

OVERVIEW SECTION

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

TITLE: CERCLA RESEARCH COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

ACTION: Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP NO: EPA-OLEM-OSRTI-16-07

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NO.: 66.813

DATES: The closing date and time for receipt of proposal submissions is January 6, 2017, 11:59 p.m. ET. Proposals must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. ET on January 6, 2017 to receive consideration. Proposals submitted after 11:59 p.m. ET on January 6, 2017, will not be considered.

SUMMARY: This request for proposals (RFP) solicits proposals from eligible entities to promote and stimulate research for use by state environmental officials to address Superfund policy and implementation issues of importance to states. The project will provide support for state participation in developing tools, procedures and guidance to promote efficient cleanup work by states under the Superfund program.

FUNDING/AWARDS: The total estimated funding available under this competitive opportunity is \$1,500,000, subject to availability of funds, quality of proposals received and other applicable considerations. EPA anticipates selecting one project through this competitive opportunity.

CONTENTS BY SECTION:

1. Funding Opportunity Description
2. Award Information
3. Eligibility Information and Threshold Criteria
4. Proposal Submission Information
5. Proposal Review Information
6. Award Administration Information
7. Contacts
8. Other Information

Section 1– Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background

EPA is responsible for cleaning up the nation’s most contaminated land, and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills and natural disasters. To protect public health and the environment, the Superfund program focuses on making a visible and lasting difference in communities, ensuring that people can live and work in healthy, vibrant places. Superfund is also the name of the fund established by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended (CERCLA). It allows the EPA to clean up such sites and to compel responsible parties to perform cleanups or reimburse the government for EPA-lead cleanups.

EPA strategic documents have recognized the critical importance of leveraging strong federal-state partnerships to facilitate successful environmental protection programs. One of EPA’s Cross-Agency Strategies is titled “Launching a New Era of State, Tribal, Local, and International Partnerships.” States play a significant role in the implementation of the federal Superfund program. According to the National Contingency Plan (NCP) 40 CFR Part 300.500, EPA shall ensure meaningful and substantial state involvement in hazardous substance response, including an opportunity for state participation in removal, pre-remedial, remedial, and enforcement response activities. Typically states refer sites to the Superfund Program for cleanup; state governor support is needed before a site is added to the National Priorities List (NPL); states must concur on remedies; states share 10% of the cost for fund lead remedial actions and 100% of the cost for operation and maintenance after the remedy is complete. In addition, while EPA may select institutional controls as part of a remedy, the authority to implement, monitor, and enforce institutional controls relies upon a combination of state, tribal and local authorities.

EPA works closely with the states as we address contaminated sites, and needs to hear state concerns and perspectives to ensure that national regulations, policies, and programs reflect state input. While interaction occurs between each EPA regional office and the states and territories within that region as a part of day-to-day work, the national Superfund program greatly benefits from engagement of all states and territories when considering national level policies.

This research will foster the identification and resolution of current and emerging Superfund related issues that are important to state “co-regulators.” This research is important for several reasons. States play a critical role in the identification of contaminated sites, decisions to list sites on the National Priorities List ~~(NPL)~~, and cleanup decisions, and then assume the lead for O&M of remedies. When waste is left in place, O&M responsibilities include engineering and/or institutional controls requiring active maintenance, oversight, and enforcement. This research will identify and promote efficiencies that will assist EPA and states in working more effectively to manage their joint responsibilities, disseminate information from this research to states, in order to support fuller state participation in new Superfund program initiatives once implemented. In addition, EPA recognizes the role states play in Superfund cleanup enforcement. Through this new cooperative agreement, EPA seeks research to identify opportunities within its cleanup enforcement program to strengthen partnerships with states through consultation, collaboration, and shared accountability.

B. Project Description

The activities identified below provide examples of Superfund program areas in which EPA believes states will benefit from state-focused research during the proposed 5-year cooperative agreement period. However, since initiatives are likely to evolve, support areas are not limited to these activities, and EPA seeks proposals that show an ability to adapt to new issues facing states as they implement the Superfund program.

For all of the activities described below, only the cooperative agreement recipient, rather than EPA, will identify state personnel who receive travel support from cooperative agreement funds. Travel for state personnel are participant support costs under 2 CFR 200.75 and applicants should anticipate making appropriate adjustments to their indirect cost rate distribution.

