

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

TITLE: RESTORE Estuary Program (Planning)

ACTION: Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP NUMBER: EPA-GM-2017-RESTORE-Estuary-Program

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NO: 66.130

DATES: Proposal packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>) no later than **August 1, 2017 at 11:59pm EST** in order to be considered for funding.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds and solicits proposals to develop and stand-up a place-based estuary program encompassing one or more of the following bays in Florida's northwest panhandle region: Perdido Bay, Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, Choctawhatchee Bay, St. Andrews Bay and Apalachicola Bay.

FUNDING/AWARDS: The total estimated funding for this competitive opportunity is approximately \$2.0 million. EPA anticipates awarding one grant from this announcement, subject to availability of funds and other applicable considerations.

Tentative Timeline

May 4, 2017	RFP Posted
June 1, 2017	Q&A posted at https://www.epa.gov/gmpo/ . Please submit questions to GMP-RFP@epa.gov. Q&A will be updated approximately every two weeks with new questions. All questions must be received no later than July 20th for inclusion in the Final Q&A.
August 1, 2017	Proposals Due to the Gulf of Mexico Program by 11:59pm EST
August 28, 2017	EPA Issues Notice of Tentative Award
December 5, 2017	EPA Funds Approved Application Package

The above dates (other than the proposal submission date) are anticipated dates and subject to change.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill led to passage of the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast Act (RESTORE Act) in 2012. The Act dedicates 80 percent of all Clean Water Act administrative and civil penalties related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund). The Act also created the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council).

The Council is an independent Federal agency and its membership is comprised of the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, as well as the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Army, Commerce, Homeland Security and the Interior, and the Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The U.S. Department of Agriculture currently serves as the Chair of the Council. The Council is responsible for helping to restore the ecosystems and economies of the Gulf Coast region by developing and overseeing implementation of a Comprehensive Plan to undertake projects and programs, using the best available science, which would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and the economy of the Gulf Coast. In accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, the Council selects all projects, programs, and activities that will be funded and lists them on the Council's approved Funded Priorities List (FPL) (https://restorethegulf.gov/sites/default/files/FPL_forDec9Vote_Errata_04-07-2016.pdf).

The RESTORE Council acts through the federal and state Council members to expend Trust Funds to carry out Comprehensive Plan projects and programs. The Council enters into Interagency Agreements with EPA to expend funds to carry out EPA-assigned Comprehensive Plan projects and programs included in the Funded Priorities List (FPL). To carry out the Council assigned projects/programs, EPA then issues grants to pre-selected entities identified in the particular FPL project/program or competitively selects recipients for grants whenever the FPL project/program requires competition.

This particular competitive federal funding opportunity supports EPA in carrying out the following Council assigned FPL project:

- *The Gulf of Mexico Estuary Program* will develop and stand-up a place-based estuary program encompassing one or more of the following bays in Florida's northwest panhandle region: Perdido Bay, Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, Choctawhatchee Bay, St. Andrews Bay and Apalachicola Bay. The key components of the project include establishing the host organization, host organization hiring key staff, developing Management and Technical committees, determining stressors and then developing and approving a Comprehensive Plan (e.g., CCMP). **Although this Estuary Program will be modeled after the structure and operation of the National Estuary Program established by Section 320 of the Clean Water Act, this new Estuary Program will not receive the designation of a National Estuary Program under Section 320.**

In addition to carrying out its responsibilities, the Council is committed to public engagement and coordinating with other Gulf Coast restoration initiatives, including the Natural Resource Damage Assessment for the Oil Spill, to ensure that restoration efforts are community-supported and complementary. To read more about the RESTORE Act, the Council, the Comprehensive Plan and the Funded Priorities List, just click on this link www.RestoreTheGulf.gov.

