subawards. Include an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow acceptance of the award by the successful applicant.
 - d. **Partnerships:** Describe the agencies/organizations who you will partner with as appropriate and necessary to successfully conduct the project. Include a clear description of the roles of specific partners in the project's components/tasks. Describe how these partnerships will contribute to the success of the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program. If you choose to identify any partner entities

who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants) please refer to the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>, before doing so as EPA will not consider their qualifications unless you select them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. Letters of support from potential partners are encouraged and will not count against the page limit for the proposal narrative.

- e. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) (not counted in 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).
- f. Invasive Species Control (not counted in page limit): If applicable, describe how you will ensure that your project does not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive species. Explain how you would respond if an invasive species problem occurs in relation to your project. (See Section VIII.E, INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL, of this announcement for additional information).

C. Programmatic Capability -

- a. Organizational Experience. Provide a brief description of the applicant's organization and experience related to the proposed project, and the 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 expertise/qualifications and knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them to successfully achieve the goals of the project. Include an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (based on 2080 hours per year/FTE). Annotated resumes of applicant's key staff are also encouraged and are not included in the page limit.

D. Detailed Budget Narrative - Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. This section provides an opportunity for narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF 424A such as "other" and "contractual". All subaward funding should be located under the "other" cost category.

- a. Total costs must include both federal and cost share/match (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 25 percent cost share/match as required in Section III.B. Include any travel for applicant staff to attend meetings throughout the proposed project period to promote the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program or to increase subawardee applications. Describe each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of costs.
- b. When formulating budgets for proposals, applicants must not include management fees or similar charges in excess of the direct costs and indirect costs at the rate approved by the applicants cognizant audit agency, or at the rate provided for by the terms of the agreement negotiated with EPA. The term "management fees or similar charges" refers to expenses added to the direct costs in order to accumulate and reserve funds for ongoing business expenses,

unforeseen liabilities, or for other similar costs that are not allowable under EPA assistance agreements. Management fees or similar charges may not be used to improve or expand the project funded under the agreement, except to the extent authorized as a direct cost of carrying out the project.

- E. Past Performance – Briefly describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements but not federal contracts) similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and:
- Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
 - Describe your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports.
 - 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 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 from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a statement in the proposal 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).

NOTE: The applicant should also provide in its proposal narrative any additional information, to the extent not already identified above, that addresses the selection criteria found in Section V.

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Proposals submitted electronically through Grants.gov must be received by 11:59 PM EST January 22, 2016. Late proposals 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, contracts and subawards under grants, and proposal assistance and communications, can be found at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>. 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.

EPA recommends that if your program is covered under E.O. 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs” that the applicant should submit their proposal and SF 424 form to the official designated point of contact in his or her state at the time of submission of your package to EPA.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. SELECTION CRITERIA

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

<p>1) Project Goals and Objectives (15 points)</p>	<p>Proposals will be evaluated based on each of the following sub-criterion:</p> <p>A. The extent and quality to which the proposal demonstrates the potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to EPA’s Strategic Plan. (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section I.C of this announcement). (10 points)</p> <p>B. The extent and quality to which the proposal 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.C of this announcement). (5 points)</p>
<p>2) Project Approach (35 points)</p>	<p>Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the project approach demonstrates the applicant’s ability to:</p> <p>A. Prepare and advertise a Request For Proposals, establish criteria for evaluating and selecting subawardee proposals, and make subawards to support environmental training through voluntary, community/watershed-based wetland restoration projects that: 1) include an environmental training component; 2) include a variety of partners; 3) incorporate ecological and socioeconomic benefits; 4) be part of a watershed or community-based plan; and 5) demonstrate on-the ground, voluntary restoration for wetlands. (15 points)</p> <p>B. Oversee and monitor subawardees for completion of restoration training projects. (5 points)</p> <p>C. Provide technical support to subawardees through peer-to-peer outreach to broaden participation in restoration training projects. (5 points)</p> <p>D. Qualitatively and quantitatively measure and report on the environmental results of the restoration training projects accomplished through the subawards. (5 points)</p>