1. Research.

In order to provide for meaningful consideration of projects that can help to improve cleanup efforts, the recipient will convene focus groups to research priority issues of interest to the states in the context of the Federal-state Superfund partnership. These projects will promote state participation in issues related to assessment, cleanup, O&M, and enforcement that will aid in improving the implementation of the Superfund program. Examples of potential activities include, but need not be limited to, assisting state response programs with:

- Incorporating new and emerging science into cleanup program activities
- Supporting efforts to build capacity for the planning, implementation, management and enforcement of institutional controls and operation and maintenance activities;
- Developing oversight and enforcement mechanisms that are adequate to ensure remediation is protective of human health and the environment and conducted in accordance with federal and state law
- Promoting coordination and partnership with co-regulators (e.g., EPA, local government, tribes) to provide for more effective remedies
- Investigating barriers – institutional, technological, regulatory and policy – related to effective implementation of the Superfund cleanup and enforcement programs

EPA encourages applicants to propose additional activities based on their analysis of state interests. Applicants should also propose cost-effective ways of sharing research information and reports with states and, secondarily, with EPA.

Focus groups may be an effective way to organize proposed research. Examples of potential focus groups could include the following, and EPA encourages applicants to base their proposals on an analysis of state interests.

- Site Assessment
- Remedial Action
- Post-Construction

- Emerging Issues (e.g., inactive mining sites)

2. Coordination of research results and other information

It is critical that research from this agreement be shared with states and possibly other non-Federal stakeholders. This agreement will support a variety of efforts to share information developed by the focus groups and engage in dialogue on issues of importance to the Superfund Program.

Examples of research information sharing mechanisms include the following but again EPA encourages applicants to propose the use of innovative means of information dissemination:

- sharing information online or through webinars
- sponsoring in-person meetings
- supporting state travel to share information resulting from research projects

3. Travel to Other Meetings

Funding under this assistance agreement will assist state travel in support of the research focus groups to meetings that further the Federal-state Superfund partnership and enable state personnel to conduct research or disseminate the results of research. Funding is also available for travel for technical support, meetings to coordinate information, and training in research techniques.

As part of EPA's substantial involvement, EPA's Project Officer will review and approve all proposed travel under this task in advance and the successful applicant will track the travel separately.

C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage

The projects selected for award under this solicitation will support progress towards EPA Strategic Plan Goal 3 (Cleaning Up Communities and Advancing Sustainable Development), Objective 3 (Restore Land). View EPA's Strategic Plan at: <http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan.html>.

D. Measuring Environmental Results: Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs

Pursuant to EPA Order 5700.7, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA requires that all grant applicants and recipients adequately address environmental outcomes and outputs. Outcomes and outputs differ both in their nature and in how they are measured. Recipients must discuss environmental outcomes and outputs in their proposed workplan.

1. **Outcomes:** The term "outcomes" refer to 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. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related or programmatic in nature, and may not necessarily be achievable during the project period.

The EPA anticipates that outcomes from projects awarded under this announcement will enable:

- Increased efficiency of state Superfund programs as a result of the information and knowledge shared by the recipient.
- Improved state technical expertise to address Superfund program challenges through usage of the research products developed by the recipient.
- Increased state knowledge of key Superfund program initiatives, and implementation best practices.
- Incorporation of state perspectives into national Superfund program consideration of technological, regulatory or policy barriers to effective Superfund program implementation.
- Improved cleanup program coordination and collaboration among the states, and between states and EPA (both regionally and nationally) to improve implementation of the Superfund program.

2. **Outputs:** The term “output” refers to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work products related to an environmental goal or objective, that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs must be measurable during the project period.

The EPA anticipates outputs from projects awarded under this competitive opportunity will include, but not be limited to:

- Development and dissemination of resource documents and tools to assist states in enhancing and improving their Superfund programs.
- State feedback on federal regulations and policies under development; and
- Increased opportunities for dialogue between states, territories, EPA and other federal agencies to address Superfund program implementation concerns.

E. Supplementary Information

The statutory authority for this action is the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), Section 311(c).

Section 2 – Award Information

A. What is the amount of available funding?

The total estimated funding available under this competitive opportunity is \$1.5 million, subject to the availability of funds, quality of proposals received, EPA discretion and other applicable considerations.

B. How many grants will EPA award through this competition?

EPA anticipates award of one cooperative agreement under this competitive opportunity.

