

# Exchange Network Grants Program FY 2019 Solicitation Notice Webinar

## *Preparing Quality Applications*

March, 2019

<https://www.epa.gov/exchangenetwork>



A large, abstract green watercolor splash on the left side of the slide, with various shades of green and white highlights, creating a textured, organic shape.

# ABSTRACT

A faint, circular watermark of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) logo is centered in the background. The logo features a stylized flower with three leaves and a sun-like symbol in the center, surrounded by the text "UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY".

The objective of this presentation is to help states, tribes and territories prepare successful Exchange Network grant applications.

# Presentation Overview



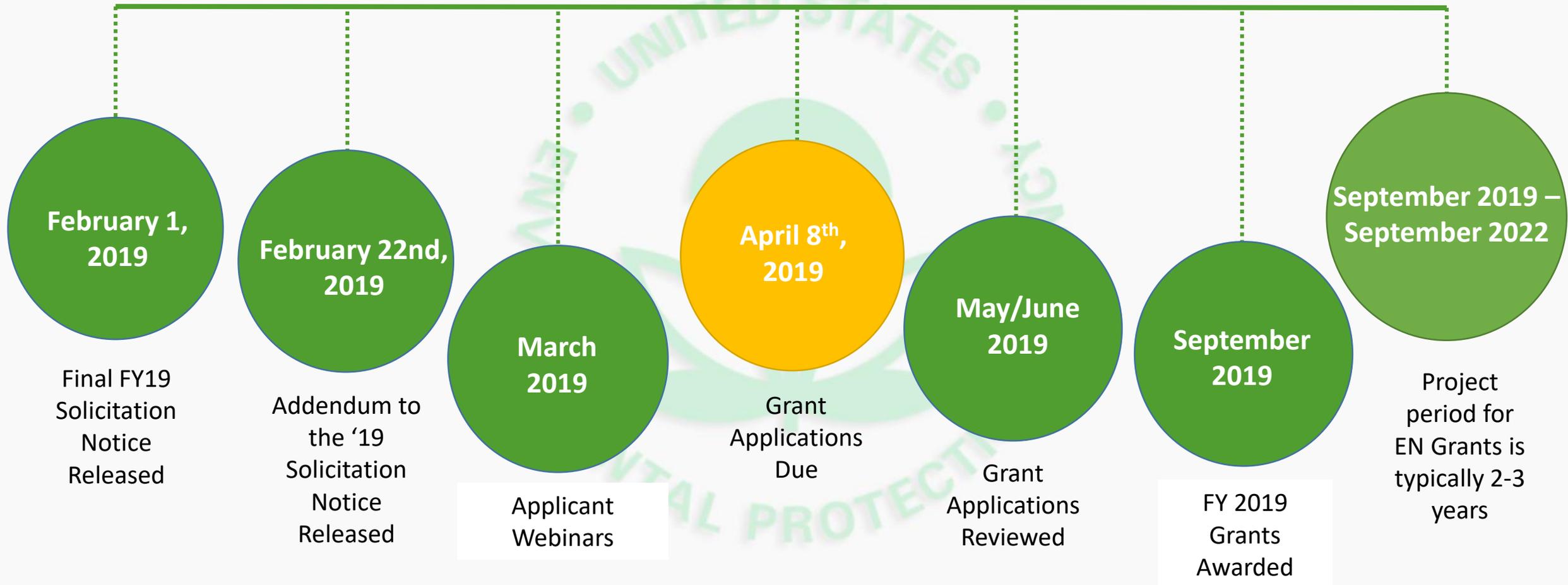
- Overview of EN Grants
- Critical Elements of the Solicitation Notice
- Changes from FY 2018
- Best Practices & Reminders
- Top 10 Common Mistakes to Avoid
- Stay Connected & Contacts
- Questions and Discussion

# Overview of Exchange Network Grants

*The EN uses a standards-based approach to share data via the internet regardless of the information technology*

- Grant Funding Purpose
  - To develop technologies to share data among partners through the EN
  - Develop underlying shared or reusable services that provide the foundation of EN operations
  - Make data available to partner personnel, the public or other communities of interest.