B. Scope of Work

Under this solicitation, the EPA will only consider funding projects to develop and stand-up a place-based estuary program encompassing one or more of the following bays in Florida's northwest panhandle region: Perdido Bay, Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, Choctawhatchee Bay, St. Andrews Bay and Apalachicola Bay. Although this Estuary Program will be modeled after the structure and operation of National Estuary Programs (NEP) (as defined under Section 320 of the Clean Water Act¹), it will not be a designated NEP. The following activities will be expected to be completed during the grant period. Please see section IV.D.2 for how the activities should be addressed in your proposal:

1. **Establish Management Conference.** The Management Conference will develop and implement local solutions to address complex water quality and habitat restoration and protection needs. A top-level organizational unit (TLOU), within the Management Conference will be established as the decision making body for the estuary program. Estuary Program Management Conferences typically name the TLOU the Executive Committee or the Policy Committee. EPA encourages the applicant to designate the suggested naming of their TLOU in the proposal. This TLOU will be made up of top officials from key local, federal, and state resource or decision-making organizations for the estuary program study area. The members of a management conference convened shall include, **at a minimum**, representatives from:
 - EPA Gulf of Mexico Program
 - State of Florida
 - International, interstate, or regional agencies or entities having jurisdiction over all or a significant part of the estuary
 - Each interested Federal agency
 - Local governments having jurisdiction over any land or water within the estuarine zone

¹ For more information, see: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/2007_04_09_estuaries_neprimeruments_srappendixa.pdf

- Interested businesses, industries, agriculture, public and private educational institutions, and the general public
2. **Hire Program Director.** One of the first action items for the TLOU will be to direct the host organization to advertise for and hire a Program Director based on an approved position description and salary rate. The Program Director will be selected by and serve at the pleasure of the TLOU. This Program Director will receive direction from the TLOU of the Management Conference.
 3. **Develop the Management Conference and program office.** The estuary program director, working with the TLOU members, will develop the Management Conference and estuary program office, including:
 - a) Estuary Program office staffing plans
 - b) Management Conference Organizational Plan and membership of the Management Conference committee structure
 - c) Draft bylaws for the Management Conference
 - d) Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) Development Workplan. The Director will draft an estuary program workplan, and will utilize the Management Conference to develop consensus, draft and submit the workplan to the TLOU for approval. This workplan will define the process to complete the development of a draft and final CCMP and any initial restoration actions.
 4. **Develop CCMP.** The CCMP will provide goals and objectives as well as specific actions to restore and protect the estuary based on a stakeholder driven process rooted in strong science. The Goals, Objectives and Actions comprising the CCMP will primarily focus on restoring water quality, while also addressing restoration and conservation of habitat, replenishing and protecting living coastal and marine resources, enhancing community resilience, and revitalizing the coastal economy. In addition to providing the goals and objectives, the CCMP will summarize the characterization of the estuary's current state and its stressors, while also recommending priority actions and schedules addressing point and nonpoint sources of pollution to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the estuary, including restoration and maintenance of water quality, a balanced indigenous population of shellfish, fish, and wildlife, and recreational activities in the estuary, and assure that the designated uses of the estuary are protected; develop plans for the coordinated implementation of the plan with the State of Florida as well as federal and local agencies participating in the conference; monitor the effectiveness of actions taken pursuant to the plan.
 5. **CCMP Approval by Management Conference and EPA.** The CCMP is approved by the Management Conference and EPA.

C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage & Anticipated Outcomes, Outputs & Performance Measures

Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to the Agency's Strategic Plan. EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements, <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/award/5700.7.pdf>).

1. **Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan. Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan.** All proposals must support progress towards the following EPA 2014-2018 Strategic Plan Goals:

- a) Goal 2: Protecting America’s Waters. “Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems,” which states “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.”

Please read [EPA’s FY 2014-2018 Strategic Plan](#) for more information.

2. Outputs. The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period. The following outputs are expected to be achieved during the grant period.

- a) Estuary Program office staffing plans
- b) Management Conference Organizational Plan and membership of the Management Conference committee structure
- c) draft bylaws for the Management Conference
- d) Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan Development Workplan
- e) Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan

The proposal must provide a timeline and detailed description of how the applicant will complete these outputs.

Progress reports and a final report will also be a required output, as specified in Section VI(C) of this announcement, “Reporting Requirement.”

3. Outcomes. The term “outcome” means the result, effect or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must also be quantitative. The following outcomes are expected:

- water quality improvement
- restoration and conservation of habitat
- provide healthy ecosystems in order to support—
 - (i) wildlife, including endangered and threatened species, migratory birds, and resident species of an estuary watershed; and
 - (ii) fish and shellfish, including commercial and recreational fisheries;
- improve surface and ground water quality and quantity, and flood control;
- enhancing community resilience, and
- revitalizing the coastal economy

4. Project Performance. During preparation of the proposal, the applicant should consider the following questions in order to document project results:

- i) What are the measureable short term and longer term results that the project will achieve?
- ii) How will the applicant measure timely progress in achieving the outputs listed in Section C.2. above and how will the applicant measure the quality of those outputs?