A cooperative agreement is an assistance agreement that is used when there is substantial federal involvement throughout the performance of the project. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the performance of the project. EPA will negotiate the precise terms and conditions of “substantial involvement” as part of the award process. Federal involvement may include close monitoring of the recipient’s performance; collaboration during the performance of the scope of work; in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, as appropriate, review of proposed procurements; reviewing qualifications of key personnel; and/or review and comment on the content of printed or electronic publications prepared. EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.

EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this competition, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months from the date of the original selection decision.

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement, or make fewer awards than anticipated.

C. What is the project period for award(s) resulting from this solicitation?

The estimated start date for projects resulting from this solicitation is February 1, 2017. All project activities must be completed within the maximum negotiated project performance period of five years.

D. Will proposals be partially funded?

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

Section 3 – Eligibility Information and Threshold Criteria

A. Eligible Entities

Assistance under this program is generally available to States, territories, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, other public or private nonprofit institutions, and individuals. In some instances, EPA will consider applications from profit makers, proposing projects with significant technical merit and relevance to EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management. 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. For certain competitive funding opportunities under this CFDA description, the Agency may limit eligibility to compete to a number or subset of eligible applicants consistent with the Agency's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No matching funds are required under this competition. Although cost-sharing/matching is not required as a condition of eligibility under this competition, under Section 5.A. of this solicitation the EPA will evaluate proposals based on leveraging. Leveraging is generally when an applicant proposes to provide its own additional funds/resources or those from third party sources to support or complement the project they are awarded under the competition, which are above and beyond the EPA grant funds awarded. Any leveraged funds/resources, and their source, must be identified in the proposal under the appropriate ranking criterion and documentation provided (see Section 5.A.7., Leveraging). Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

Voluntary cost share: this is a form of leveraging. Voluntary cost sharing is when an applicant voluntarily proposes to legally commit to provide costs or contributions to support the project when a cost share is not required. Applicants who propose to use a voluntary cost share must include the costs or contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424. If an applicant proposes a voluntary cost share, the following apply:

- A voluntary cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations (2 CFR 200.306, as applicable).
- A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
- The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.
- The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved project budget. If the proposed voluntary cost share does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR 200.338.

Other leveraged funding/resources that are not identified as a voluntary cost share: this form of leveraging may be met by funding from another federal grant, from an applicant's own resources, or

resources from other third party sources. This form of leveraging should not be included in the budget and the costs need not be eligible and allowable project costs under the EPA grant. While this form of leveraging should not be included in the budget, the grant workplan should include a statement indicating that the applicant is expected to produce the proposed leveraging consistent with the terms of the announcement and the applicant's proposal. If an applicant proposes to provide this form of leveraging, EPA expects the applicant to make the effort to secure the leveraged resources described in the proposals. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500 as applicable.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

Proposals must meet the following “threshold criteria,” **by the time of proposal submission. Proposals that fail to meet any one of the threshold criteria will not be considered further.**

EPA will notify applicants who do not meet the threshold criteria within 15 calendar days of the “fail” determination. Proposals that meet the threshold criteria will then be evaluated based on the factors disclosed in *Section 5(A), Evaluation Criteria*. The threshold criteria are:

1. Proposals must address an acceptable project as described in *Section 1(B), Project Description* of this announcement.
2. Proposals must specifically describe how the applicant has an established organizational structure to meaningfully engage state cleanup program experts in the proposed research, and an ability to widely disseminate information across all states and territories.
3. Federal funds requested may not exceed **\$1.5 million. This excludes any leveraging or voluntary cost share.** Proposals requesting assistance funding in excess of this value will not be considered.
4. Proposals must substantially comply with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in *Section 4(B)* of this announcement or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in *Section 4(D)* with respect to the proposal, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.

In addition, initial proposals must be submitted through www.grants.gov as specified in *Section 4(B)* of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in *Section 4(A)*), on or before the proposal submission deadline published in *Section 4(B)* of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in *Section 4(b)* of this announcement to ensure that their proposal is timely submitted.

