

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS FOR A COOPERATIVE
AGREEMENT**

**OUTREACH PROGRAM TO PROMOTE MORE EFFECTIVE AND
CONSISTENT ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AMONG STATE
AND TRIBAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES**

SOLICITATION NO. TBN25217

September 7, 2004

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**NATIONAL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS
RESEARCH LABORATORY**

WESTERN ECOLOGY DIVISION

**Title: Outreach Program to Promote More Effective and Consistent
Environmental Monitoring Among State and Tribal Environmental Agencies**

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: TBN25217

Posted Date: September 7, 2004

Original Due Date for Applications: November 8, 2004

Archive Date:

Category of Funding Activity: Environment

Expected Number of Awards: One

Estimated Total Project Funding: \$850,000

Award Ceiling: \$850,000

Award Floor: \$75,000

CFDA Number: 66.610 – Special Purpose Grants

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: None

Eligible Applicants: Applicants must be eligible to receive federal assistance under the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C 7403 and the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1254(g) and under CFR PART 30, “Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations”, CFR Part 31, “Grants and Agreements with State and Local Governments”

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Research and Development
National Health and Environmental Effects Research
Laboratory
Western Ecology Division
Attn: Connie M. Hays, Acquisition Program Manager
200 SW 35th Street
Corvallis, OR 97333

Description: This solicitation calls for applications for a three year cooperative agreement to support the public purpose of reaching State/Tribal personnel with the latest water quality monitoring technology developed by EMAP, through the use of workshops, symposia, conferences and other outreach methods.

Agency Contact Person for Electronic Access Problems:

Connie Hays, Phone: 541-754-4504; Email: hays.connie@epa.gov

Link to Full Announcement:

<http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/opportunities/businessopportunities.htm>

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

- A. Title: Outreach Program to Promote More Effective and Consistent Environmental Monitoring Among State and Tribal Environmental Agencies
- B. Background: The Clean Water Act calls for the Environmental Protection Agency to report on the condition of the Nation's waters biennially. To meet this requirement, the Agency depends upon each state and tribe to provide data which is then consolidated into a single report. The result is a report that has been criticized for not providing a statistically defensible statement of condition in that each state provides data taken with different protocols. In the early 1990s, the Agency's Office of Research and Development initiated a long-termed research program called the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP). EMAP is designed to provide the states and tribes with the tools to collect and provide water quality data in a consistent manner that could be consolidated into a national statement of the status of water quality. EMAP has conducted a series of studies throughout the country designed to develop and test indicators of condition and survey designs. Estuaries and freshwater streams, rivers and lakes have been the main foci of the program through 2004. National coastal assessment is an ongoing activity and the streams and rivers of the west (EMAP-West) are presently in the final stages of data collection prior to analysis and reporting. A study of the Great Rivers of the upper Mississippi basin is presently beginning field data collection. Each of these studies has been done in cooperation with states and tribes as well as with other federal agencies. Future work will be determined by the Agency research planning process but may include emphasis on wetlands and lakes. More information on EMAP and the breadth of the Program can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/emap/>.

A key element of EMAP has been the outreach to the state/tribal environmental entities responsible for water quality monitoring. The Office of Research and Development has typically conducted cooperative research with these groups involving them in data collection, analysis and assessment. Close coordination is required with the cooperating agency within the state. A broader range of the interested public has also been included in a series of symposia, workshops and communications designed to bring together monitoring practitioners and EMAP scientists with the Agency's Office of Water and Regional personnel with water quality monitoring responsibilities. This outreach has been facilitated for the past several years through an existing cooperative agreement. This assistance opportunity seeks to continue an active outreach program with the assistance of an organization with strong connections to state/tribal environmental agencies as well as the legislative/executive branches whose oversight is important to the institution of monitoring programs. The successful applicant will cooperate with EMAP personnel by facilitating these outreach activities assuring that appropriate individuals are aware of and/or attend the meetings where research results and the

tools developed are described and discussed.