D. Supplementary Information.

The statutory authority for this action is the Restore Act, §311(t)(2)(E)(ii)(II), which authorizes funds to be transferred by the Secretary of the Treasury for the Trust Fund through the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to that Federal agency or Gulf Coast State to carry out projects and programs adopted in the Comprehensive Plan. EPA may award grants or cooperative agreements with these funds under RESTORE Act §311(t)(2)(E)(i).

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. What is the amount of funding available?

The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards under this competitive funding opportunity is approximately \$2.0 million.

B. How many agreements will EPA award in this competition?

EPA anticipates awarding one grant under this announcement, with the award not exceeding approximately \$2.0 million subject to the availability of funds, quality of evaluated proposals, and other applicable considerations.

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

C. Partial Funding

In appropriate circumstances, and if permissible under the Restore Act, 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 applicant or affect the basis upon which the proposal was evaluated and selected for award and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process.

D. What is the project period for awards resulting from this solicitation?

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation will begin in Calendar Year 2017. Proposed project periods may be up to five years.

E. Funding Type

The funding for selected projects will be in the form of a cooperative agreement. EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial Federal involvement for this project will be:

- close monitoring of the successful applicant’s performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- in accordance with 2 CFR 317 and 2 CFR 318, review of proposed procurement;
- approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient);
- review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Entities

The following entities are eligible to apply for funding under this announcement unless restricted by the authorizing statute(s); State and local governments, Tribes, colleges and universities, and other public or nonprofit organizations.

Non-profit organization, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve and/or expand its operations. Note that 2 CFR Part 200 specifically excludes the following types of organizations from the definition of “non-profit organization” because they are separately defined in the regulation: (i) institutions of higher education; and (ii) state, local and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments. While not considered to be a “non-profit organization(s)” as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, Institutions of Higher Education and state, local and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA. Hospitals operated by state, tribal, or local governments or that meet the definition of nonprofit at 2 CFR 200.70 are also eligible to apply. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Neither a cost share nor matching funds are required under this competition.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the time of proposal submission will result in elimination of the proposal from consideration for funding. Only proposals from eligible entities (see above) that meet all of these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. **Proposals must substantially comply with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected.** However, where a page

limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the narrative proposal, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.

2. In addition, proposals must be submitted through www.grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV) on or before the proposal 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. **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.** Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with Rachel Hogue via email to GMP-RFP@epa.gov as soon as possible after submission—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.
3. Proposals must support the following EPA Strategic Goals (See Section I.C):
Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters
4. **Proposals must** address the development of a place-based estuary program encompassing one or more of the following bays in Florida's northwest panhandle region: Perdido Bay, Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, Choctawhatchee Bay, St. Andrews Bay and Apalachicola Bay. Those that do not will be rejected.
5. **Requests for EPA funding amounts in excess of a total of \$2.0 million, including direct and indirect costs, will not be considered.**
6. 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.

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 under this funding opportunity based on the grants.gov instructions in this announcement and Appendix A. If an applicant does not have the technical capability to apply electronically through grants.gov because of limited or no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required proposal materials to Grants.gov, the applicant must contact OGDWaivers@epa.gov or the address listed below in writing (e.g., by hard copy, email) *at least 15 calendar days prior to the submission deadline under this announcement* to request approval to submit their proposal 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 proposal submissions made through December 31 of the calendar year in which the exception was approved (e.g., if the exception was approved on March 1, 2015, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive proposal submission to EPA through December 31, 2015). Applicants need only request an exception once in a calendar year and all exceptions will expire on December 31 of that calendar year. Applicants must request a new exception from required electronic submission through Grants.gov for submissions for any succeeding calendar year. For example, if there is a competitive opportunity issued on December 1, 2015 with a submission deadline of January 15, 2016, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2016.

Please note that the process described in this section is only for requesting alternate submission methods. All other inquiries about this announcement must be directed to the Agency Contact listed in Section VII of the

announcement. Queries or requests submitted to the email address identified above for any reason other than to request an alternate submission method will not be acknowledged or answered.