	E. Develop a strategy to promote and grow the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program over the life of the cooperative agreement. (5 Points)
3) Specific Workplan Proposal Narrative Elements (15 points)	<p>Proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the proposal demonstrates each of the following sub-criterion:</p> <p>A. A clearly articulated milestone schedule for project tasks including, but not limited to, major annual outreach activities, release of the subaward RFP, and the approximate time of award of the subawards. (5 points)</p> <p>B. 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, and whether there is a clearly articulated approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. 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). (10 points)</p>
4) Project Partnerships (10 points)	Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project including whether they have provided a clear description of the roles of specific partners in the project's components/tasks, and how these partnerships will contribute to the success of the Five Star Restoration Training Grant program. (10 points)
5) Programmatic Capability (Organizational Experience/ Staff Expertise/ Qualifications) (15 Points)	<p>Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account the applicant's:</p> <p>A. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the project. (10 points)</p> <p>B. Staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. (5 points)</p>
6) Past Performance (10 points)	<p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their:</p> <p>A. Past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements). (3 points)</p>

	<p>B. History of meeting reporting requirements under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract) similar in size, scope, and relevance 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 these agreements. (3 points)</p> <p>C. Extent and quality to which they 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 (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract) performed in 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 why not. (4 points)</p> <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under A., B., and C. 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 provided by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the proposal and they will receive a neutral score for the factor (i.e., 1.5 points for subcriterion A., 1.5 points for subcriterion B., and 2 points for subcriterion C.).</p> <p>Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a statement in your proposal 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 subcriterion A., 0 points for subcriterion B., and 0 points for subcriterion C.).</p>
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B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

All proposals 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. Proposals that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

A panel comprised of EPA staff will review eligible proposals based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. The panel will develop a ranking list of the proposals based on the evaluation scores received. The ranking list will be provided to the Selection Official who makes final funding decisions. In making final funding decisions, the Selection Official will consider the proposal score and may also take into account programmatic priorities.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

Following EPA's evaluations of the proposals, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified regarding their status. A final application will be requested

from the eligible applicant whose proposal has been successfully evaluated and preliminarily recommended for award. The applicant will be provided with instructions and a due date for submittal of the final application package. The notification of recommendation for award is not an authorization to begin performance, nor is it a guarantee that the award will be made.

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

1. Workplan components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each workplan component;
3. Workplan commitments for each workplan 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 workplan commitments.

The selected project will be posted on EPA's website at <http://www2.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants>. This website may also contain additional information about this RFP. Deadline extensions, if any, will be posted on this website and www.grants.gov.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by the 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.

C. 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 semi-annually 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 workplan consistent with 2 CFR § 200.328, Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance, and 40 CFR Part 45. This includes any problems, issues or difficulties encountered that may affect the quality requirements of the project. The recipient must indicate what if any corrective actions were taken. Award recipients will be required to submit the final report electronically and in hard copy and should include, in addition, a 1-2 page project summary. If travel assistance is provided to selected attendees to attend wetland meetings/training workshops, the recipient will be required to provide a report on how participating non-federal attendees benefited from the workshops.

D. DISPUTES

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/dispute-resolution-procedures>. Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement.

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 DUNS, SAM, copyrights, disputes, and administrative capability, can be found at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>. 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.

VII. AGENCY CONTACT

In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft proposals, provide informal comments on draft proposals, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their proposals. 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 proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination. Questions must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified below by **December 23, 2015** and written responses will be posted on the EPA's website at: <http://www2.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants>.

Agency Contact

Myra Price

E-mail: Price.Myra@epa.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL (QA/QC)

Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements apply to these grants 2 CFR 200.414. 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 CONTACTS 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. INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Pursuant to Executive Order 13112 (<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/>), the recipient of EPA funds and all subcontractors shall monitor the project to ensure it does not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive species. If invasive species are detected or populations promoted in any way, the recipient will respond rapidly to control populations in an environmentally sound manner, as approved by the EPA Project Officer.

C. WETLANDS MAPPING STANDARD

A "National Wetland Mapping Standard" has been developed by a work group of the Federal Geospatial Data Committee. This work group has provided a national standard for wetland mapping which must be used in all mapping projects that are funded through the federal government. Non-federally funded wetland mapping projects are encouraged to comply with the standard. All geospatial data created must be consistent with Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) endorsed standards. Information on these standards may be found at www.fgdc.gov. All geospatial wetlands mapping must comply with the FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standard which can be found at: http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/projects/FGDC-standards-projects/wetlands-mapping/2009-08%20FGDC%20Wetlands%20Mapping%20Standard_final.pdf. To facilitate accurate data production and inclusion into the National Wetlands Database it is recommended that you visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's, National Wetlands Inventory, Contributed Data page at: <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Contributed-Data.html> or contact them at Wetlands_Team@fws.gov.