C. GPRA Goals, Objectives:

The specific Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) Goals, Objectives and Sub-objectives that relate to this RFA include:

GPRA Goal 4: Healthy Communities and Ecosystems
Objective(s): 4.4 Enhance Science & Research
Sub-objective(s): 4.4.2 Conduct Relevant Research

D. Statutory Authority for Award of Assistance:

This research is authorized under the Clean Water Act, Section 104(a).

II. Award Information

This solicitation calls for proposals for a three year cooperative agreement to support the public purpose of reaching State/Tribal personnel with the latest water quality monitoring technology developed by EMAP.

- A. Total Amount of Funding: Funding is dependent upon available funds but is limited to \$850,000 for the three-year funding period.
- B. Anticipated Number of Awards: One.
- C. Anticipated Start Date and Period of Performance: January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2008.
- D. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards.
- E. Type of Assistance Instrument to be awarded: Cooperative Agreement

Agency representatives will have substantial involvement in the activities conducted under the umbrella of this agreement. Such involvement may be in the form of co-chairing program or organizational committees for symposia or workshops. Additionally, the Agency expect to substantially involved in the actions necessary for preparing agendas, choosing appropriate attendees, selection of venue and similar activities appropriate to a cooperative agreement.

- F. Proposals will be reviewed by an independent panel of experts whose recommendations will be a key factor in selection of the incumbent. (See section V. below).

III. Eligibility Information

- A. Applicants must be eligible to receive federal assistance under the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1254(g) and under CFR PART 30, "Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations", CFR Part 31, "Grants and Agreements with State and Local Governments".

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application for this assistance agreement. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the assistance agreement, and which eligible organizations(s) will be subawardees of the recipient. Sub awards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 40 CFR 30.2(ff). The recipient must administer the assistance agreement, is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds, and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 40 CFR 30.2(gg), sub recipients are accountable to the recipient for proper use of EPA funding.

Coalitions may not include for profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant. For profit organizations are not eligible for sub awards. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 40 CFR Part 30. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify contractors or consultants in the proposal. Moreover, the fact a successful applicant has named a specific contractor or consultant in the proposal EPA approves does not relieve it of its obligations to comply with competitive procurement requirements or consultant compensation limitations.

Applications will be reviewed for eligibility during the Administrative Review (see Section V). Applications from ineligible applicants will be returned without further review.

- B. Cost Sharing or matching is NOT required in order to apply for this funding opportunity.
- C. Confidential Business Information: Clearly mark information considered to be confidential. EPA will make final confidentially decisions in accordance with Agency regulations at 40 CFR, Part 2, Subpart B. As noted above, applications for research and demonstration projects will be provided to at least two non-EPA consultants for review. All reviewers will be required to sign confidentiality agreements certifying that they will keep all deliberations confidential, and they will not copy any portions of any material provided by EPA for review, and they will return all material to EPA upon request. If you are unwilling to allow non-EPA consultants to review your proposal, please advise us of your decision in a cover letter to your proposal.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The Western Ecology Division Application for Assistance kit is located on the web at:

<http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/opportunities/businessopportunities.htm>

This kit is available in a PDF format and contains complete instructions on completing the application package and all necessary forms. In addition, Standard Form 424 documents are available in a WordPerfect screen fillable version.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must include the name of the applicant, a general description of the applicant's mission and organizational framework and primary activities. Show how the existing mission and activities qualify the applicant for this funding opportunity.

Proposals must describe the applicant's capabilities and experience with respect to conducting the activities described in paragraph two of Section I. These include:

1. conducting workshops, symposia and conferences including preparation of pre and post meeting materials for the participants,
2. capability in reaching an appropriate representative in each State/Tribe,
3. choosing venue appropriate to the size, budget and objectives of a range of meeting options,
4. capabilities for using electronic media in publicizing, conducting and summarizing the results of the meetings described above.
5. developing innovative ways to transfer complex research concepts to practitioners in the field of aquatic monitoring/management/restoration.