B. 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 [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and click on “Applicants” on the top of the page and then go to the “Get Registered” link on the page. *If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a DUNS number and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more.* Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the submission deadline. Registration on grants.gov, SAM.gov, and DUNS number assignment is FREE.

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.

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

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and then click on “Search Grants” at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-GM-2017-RESTORE Estuary Program, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.301), in the appropriate field and click the Search button.

Please note that Grants.gov is strongly encouraging users to sign up for and use their “[Workspace](#)” feature when applying for opportunities. Grants.gov will be phasing out the “legacy” application process, so EPA recommends that all applicants begin using Workspace as soon as possible so they are prepared when the “legacy” application process is no longer available. Please see the following link and instructional video for training and additional information regarding the “Workspace” feature:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html>

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization’s AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than August 1st, 2017 at 11:59pm EST. *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 (see Section IV for more information on these documents):

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3. Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
4. Narrative Proposal (Project Narrative Attachment Form)

Optional Documents

1. Other Attachments form

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 GMP-RFP@epa.gov. 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 [Grants.gov](https://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 GMP-RFP@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Rachel Houge at 228-304-7441. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to [Grants.gov](https://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 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 GMP-RFP@epa.gov.
- 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, and you have already attempted to resolve the issue by contacting Grants.gov, send an email message to GMP-RFP@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 and it is too late to reapply, promptly send an email to GMP-RFP@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by Grants.gov and attach the entire application in PDF format.

Please note that successful submission through Grants.gov or via email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

D. Content of Proposal Submission

The proposal package *must* include all of the following materials:

Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance

Complete the form (available at http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424_2_1-V2.1.pdf). For form instructions see, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html>
Please be sure to include organization email address in Block 5 of the Standard Form SF 424.

Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711.

Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information

Complete the form (available at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424A-V1.0.pdf>). For form instructions see, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html>.

Standard Form (SF) 424B, Assurances for non-construction forms

Complete the form (available at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424B-V1.1.pdf>).

Narrative Proposal

The Narrative Proposal (**sections 1-3 below**) cannot exceed a maximum of fifteen **single-spaced** typewritten pages. EPA recommends that proposals be in 12 point font or larger and readability is of paramount importance. Supporting materials, such as resumes, can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the fifteen **page limit**.

1. Proposal Information Page

- a. Project Title
- b. Applicant Information. Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, fax, e-mail address and DUNS number.
- c. Total Project Cost. Specify total cost of the project and specify the amount you are requesting from EPA, if different.
- d. Project Description: Please provide one or two sentences summarizing your project.
- e. EPA Strategic Goal: Please describe how your project meets the EPA Strategic Goal of Protecting America's Waters
- f. Place of Performance. Please describe the area(s) where your project will take place, including the Northwest Florida Bay(s) your project addresses.
- g. HUC Waterbody. Please identify the eight or twelve digit HUC watershed where your project will take place. For more information see:
<http://cfpub1.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm> (eight digit) or
<https://www.azdeq.gov/enviro/water/watershed/download/easysteps.pdf> (twelve digit)
- h. Project period. Provide beginning and ending dates. (Projects are anticipated to begin date and end no later than date.)

2. Narrative Proposal. The narrative proposal must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III of this announcement (including the threshold eligibility criteria in Section III.C), and must address each of the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V. It must also address how the applicant will perform the activities under the scope of work in Section I.B.

a) **Project Description/Approach. Please provide the following in your narrative:**

- i. Establish Management Conference. Describe the management conference development process you intend to undertake. Describe how you have engaged or plan to engage the appropriate organizations (e.g. local elected officials, scientists, citizens, business leaders, commercial fishing, universities, federal and state agency directors, and representatives from agricultural and industry (e.g. timber, ports, etc)).
- ii. Hire Program Director. Please describe your plans for hiring a program director. Provide a summary of the qualifications, job duties and requirements for the program director.
- iii. Timeline. Provide a comprehensive timeline to achieve the goals during your project period. The following accomplishments should be included in your timeline:
 - a. Establish Management Conference
 - b. Hire Program Director
 - c. Develop the Management Conference and program office, including:
 1. Program office staffing plans