Proposals submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated

with Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues. An applicant's failure to timely submit their proposal 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. 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 proposal deadline, please contact **Ellyn Fine** at **(703) 603-8714** or fine.ellyn@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

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

Section 4 – Proposal Submission Information

A. Requirement to Submit Through www.grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants, except as noted below, must apply electronically through www.grants.gov under this funding opportunity based on the www.grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If an applicant does not have the technical capability to apply electronically through www.grants.gov because of limited or no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials to 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 www.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 31st of the calendar year in which the exception was approved (e.g., if the exception was approved on March 1, 2016, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to EPA through December 31, 2016). Applicants need only request an exception once in a calendar year and all exceptions will expire on December 31st of that calendar year. Applicants must request a new exception from required electronic submission through www.grants.gov for submissions for any succeeding calendar year. For example, if there is a competitive opportunity issued on December 1, 2016, with a submission deadline of January 15, 2017, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2017.

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 7 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. Submission Instructions

In order to submit a proposal¹ through www.grants.gov, you must:

1. Have an active DUNS number,

¹ Note that the terms "proposal" and "application" mean the same thing for the purposes of this competition. The files that you submit through www.grants.gov as your BF AWP proposal is what is known as an application package in www.grants.gov.

2. Have an active System for Award Management (SAM) account in www.sam.gov,
3. Be registered in www.grants.gov, and
4. Be designated as your organization's Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).

The registration process to all of the above items **may take a month or more to complete**. Occasionally, technical and other issues arise when using www.grants.gov. EPA encourages applicants to submit their proposals early.

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with www.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 www.grants.gov, go to 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 www.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 www.grants.gov, www.SAM.gov, and DUNS number assignment is FREE.

Applicants need to ensure that the AOR who submits the application through www.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.

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to 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 www.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 [Adobe Reader Compatibility Information on www.grants.gov](http://www.adobe.com/reader/compatibility).

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on www.grants.gov. Go to www.grants.gov and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-OLEM-OSRTI-16-07, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.813), in the appropriate field and click the Search button. Alternatively, you may be able to access the application package by clicking on the Package button at the top right of the synopsis page for the announcement on www.grants.gov. To find the synopsis page, go to 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 www.grants.gov no later than January 6,

2017, 11:59 p.m. ET. Please allow 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 www.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.

After signing and successfully submitting the application package, within 24 to 48 hours the AOR should receive notification emails from www.grants.gov with the following subject lines:

1. GRANT##### Grants.gov Submission Receipt

2. GRANT##### Grants.gov Submission Validation Receipt for Application

If the AOR did not receive either notification emails listed above, contact the www.grants.gov Help Desk at 1-800-518-4726.

After the application package is retrieved out of the www.grants.gov system by EPA, the AOR should receive the following notification emails from www.grants.gov:

3. GRANT##### Grants.gov Grantor Agency Retrieval Receipt for Application

4. GRANT##### Grants.gov Agency Tracking Number Assignment for Application

Application Materials: The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Narrative Proposal. See Section 4.D. for details on the content of the Narrative Proposal and the associated page limits
3. Required Attachments. See Section 4.D.

Applications submitted through www.grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from www.grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Ellyn Fine (703-603-8714; fine.ellyn@epa.gov). Failure to do so may result in your proposal 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 www.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 www.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 www.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 www.grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to www.grants.gov BEFORE the due date identified in Section 4 of the solicitation. The www.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: www.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 Ellyn Fine (fine.ellyn@epa.gov) with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Ellyn Fine (703-603-8714). 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 www.sam.gov or www.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 www.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 www.grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be *sure* to obtain a case number from www.grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to www.grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Ellyn Fine (703-603-8714).
 - b. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from www.grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, send an email message to fine.ellyn@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the www.grants.gov case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.
 - c. www.grants.gov rejection of the application package: If a notification is received from www.grants.gov stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal promptly send an email to Ellyn Fine (fine.ellyn@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 www.grants.gov and attach the entire application in PDF format.

D. Content and Form of Proposal

The following documents are required for all proposal packages. In addition to the mandatory documents listed in Section 4(B), all proposals must contain a “Narrative Proposal,” and a budget narrative. The “Narrative Proposal,” a maximum of 15 pages in length, must explicitly describe the applicant’s proposed project and specifically address each of the evaluation criteria disclosed in *Section 5(A), Evaluation Criteria*, and the threshold eligibility criteria in *Section 3(C)*.