# FY 2019 Exchange Network Grants Cycle



\*Tentative timeline

# Critical Elements of the Solicitation Notice



- Linkage to EPA mission (*Section I-D*)
- Program priorities (*Section I-E*)
- Eligibility (*Section II-C*)
- Types of assistance agreements (*Section II-B*)
- Threshold criteria (*Section III-B*)
- Application instructions (*Section IV., Appendix E, & Appendix F*)
- Evaluation criteria (*Section V-A.*)

# Linkage to EPA Mission

(Section I-D.)

- It is EPA policy that work supported by assistance agreements must link directly to EPA mission
  - All EN Grants must support [EPA's FY 2018-22 Strategic Plan](#), Goal 3: Rule of Law and Process, Objective 3.4 Streamline and Modernize.

# Grant Program Priorities

(Section I-E.)

- Proposed work must be activities *specifically mentioned* in the priorities section of the Solicitation Notice (*see section I-E*) or in *Appendices A, B, or C*
- Proposals must commit to the completion of an activity

# Grant Program Priorities FY 2019

## (Section I-E.)

- **Foundational EN Services:** Integrate into Environmental Business Processes
- **Data flows:** Eliminate industry paper reporting and expand e-reporting among co-regulators
- **Data Availability:** Expand Data Access and Availability
- **Improve Environmental Management Business Processes:** *Especially through advanced data monitoring and transmittal processes*
- **Capacity Building:** Augment the Data and Technology Management Capacity of Potential EN Partners

# Exchange Network Grant Availability

## (Section II-C.)

### *Activities **ineligible** for funding:*

- Development and deployment of traditional physical nodes
- Operations and Maintenance (O&M)
- Data flow expansion

### *Entities **eligible** for funding:*

- States
- Federally Recognized Tribes and Native Villages
- Inter-tribal consortia of Federally Recognized Tribes
- U.S. Territories

# Types of Assistance Agreements

(Section II-B.)

- Stand-alone Grant or Performance Partnership Grant (PPG)
- Grant or cooperative agreement
- Direct funding and/or in-kind services
- Sole application or partnership

# Threshold Criteria to Receive FY 19 Grant

## (Section III-B.)

- Application goals result in full implementation of:
  - Data flow(s), data publishing service, web service, or other eligible activities (e.g. pilot projects) into production
- Project period of no more than 3 years
- Budget not to exceed:
  - \$200,000 for single applicant
  - \$400,000 for partnership applications

# Threshold Criteria to Receive FY 19 Grant

(Section III-B.)

- Limit of four active grants by **12/31/2018**
  - *Note: If an agency is a participant in an EN partnership grant, but not the lead agency, their participation in the grant will not be counted as an active assistance agreement.*
- Applications must not request funds for activities or deliverables for which the applicant has previously received funds
- Applicants must comply with solicitation notice submission instructions as noted in *section IV* and detailed in *Appendix E*

# Application Instructions

(Section IV., Appendix E, & Appendix F)

- Submit using [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)
  - This is **mandatory** unless the applicant has obtained a waiver
- Provide all required documents
  - Refer to the instructions in Appendix E and the checklist in Appendix F
- Keep an eye out for two confirmation emails that your application was received
  - The second email confirms that the right agency (EPA) has your application

# Evaluation Criteria

## (Section V-A.)

- All applications are evaluated on the following criteria:
  - Outputs and Outcomes Leading to Environmental Results
  - Project Feasibility and Approach
  - Exchange Network Priorities
  - Budget, Resources and Key Personnel
  - Past Performance
    - Explicitly state if you have not received any previous EN Grants



# Key Changes from Solicitation Notice FY '18

# Key Changes from FY 2018

- Appendix A Safe Drinking Water Information (SDWIS)
  - API opportunities were eliminated from version posted February 1, 2019
- Evaluation criteria no longer contains 'Yes/No' answers
  - Grading is done on a sliding scale which assigns points based on how well you meet the criteria
- Evaluation criteria now places a greater emphasis on the use of multiple shared services

# Key Changes from FY 2018

- [EPA Form 6600-66 Certification Regarding Lobbying](#) is no longer needed at time of application submittal
  - This form would be required prior to EPA awarding funding greater than \$100,000 to a successful application
- EPA has made it easier for you to search our catalogs to identify reusable shared services

# Key Changes from FY 2018

- Within section E-I, overall opportunities remain virtually the same from FY '18
- **HOWEVER**, many opportunities have been updated to reflect the current status of either the program or system relating to the opportunity
  - We recommend carefully reading through the SN so that you are fully aware of these changes