2. Management Conference Organizational Plan and membership of the Management Conference committee structure
 3. Draft bylaws for the Management Conference
 4. CCMP Development Workplan. See Section I.B.4 for more information.
- d. Develop CCMP
 - e. CCMP Approval by Management Conference and EPA
- iv. Explanation of project benefits to the public, and specifically the potential audience(s) served.
 - v. Description of the roles of the applicant and partners, if any.
 - vi. Description of the applicant’s organization and experience related to the proposed project.
 - vii. Description of staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.
 - viii. For awards under this competition that are expected to exceed \$200,000 in federal funding **AND** involve the generation or use of environmental data, please provide a statement acknowledging 1) your need to demonstrate competency prior to beginning work and 2) your understanding that a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required. Please see Section VI. N. at the following link for more information:
<https://www.epa.gov/grants#Competencythe%20necessity> For further information, please see the Frequently Asked Questions Document regarding this EPA requirement:
<https://www.epa.gov/measurements/documents-about-measurement-competency-under-assistance-agreements>.

b) Environmental Results—Outcomes, Outputs and Project Performance

Several outputs required from this project are identified in Section I. Please identify any additional outputs and the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the project (**See Section I**). **Also, identify what means will be used to track and measure your progress towards achieving the expected outcomes and outputs and how the results of the project will be evaluated.**

It is expected that the description of project performance will include the following:

- How the project will support achieving the outputs and outcomes
- oversight of project partners, subgrantees, and/or contractors and vendors;
- tracking and reporting project progress on expenditures, purchases, and other fiscal activities;
- tracking and reporting actual accomplishments/timeline versus proposed outputs/outcomes and proposed timelines/milestones;

c) Project Sustainability Approach

Please describe a long-term funding plan for the project following the completion of this funding, including implementation of the CCMP, after the project funding period is over. Please include any narrative or financial (and other) commitments made by organizations involved with your project that supports this long-term funding plan. Please attach any letters of support or commitment related to the long-term funding plan. **Letters submitted will not be considered a part of your page limit.**

d) Applicant Past Performance

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

e) Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds

Please include a detailed discussion of the applicant's approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

3. Detailed Budget Narrative (*See Appendix A, Budget Sample*)

- a. Description of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each work component/task.
- b. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs. *Selected applicant(s) will need to submit a copy of their current indirect cost rate that has been negotiated with a federal cognizant agency prior to award.

Attachments. These are *optional* and are not included in the page limit. Nor are these attachments considered during evaluation of an applicant's proposal

- a. Biographical Sketch. If desired, provide biographical sketch of Principal Investigators and/or any other key personnel.
- b. If applicable, approval letter to use alternate means to submit initial application.

E. Submission Dates and Times

The closing date and time for submission of proposals is August 1st, 2017 at 11:59pm EST. Proposals submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

F. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated Into The Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to confidential business information, contracts and sub-awards under grants, and application 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 applications for this solicitation.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

A. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Points
<p><u>1. Project Description/Approach:</u> Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the following factors:</p>	-
i. Description of management conference development process and planned engagement of appropriate organizations	10
ii. Plan for hiring a program director, including the description of the qualifications, job duties and requirements for the program director.	10
iii. Timeline which should include the following accomplishments and any milestones planned to reach those goals: Establish Management Conference, Hire Program Director, Develop the Management Conference and program office, Develop CCMP, CCMP Approval by Management Conference and EPA	10
iv. Explanation of project benefits to the public, and specifically the potential audience(s) served.	5
v. Description of the roles of the applicant and partners, if any.	5
vi. Description of the applicant’s organization and experience related to the proposed project.	5
vii. Description of staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.	5
<p><u>2. Environmental Results—Outcomes, Outputs and Performance Measures:</u> Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate proposed deliverables and outcomes based on information provided, including evaluating the means that will be used to track and measure your progress towards achieving the expected outcomes and outputs including those identified in Section I and how the results of the project will be evaluated.</p>	10

<p><u>3. Project Sustainability Approach</u> Under this criterion, the agency will evaluate the proposed long term funding plan based on the level of commitment demonstrated.</p>	15
<p><u>4. Past Performance</u> Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account the applicant's: (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.D_ of the announcement (5 points), (ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.D_ of the announcement including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not (5 points). Note: In evaluating applicants under items i and ii of this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items i and ii above-a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.</p>	10
<p><u>5. Budget:</u> Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate whether the applicant has provided both a detailed narrative which describes the project budget by categories; and, a breakout of the approximate dollar amount of funding for each major activity. Budget categories include: Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, Other and Indirect Costs.</p>	10
<p><u>6. Expenditure of Awarded Funds:</u> Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, controls to ensure that awarded funds are expended in a timely and efficient manner..</p>	5

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in Section III. Only those proposals which meet all of the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by a panel(s) comprised of EPA staff and may include a State of Florida representative. The panel will score and rank the eligible proposals using the evaluation criteria identified in Section V.A. Each proposal will be given a numerical score and will be rank-ordered according to the numerical score. Preliminary funding recommendations will be provided to the Approving Official based on this ranking.