Personnel to be assigned to this agreement should be identified and biographical information provided in form of a one page description of qualifying education/experience. In situations where personnel will be hired to staff this agreement, a clear description of the position(s) should be given to indicate the qualifications of individuals the applicant will be seeking.

Submit a budget estimate for the overall project that is broken down into direct labor, fringe benefits, equipment, travel, other direct costs and overhead with summaries for each year and the total for the entire project.

In addition, applicants must provide an example budget for two scenarios.

1. A symposium with 300 attendees that includes pre-meeting planning, materials such as programs, posters, electronic announcements, and post meeting summaries in hard copy and electronic format. Assume three days with one day for plenary opening and closing sessions with two days of

three concurrent technical sessions. Include hotel costs that are additional to guest rooms; i.e., meeting rooms, audio-visual, and other appropriate venue requirements.

2. A three day workshop for 30 attendees at a government facility (no meeting room costs). Arrangements include pre-meeting planning, workshop content with Agency representatives, pre-meeting printed material, facilitation of two concurrent sessions for two days with final meeting summary of major conclusions/action items.

For these budgets, show personnel costs, overhead, expected equipment rentals, etc. Clearly state any assumptions pertinent to the budget detail.

The entire application including all supporting documentation must not exceed 30 pages. Page margins should be at least 0.5 inches at the sides and 0.75 inches at the top and bottom of the page. The font should be Times New Roman no smaller than 10 point or equivalent. The cover page should show the title of the proposed agreement, name of the applicant, date of submission and include the signature(s) of the qualified representative of the applicant. Three complete copies of the application are required. Electronic copies in the form of a Word document or an Adobe pdf are encouraged either as included in with the printed copies or as an attachment to an email. Electronic copies do not replace the requirement for a printed version.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Completed packages must be received at the address below by close of business on or before November 8, 2004, Pacific Standard Time. No applications received after this time will be considered.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Western Ecology Division
Attn: Connie M. Hays, Acquisition Program Manager
200 SW 35th Street
Corvallis, OR 97333

D. Funding Restrictions

No construction costs are allowed in this agreement. No foreign travel is allowed unless specifically agreed upon (and required by the EPA Project Officer as a part of the agreement objective during an incremental funding.

No pre-award costs will be allowed.

E. Amendments

Amendments will be posted on the website listed in paragraph IV.A, and the due date for applications will be extended if deemed appropriate.

F. Other Submission Requirements - None

V. Application Review Information

A. Criteria The criteria used to evaluate proposals include:

1. Administrative Review: All applications will be subject to an administrative review to ensure that they conform with the requirements of this RFA. EPA may reject any applications that fail to conform substantially with the requirements of this RFA.
2. Relevance Review: Applications that are found administratively acceptable will be subjected to a review for relevancy to EPA's mission to support advancement of environmental science. Applications may be rejected if they are found to lack relevance. Examples include:
 - a. Application is deficient technically with no chance for consideration.
 - b. Application fails to advance the objectives stated in the solicitation even if successfully performed.
 - c. Application essentially duplicates research already completed or underway.
 - d. Application fails to demonstrate a public purpose of support and stimulation; i.e., it implies the primary purpose is to provide direct support to the Federal government.
3. Technical Review: Applications that are found administratively acceptable and relevant shall be reviewed for technical merit against the following criteria.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Applicant's organizational experience in conducting outreach activities – items 1 through 4 in section IV. B. | 30% |
| Personnel assigned – experience and/or training | 30% |
| Response to budget scenarios – indication of knowledge costs associated with different sized meetings. | 20% |
| Knowledge of electronic media in meeting/workshop environments | 10% |
| Innovative approaches to outreach activities | 10% |

Other Factors: When two or more of the highly rated applications receive equivalent rankings, the respective budgets will be evaluated for cost reasonableness and cost realism in order to determine which applicant(s) will receive the award. The application that is determined to be the most reasonable/realistic will be selected for award.