# Best Practices and Reminders

# Best Practices

- Read the Solicitation Notice carefully
  - ✓ Make note of all requirements for a complete application
  - ✓ Highlight the key elements
- Address all of the evaluation criteria
  - ✓ Only include text that will award you points
  - ✓ Make it easy for the reviewers
- Call us if you have questions or require clarification

# General Reminders

Be explicit about reusing existing products/services

- ✓ List products registered in RCS, SSRC, and the E-Enterprise Community Inventory Platform

Describe partner roles and responsibilities

- ✓ Include commitment letters

Include AG letter if not a state agency or department

- ✓ Public universities or regional air pollution control districts are eligible entities if instrumentalities of the state

# General Reminders

- Include a schedule with Oct. 1st, 2019, as the project start date
- Write to criteria and use EPA language (*see appendix G*)
- Check application length and the font/margin specs (*appendix E*)
- Ensure that the cover letter includes the type of assistance being sought and a brief project summary (*appendix E*)
- Remember that the project narrative is the *most important element*, as this is what the review panel uses to score proposals

# Project Narrative Reminders

- A successful narrative:
  - Clearly defines each goal, output, and the environmental impact
  - Explains how each goal meets a programmatic or administrative business need
  - Explains project methodology and demonstrates technical understanding
  - Results in the development and deployment of a *fully functional product or service*

# Recommended format for 'Projected Goals, Outputs, and Outcomes' within the Project Narrative (*Appendix E*)

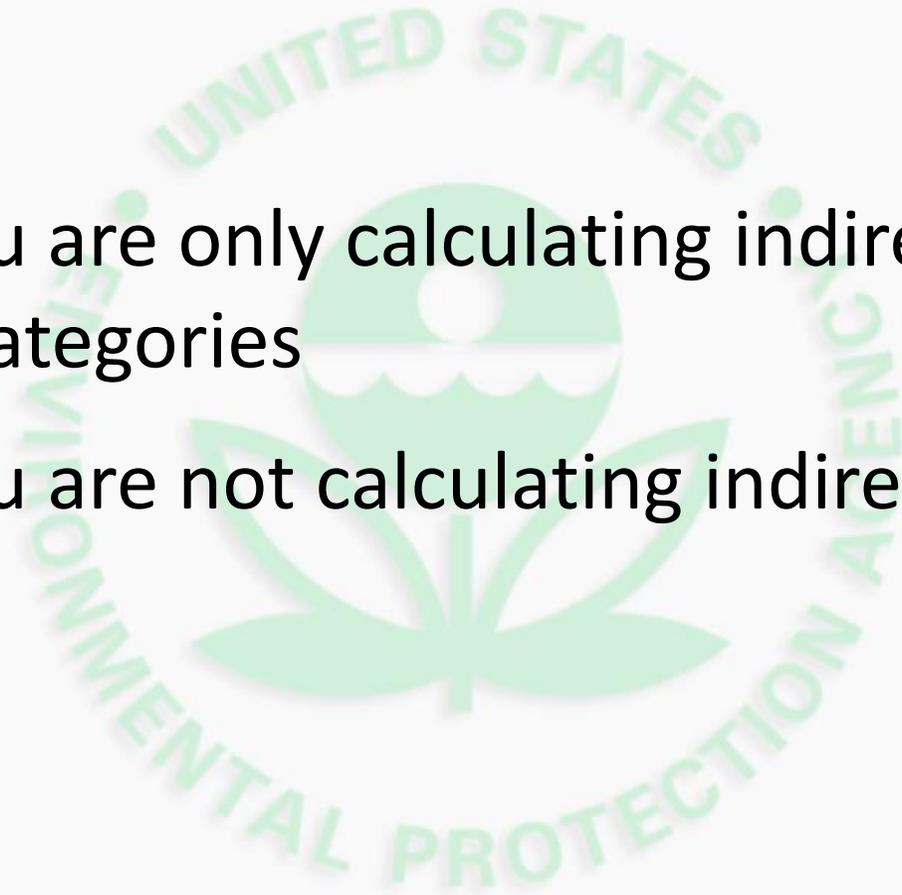
Goal	Output	Output Budget	Scheduled Completion Date	Outcomes
Goal One: EIS & GHG Data Flows (\$58,000)	1.1 CERS data mapped to XML Schema	\$5,000	Jan. 1, 2011	Increased availability of timely, high quality data to other Exchange Network partners will improve environmental decision-making
	1.2 EIS flow to EPA becomes operational	\$7,500	Jun. 1, 2011	
	1.3 GHG flow to EPA becomes operational	\$15,000	Dec. 31, 2011	
	1.4 Improve GIS locations and geospatial metadata for air release points	\$22,000	Sept. 30, 2012	
	1.5 Add Assessment Module to evaluate air emissions near new construction projects	\$8,500		
Goal Two: WQX (\$44,350)	2.1 Data mapped to XML schema	\$21,350	Mar. 31, 2011	Increased availability of data to other Exchange Network partners Electronic availability of standardized, timely, high quality data over the Exchange Network will improve the analysis of water quality monitoring data and lead to better decision-making
	2.2 Implement WQX Flow	\$7,800	Sept. 30, 2011	
	2.3 Written documentation of implementing WQX with multi-state AWQMS database	\$13,000	Jan. 31, 2012	
	2.4 Publish Web Service	\$2,200	Sept. 30, 2012	