C. Final Selections

Final funding decisions will be made by the Approving Official based on the rankings and preliminary recommendations of the Evaluation panel. Once final decisions have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA Award Official.

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 on the [EPA Solicitation Clauses](https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses) page <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.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notices

Following evaluation of proposals, all applicants will be notified regarding their status.

Proposal Notifications (*allow for review time, usually 45-60 days after closing date*)

1. EPA anticipates notification to successful applicant will be made via e-mail. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the proposal or the project contact listed in the proposal. *This notification, which informs the applicant that its proposal has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Region 4 Grants Management Officer.*

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.

2. EPA anticipates notification to unsuccessful applicant(s) will be made via email or postal mail. *The notification will be made to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance.*

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirement

A listing and description of general EPA Regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/applicable_epa_regulations_and_description.htm.

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. Applicants selected for funding may be required to provide a copy of their application to their [State Point of Contact](#) (SPOC) for review, pursuant to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. This review is not required with the Initial Application and not all states require such a review.

C. Reporting Requirement

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

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 <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grant-competition-dispute-resolution-procedures> . Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting Gerry Martin at martin.gerry@gmail.com.

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 <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.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For further information, contact:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Gulf of Mexico Program
ATTN: Rachel Houge
2510 14th Street – Suite 1212
Gulfport, MS 39501
GMP-RFP@epa.gov

All questions or comments must be communicated in writing via email by **July 20th** to GMP-RFP@epa.gov. Questions and answers will be posted at the GMP home page by **June 1st** and updated approximately every two weeks: <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/>.

VIII. Other Information

Appendix A. Budget Sample

Budget Detail

*[This section of the proposal is a detailed description of the budget found in the SF-424A, and must include a detailed discussion of how EPA funds will be used. Applicants must **itemize** costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs.*

Applicants should use the following instructions, budget object class descriptions, and example table to complete the Budget Detail section of the proposal.

- **Personnel** - *List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period. This category includes only direct costs for the salaries of those individuals who will perform work directly for the project (generally, paid employees of the applicant organization). If the applicant organization is including staff time (in-kind services) as a cost-share, this should be included as Personnel costs. Personnel costs do not include: (1) costs for services of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the “Other” category; or (3) effort that is not directly in support of the proposed project, which may be covered by the organization’s negotiated indirect cost rate. The budget detail must identify the personnel category type by Full Time Equivalent (FTE), including percentage of FTE for part-time employees, number of personnel proposed for each category, and the estimated funding amounts.*
- **Fringe Benefits** - *Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included. Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to the cost of leave, employee insurance, pensions and unemployment benefit plans.*
- **Travel** - *Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips in-state and out-of-state, number of travelers, and other costs for each type of travel. Travel may be integral to the purpose of the proposed project (e.g. inspections) or related to proposed project activities (e.g. attendance at meetings). Travel costs do not include: (1) costs for travel of consultants, contractors, consortia members, or other partner organizations, which are included in the “Contractual” category; (2) travel costs for employees of subrecipients under subawards, which are included in the “Other” category.*
- **Equipment** - *Identify each item to be purchased which has an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year. Equipment also includes accessories necessary to make the equipment operational. Equipment does not include: (1) equipment planned to be leased/rented, including lease/purchase agreement; or (2) equipment service or maintenance contracts. These types of proposed costs should be included in the “Other” category. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 should be categorized as supplies, pursuant to ~~40 CFR 31.3 and 30.2~~. 2 CFR §200.33. The budget detail must include an itemized listing of all equipment proposed under the project.*
- **Supplies** - *“Supplies” means all tangible personal property other than “equipment.” The budget detail should identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). Non-tangible goods and services associated with supplies, such as printing service, photocopy services, and rental costs should be included in the “Other” category.*
- **Contractual** - *Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose and estimated cost. Contractual/consultant services are those services to be carried out by an individual or organization, other than the applicant, in the form of a procurement relationship. Leased or rented goods (equipment or*

supplies) should be included in the “Other” category. The applicant should list the proposed contract activities along with a brief description of the scope of work or services to be provided, proposed duration, and proposed procurement method (competitive or non-competitive), if known.