1. Narrative Proposal.

Narrative Proposals must be concise, well organized, and not exceed 15 typed, single-line spaced, 8 1/2 x 11” pages. The Narrative Proposal must provide the information detailed in this section and, **include responses to all *Section 3(C), Threshold Criteria, Section 5(A), Evaluation Criteria*, as well as the information identified in *Section 1, Funding Opportunity Description*.** Factual information about your proposed project must be provided. Do not include discussions of broad principles that are not specific to the proposed work or project covered by your proposal. **Responses to evaluation criteria should include the criteria number and title but need not restate the entire text of the criteria.** Sufficient detail must be provided to allow for an evaluation of the merits of the proposal. Vague descriptions, redundancy, and failure to address the selection criteria will result in a lower ranking.

The Narrative Proposal (*Sections “a” and “b” below*) must substantially conform to the following outline and content:

- a. **Cover Letter.** The cover letter must include a brief description of your project, be written on your organization’s official letterhead, and signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the proposed project. The cover letter must also include:
 - i. **Applicant Information.** Provide the name and full address of the tribe or consortium applying for funds. This is the agency or organization that will be receiving the grant and will be accountable to the EPA;
 - ii. **Contacts.** Provide phone/fax numbers, e-mail address, and mailing address of the project director and head of organization/executive director responsible for the project proposal. These individuals may be contacted if other information is needed;
 - iii. **Cooperative Partners.** Provide names and phone numbers of individuals and organizations that have agreed to participate in the implementation of the project, if any; and
 - iv. **Funding Requested.** Specify the amount you are requesting from EPA. **The total funding requested amount may not exceed \$1.5 million, excluding any in-kind contribution or match.**

- b. **Detailed Project Description.** The project description should provide the information below on how the applicant will implement and conduct its project and discuss how the proposal addresses each of the evaluation criteria in *Section 5* of this announcement.

The detailed project description must substantially conform to the following outline and content:

- i. **Project Description.** Provide a description of the proposed project, as referenced in *Section 1(B), Project Description*, and program objectives. The project description should 1) outline how the proposed project will select and conduct research on national Superfund program implementation issues of wide state concern; 2) discuss how the recipient will support efforts to share information developed through this agreement; and 3) promote dialogue between EPA and the states on issues of importance to the Superfund Program.
- ii. **Programmatic Capability and Past Performance.** Submit a list of federally 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 (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements. In evaluating applicants under these factors in *Section 5*, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or 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). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of zero for these factors.
- iii. **Performance Measurement: Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs.**

Anticipated Outcomes: Identify the expected environmental outcomes as described in *Section 1(E), Measuring Environmental Results: Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs* of this announcement. Discuss how you propose to track and measure your progress in achieving the project outcomes and results. (*Refer to Section 5(A), Evaluation Criteria, Performance Measurement.*)

Anticipated Outputs. Identify the expected project outputs, including those described in *Section 1(E), Measuring Environmental Results: Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs* of this announcement and how you will track and measure your expected project outputs. Outputs, quantitative or qualitative, must be measurable during the project performance period. (*Refer to Section 5(A), Evaluation Criteria, Performance Measurement.*)

- iv. **Voluntary cost share/match and leveraged funds.** Demonstrate how you will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support the proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes but is not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the legitimacy of the award.
- v. **Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds.** Describe your organization's procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

2. **Attachments.** The following documents shall be included as attachments to the work plan. These documents will not count as part of the 15 page limit and do not have an individual page limitation. Attachments beyond the required attachments below will not be considered. Please provide a list of all attachments to the proposal.

- a. **Budget.** Provide a detailed itemized budget proposal that clearly explains how funds will be used for each of the following categories and how it relates to the project objective. Indicate what portion of the cost EPA will pay, and what portion the applicant or other partners will pay, if applicable:
 - i. Personnel;
 - ii. Fringe Benefits;
 - iii. Contractual Costs;
 - iv. Travel;
 - v. Supplies;
 - vi. Other Costs (be specific);
 - vii. Administrative Costs (other than Indirect Costs);
 - viii. Non-EPA Project Funding. Identify funding from other sources including in-kind resources;

- ix. Total Direct Costs;
- x. Total Indirect Costs (must include Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as documentation of federally-approved indirect cost rate (percentage); and
- xi. Total Project Cost (Total Direct + Indirect Costs). Costs proposed in the budget must be linked directly to the narrative proposal.

Management Fees: When formulating budgets for proposals/applications, 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 this agreement, except to the extent authorized as a direct cost of carrying out the scope of work.