# Budget Reminders – Indirect Costs

- Almost all the agreements that states and tribes use are calculated based only on Salaries plus Fringe Benefits
  - EPA ensures applications excluded contracts, travel, etc. from the base
  - Every rate is individualized so this rule is not 100% guaranteed– will not know until the IDC agreements are read
- Make sure the agreement will not expire before award
  - For awards issued after applicant's fiscal year, the next year's rate is applied
  - *For Tribal Grants:* Get your rate proposals into DOI/IBC in a timely matter – proposed rates can be used

# Budget Reminders – Indirect Costs

- Make sure you are only calculating indirect costs on appropriate categories
- Make sure you are not calculating indirect costs above the agreed rate



# Budget Reminders

- Contract vs. Subaward
  - Most organizations look at every sub-agreement as a subcontract, **BUT** Federal agencies have to look at whether they are sub-grants (non-procurement) vs acquisitions.
    - Acquisitions/Procurements = Contract
    - Sub-grant (non-procurement) = Subaward (Other)
      - Please note that in a partnership scenario, partners are not producing a deliverable for the grantee

# Reusing Existing Services

- Applicants are encouraged to indicate their reuse of existing shared services, to the greatest extent possible, in their proposal
  - This requirement is evaluated in *Question 2C of SN Section V*
- There are several methods for an applicant to identify reusable shared services and code as part of their project proposal:
  - Reusable Components Services (RCS): <http://www.epa.gov/rcs>
  - Shared Services Resource Catalog (SSRC): <https://sscatalog.epa.gov>
  - E-Enterprise Community Inventory Platform (EECIP): [www.eecip.net](http://www.eecip.net)

# Shared Services Resource Catalog (SSRC)

- Examples of shared services:

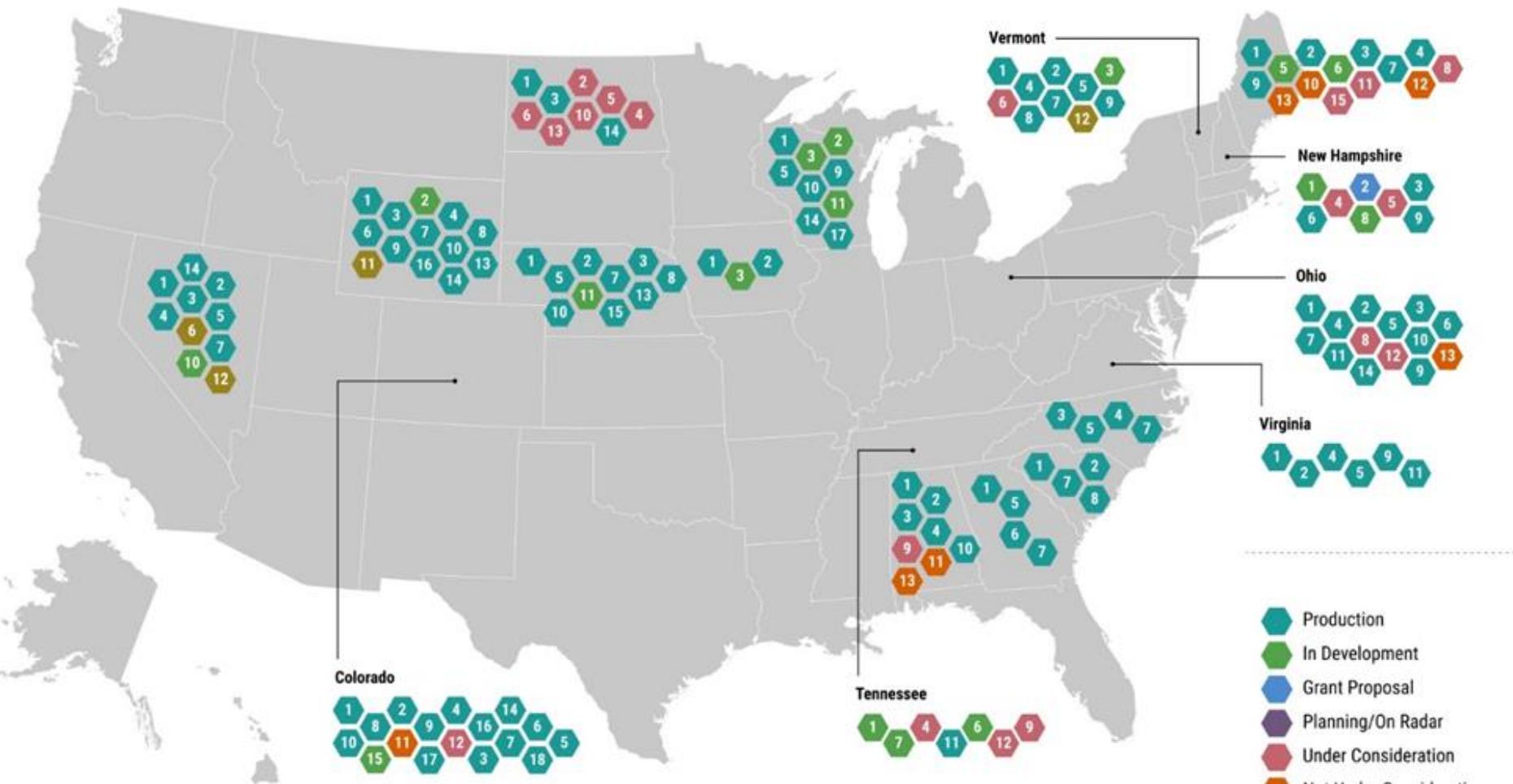
<b>Shared Service</b>	<b>Description of Shared Service</b>
<i>Facility Registry Service</i>	FRS is a centrally managed database that identifies facilities subject to environmental regulations, providing an integrated source of air, water waste, and other environmental data
<i>Substance Registry Service</i>	SRS is EPA's central system for information about regulated and monitored chemical substances
<i>Laws and Regulations Service (LRS)</i>	Databases and webservices providing access to info for EPA relevant laws and regulations and the linkages between them. Programs and chemicals are also linked to laws and regulations

# E-Enterprise Community Inventory Platform

*EECIP ([eecip.net](http://eecip.net)) encourages the discovery, reuse and repurposing of work by other organizations that is relevant to your organization*

- Living project inventory with content spanning topics such as IT, process improvement, advanced monitoring, and data management.
- Users can view partner agencies' projects and systems, participate in discussion threads, and connect with peers.

# State Enterprise Services on eecip.net



- Production
- In Development
- Grant Proposal
- Planning/On Radar
- Under Consideration
- Not Under Consideration
- Not Sure

- Exchange Network Node
- Integration of Geospatial Tools into Business Applications
- Document Management System
- Business Analytics/Report Generation
- Online Payment System
- Enterprise Portal
- ePermitting
- Forms Management
- Identity Management
- FOIA Response Management
- Mobile Enterprise Application Platform
- API Hosting/Management Platform
- Public Comment
- eReporting
- Facility/Regulated Entity Integration
- Public Complaints/Spill Response
- eSignature
- Lean or Other Process Improvement Staffing

Tribe	Exchange Network Node	Facility/Regulated Entity Integration
Cherokee Nation	Cherokee Nation Node	
Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians	Redwood Valley Rancheria VES Implementation	IIS