- **Other - List each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of its cost.** This category should include only those types of direct costs that do not fit in any of the other budget categories. Examples of costs that may be in this category are: insurance, rental/lease of equipment or supplies, equipment service or maintenance contracts, printing or photocopying, rebates, and subaward costs. Subawards (e.g., subgrants) are a distinct type of cost under this category. The term “subaward” means an award of financial assistance (money or property) by any legal agreement made by the recipient to an eligible subrecipient. This term does not include procurement purchases, technical assistance in the form of services instead of money, or other assistance in the form of revenue sharing, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, or direct appropriations. Subcontracts are not subawards and belong in the contractual category. Applicants must provide the aggregate amount they propose to issue as subaward work and a description of the types of activities to be supported.
- **Indirect Charges - If indirect charges are budgeted, indicate the approved rate and base.** Indirect costs are those incurred by the grantee for a common or joint purpose that benefit more than one cost objective or project, and are not readily assignable to specific cost objectives or projects as a direct cost. In order for indirect costs to be allowable, the applicant must have a federal or state negotiated indirect cost rate (e.g., fixed, predetermined, final or provisional), or must have submitted a proposal to the cognizant federal or state agency. Examples of Indirect Cost Rate calculations are shown below:
 - Personnel ($\text{Indirect Rate} \times \text{Personnel} = \text{Indirect Costs}$)
 - Personnel and Fringe ($\text{Indirect Rate} \times \text{Personnel} \ \& \ \text{Fringe} = \text{Indirect Costs}$)
 - Total Direct Costs ($\text{Indirect Rate} \times \text{Total direct costs} = \text{Indirect Costs}$)
 - Direct Costs, less distorting or other factors such as contracts and equipment ($\text{Indirect Rate} \times (\text{total direct cost} - \text{distorting factors}) = \text{Indirect Costs}$]

Example Budget Table

[The table below is only an example, please develop your budget table based on your proposal.]

Line Item and Itemized Cost	EPA Funding	Other funding [(identify source)]
Personnel		
(1) Director of NEP @ \$XXX/hr x XXhrs/week x XXweeks	\$XX	
(1) Project Manager at host org. @ \$XX/hr x XXhrs/week x XXweeks	\$XX	\$XX
(1) Project Staff @ \$XX/hr x XXhrs/week x XXweeks	\$XX	\$XX
TOTAL PERSONNEL	\$XX	\$XX
Fringe Benefits		
20% of Salary and Wages (Retirement, Health Benefits, etc)	\$XX	\$XX
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	\$XX	\$XX
Travel		
Local mileage for Director: XX mi/mo @XX/mi x XXmths	\$XX	
Local mileage for PM: XX mi/mo @\$0.XX/mi x XXmths	\$XX	
Local mileage for Staff: XX mi/mo @\$0.XX/mi x XXmths	\$XX	
TOTAL TRAVEL	\$XX	
Equipment (see definition of equipment above)		
None Needed		
TOTAL EQUIPMENT	\$XX	
Supplies		
Paper for development of teaching materials @ \$XX per unit	\$XX	
White Board Markers for use in training @ \$XX per unit	\$XX	
TOTAL SUPPLIES	\$XX	
Contractual		
Contract Support to Develop CCMP (X yrs@\$XX/year)	\$XX	
Contract support for Public Engagement in CCMP (X yrs@\$XX/year)	\$XX	
TOTAL CONTRACTUAL	\$XX	
Other		
Printing Services for Final Printed CCMP XX copies @ \$XX per CCMP	\$XX	
TOTAL OTHER	\$XX	
Indirect Charges		
Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate = XX%	\$XX	
(Indirect Rate x Personnel = Indirect Costs)		
TOTAL INDIRECT	\$XX	
TOTAL COST PER FUNDING SOURCE	\$XX	\$XX
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$XX	

[Note on Management Fees: 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 applicant's cognizant Federal 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 cannot 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 work plan.]