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications received on time and meeting the requirements outlined above will be reviewed as follows:

The administrative and relevancy reviews will be conducted by EPA personnel who are not a part of the technical review panel

The technical review will be conducted by a panel of experts consisting of two scientists outside EPA familiar with outreach activities plus two scientists internal to EMAP. External scientists will have no direct connection to EMAP either through funding or direct cooperation with the research activities of the Program. Reviewers internal to EMAP will consist of the Director and another person familiar with the Program's activities of his choice. None of the reviewers will have any conflict of interest as determined by a review of their credentials and their written statement of impartiality.

The reviewers will rank the applications independently and provide their information to the Project Officer who will make the final recommendation for award.

EPA will make a selection of the applicant for award based upon the rankings of the technical review panel and the other factors discussed above. The Decision Official is an Office of Research and Development (ORD) manager who will determine which applicant should receive the award.

Disputes will be resolved pursuant to the process described in 40 CFR 30.63.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Notice of award will be made in writing by an official in the EPA Grants Administration Division. Preliminary selection by the Decision Official in the Office of Research and Development does not guarantee an award will be made. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of EPA should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with an EPA Program Official. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the EPA Grants Award Official does so at their own risk.

EPA will promptly notify in writing (postal or email) those applicants whose application is rejected. An unsuccessful applicant may request a debriefing to better understand the evaluated strengths and weaknesses of its proposal and the reason for rejection if other than technical merit

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Regulations and OMB Coverage:

Grants and agreements with institutions of higher education, hospitals, and other non-profit organizations are subject to 40 CFR Parts 30 and 40 and OMB Circular A-122 for non-profits and A-21 for institutions of higher learning.

2. Programmatic Terms and Conditions: Terms and conditions will be negotiated with the selected recipient covering the following requirements:

The nature and extent of collaboration between EPA and the recipient.

C. Reporting

An annual report of activity will required unless superseded by more frequent reporting resulting from individual activities; e.g., a workshop where cost accounting and results reports are a required part of an incremental funding action. A final report will be required summarizing the financial and programmatic results attained during the course of the agreement. This report will be due no later than 90 days following the end of the performance period.

VII. Agency Contacts

Programmatic questions may be directed to:

Dr. Roger Blair, Chief, Aquatic Monitoring and Bioassessment Branch
Environmental Protection Agency
Western Ecology Division
200 SW 35th Street
Corvallis, OR 97333
Phone: 541-754-4662
Fax:541-754-4716
Email: blair.roger@epa.gov

Administrative questions may be directed to:

Connie Hays, Acquisition Program Manager
Environmental Protection Agency
Western Ecology Division

200 S.W. 35th Street
Corvallis OR 97333
Phone: 541-754-4504
Fax: 541-754-4518
Email: hays.connie@epa.gov

VIII. Other Information

- A. Questions should be submitted in writing. Do not attempt to seek information regarding this RFA from any source other than those identified in Section VII as the information provided may be erroneous. Questions that are considered significant will be answered via an amendment to this RFA.
- B. **DUNS Number:** OMB has determined that there is a need for improved statistical reporting of Federal grants and cooperative agreements. Grant applicants are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements. Use of the DUNS number government-wide will provide a means to identify entities receiving those awards and their business relationships. The identifier will be used for tracking purposes, and to validate address and point of contact information.

The DUNS number will supplement other identifiers required by statute or regulation, such as tax identification numbers. Organizations can receive a DUNS number in one day, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711. Individuals who would personally receive a grant or cooperative agreement award from the Federal government apart from any business or non-profit organization they may operate are exempt from this requirement. The website where an organization can obtain a DUNS number is: <http://www.dnb.com>. This takes 30 business days and there is no cost unless the organization requests expedited (1-day) processing, which includes a fee of \$40.