- b. **Milestones.** Schedule indicating start times and completion dates of significant tasks under your Program.

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 <https://www.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.

SECTION 5. PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION

All proposals received by the closing date and time for the submission will first be reviewed to determine eligibility for funding based upon compliance with the Threshold Eligibility Criteria in *Section 3(C)*. Only proposals determined eligible will be evaluated for technical merit. Proposals that do not meet the Threshold Eligibility Criteria will not be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria set forth below. **You must directly and explicitly address these criteria** as part of your proposal package. EPA will rate your proposal using a points system, with a total of 100 points possible.

A. Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Maximum Points per Criterion
<p>Technical Approach. Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate the quality and extent to which the proposal effectively addresses the scope of work activities described in <i>Section 1(B)</i> of this announcement. The proposal will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which the proposed project description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly, concisely and realistically provides a description of the proposed project goals, activities, budget, and project milestones; (15 pts.) Is technically sound and structured to accomplish the proposal requirements; (10 pts.) Includes measures for demonstrating success. (10 pts.) 	35
<p>Programmatic Capability and Environmental Results Past Performance. Under this criterion, the proposal will be evaluated based on your ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account your:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to this section. (10 points) Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project (5 points) Staff expertise and qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project (5 points) History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to this section including whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements, and if such progress was not being made whether you adequately reported and why not. (10 points) <p><i>NOTE: In evaluating you under items “a” and “d” of this criterion, EPA will consider the information provided by you and may also consider relevant information from other sources including EPA files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items a and d above-a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors</i></p>	30

<p>Performance Measurement: Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs. Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate the extent to which the “Narrative Proposal” realistically describes how the project will lead to measurable environmental results (i.e., amount of pollution prevented; waste reduced, reused, recycled or, resources conserved). The proposals will be evaluated on the quality and extent to which they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly specify anticipated environmental outcomes and outputs as described in <i>Section 1(E), Measuring Environmental Results: Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs</i>. (6 pts.) Clearly describe the measures of success for the project. Measure of success should be either measures of environmental improvement or should be directly linked to such measures. EPA will look for quantitative and qualitative measurability. (5 pts.) Describe how progress towards achieving project outcomes and outputs will be evaluated and measured. Include a description of any planned reports or other deliverables that measure and track the project success and, document achievement of expected outputs identified in <i>Section 1(E), Measuring Environmental Results: Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs</i>. (4 pts.) 	15
<p>Budget/Resources. This criterion refers to the proposed budget, in-kind goods and services, and other resources that the applicant outlines to carry out the proposed project. The proposal will be evaluated based on the extent that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget is clearly stated, detailed, and appropriate to achieve the project’s objectives. How will your proposed budget effectively sustain your proposed project? How will you plan on managing this budget? This should include cost estimates for each of the proposed project activities to be conducted using EPA funds. (5 pts.) The proposal identifies partnering organization(s) and documents the relationship with the applicant, for example, through letters of support, joint statements, or principles of agreement signed by other parties. <i>If there are no partnering organizations, the proposal will be evaluated on how it will achieve results without partnerships.</i> (5 pts.) 	10
<p>Voluntary Cost Share/Leveraging. Under this criterion applicants will be evaluated based on the extent they demonstrate:</p> <p>(i) how they will coordinate the use of EPA funding with other federal and/or non-federal sources of funds/resources to leverage additional resources beyond the grant funds awarded to carry out the proposed project(s) and/or (ii) that EPA funding will complement activities relevant to the proposed project(s) carried out by the applicant with other sources of funds or resources. Applicants will also be evaluated based on the type and amount of leveraging proposed, how the</p>	5

applicant will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. (5 pts.)	
Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds. Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (5 pts.)	5

B. Other Factors

Final funding decisions will be made by the EPA Headquarters Selection Official based on the rankings and preliminary recommendations of the EPA evaluation team. In making the final funding decisions, the EPA Headquarters Selection Official may also consider programmatic priorities.

C. Review and Selection Process

Each eligible proposal will be evaluated by a review panel of EPA Headquarters staff for technical merit, based on the evaluation factors detailed in *Section 5(A)* of this announcement.

Upon completion of the technical merit evaluation, each proposal will be given an evaluated numerical score with a total of 100 points possible. The evaluated numerical scores will be rank ordered. Preliminary funding recommendations will be provided to the EPA Headquarters Selection Official based on this ranking, who will make the final selection.

D. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated Into the Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation including the clause on Reporting and Use of Information Concerning Recipient Integrity and Performance can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses (<https://www.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.

Section 6 – Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made via telephone or electronic or postal mail by February 28, 2017. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the proposal or the project contact listed in the proposal. This notification, which informs the applicant that its proposal has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by EPA's Grants and Interagency

Agreement Management Division. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer 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 grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Funding will be awarded as a cooperative agreement. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a cooperative agreement application package to the EPA. This package will include the application (SF-424), a proposed workplan, a proposed budget, and other required forms. An EPA project officer will work with the successful applicant to finalize the budget and workplan.
2. Approved cooperative agreements will include terms and conditions that will be binding on the grant recipient. Terms and conditions specify what grantees must do to ensure that grant-related and program-related requirements are met. You may view a listing and description of general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements at <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/grant-terms-and-conditions>.
3. Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. Applicants the EPA selects for funding may be required to provide a copy of their proposal to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) or other affected area wide, regional and local officials for review.² This review is not required with the initial proposal.
4. Reimbursement Limitation. If the recipient expends more than the amount of funding in its EPA approved budget in anticipation of receiving additional funds from the EPA, it does so at its own risk. The EPA is not legally obligated to reimburse the recipient for costs incurred in excess of the EPA approved budget.
5. An applicant that receives an award under this announcement is expected to manage assistance agreement funds efficiently and effectively and make sufficient progress towards completing the project activities described in the work-plan in a timely manner. The assistance agreement will include terms and conditions implementing this requirement.

² More information can be found at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc

C. Reporting Requirements

Quarterly progress reports and a detailed final report will be required. The successful applicant will submit quarterly progress reports to the EPA Project Officer within thirty days after the end of each reporting period. These reports shall cover work status, work progress, difficulties encountered, preliminary data results, and planned activities for the next quarter. In addition, a discussion and summary of expenditures along with a comparison of the percentage of the project completed to the project schedule and an explanation of significant discrepancies shall be included in the report. The report shall also include any changes of key personnel involved with the project. EPA will establish a schedule of submission of quarterly reports after award.

At the close of the grant, the successful applicant will submit a final technical report to the EPA Project Officer within 90 calendar days of completion of the period of performance. The final technical report shall include a summary of the project or activity, advances or goals achieved, and costs of the project or activity. In addition, the final technical report should discuss the problems, successes, and lessons learned from the project or activity that could help overcome structural, organizational, or technical obstacles to implementing a similar project elsewhere.

D. Use of Funds

An applicant that receives an award under this announcement is expected to manage cooperative agreement funds efficiently and effectively and make sufficient progress towards completing the project activities described in the workplan in a timely manner. The cooperative agreement will include terms/conditions implementing this requirement. The Agency expects timely drawdown of funds and a yearly financial report. In addition to quarterly reports, other required financial reports will provide the Agency with information regarding progress being made.

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 Section 7.B. to obtain the provisions.

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 Grant Competition Dispute Resolution Procedures (<https://www.epa.gov/grants/grant-competition-dispute-resolution-procedures>). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section 7 of the announcement.

Section 7 - Contacts

A. EPA Headquarters Contact Information

Ellyn Fine, U.S. EPA, Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation (MC 5202-P), 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20460; Phone 703-603-8714 or email: fine.ellyn@epa.gov.

Section 8 – Other Information

A. National Environmental Information Exchange Network

The Environmental Information Exchange Network (Exchange Network, Network or EN) is a partner-inspired, developed, implemented and governed information network. It facilitates environmental data sharing among EPA, states, tribes and territories. The EN uses a standards-based approach that allows partners to exchange data over the Internet regardless of the specific information technology used. This replaces the need to perform complex and expensive data transformations to move data between systems or to share data on paper, discs or other media or via email. Partners share electronic data more easily and at a lower cost, and environmental decision makers are able to use the data to make timely decisions. States, tribes and territories exchanging data with each other or with EPA, should make the Exchange Network and the agency's connection to it, the Central Data Exchange (CDX), the standard way they exchange data and should phase out any legacy methods they have been using. More information available on the [Exchange Network](#).

B. Grants Resource Information

For additional information on how to apply for, manage, and complete an EPA grant, please visit: <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/epa-grants-101-tutorial>