**E-ENTERPRISE**  
for the environment

*Modernizing the business of environmental protection*



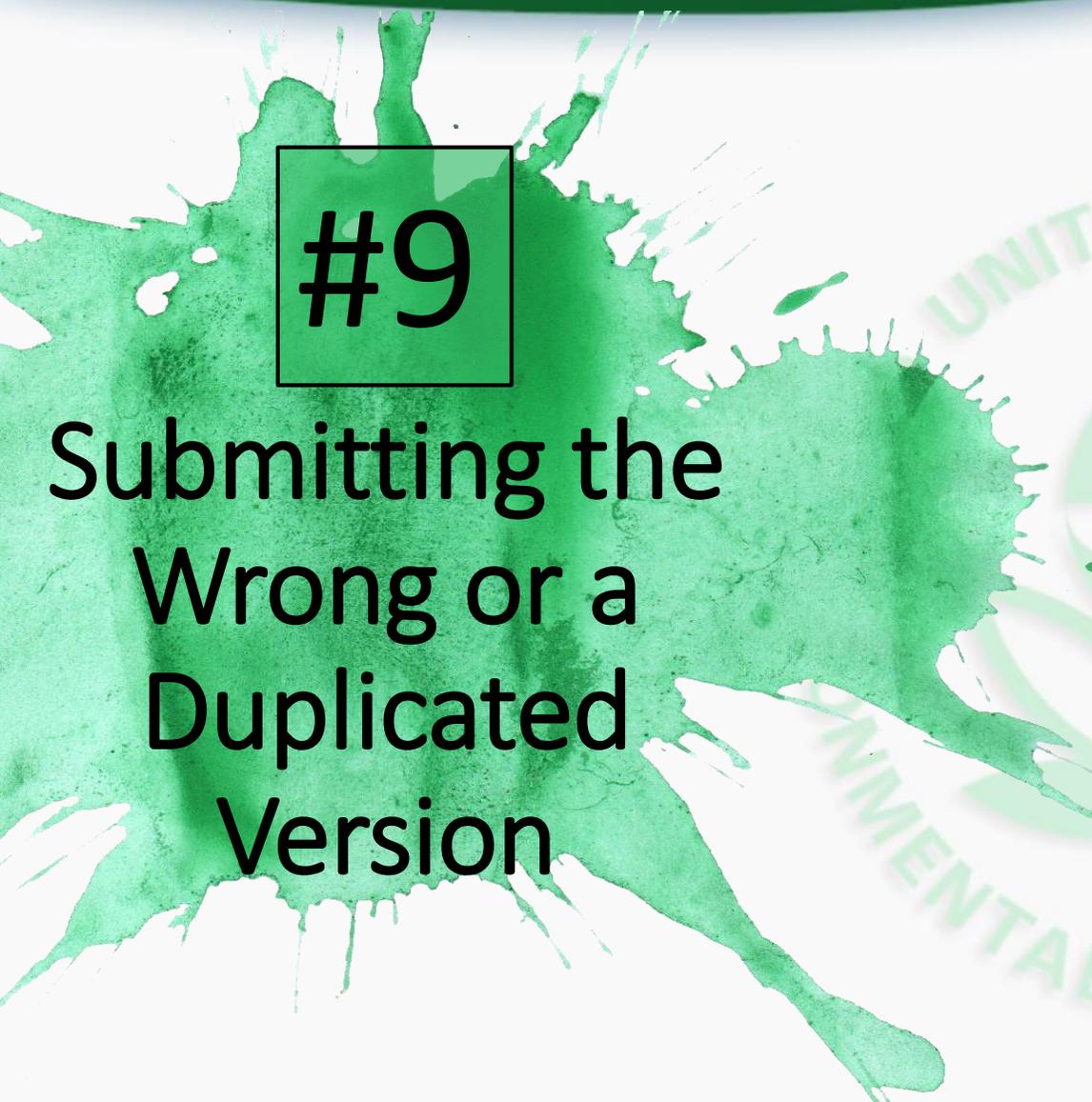
# Top Ten Mistakes/ Things to Avoid



#10

## Not Submitting All Forms

- Please ensure you have submitted all required forms.
- EG: If you are using grant funds for indirect costs, you must include an indirect cost rate form
- Use the checklist in Appendix F!



#9

## Submitting the Wrong or a Duplicated Version

- Applicants occasionally submit draft versions of their applications, slowing the application intake process
- Be sure you are submitting a final version, with **no markup** and **no comments!**
- **Mistakes do happen;** please let us know if you have submitted a duplicate application or an incorrect version

*Contact Edward Mixon if you notice an error:  
[mixon.edward@epa.gov](mailto:mixon.edward@epa.gov)*



#8

## Roles and Responsibilities

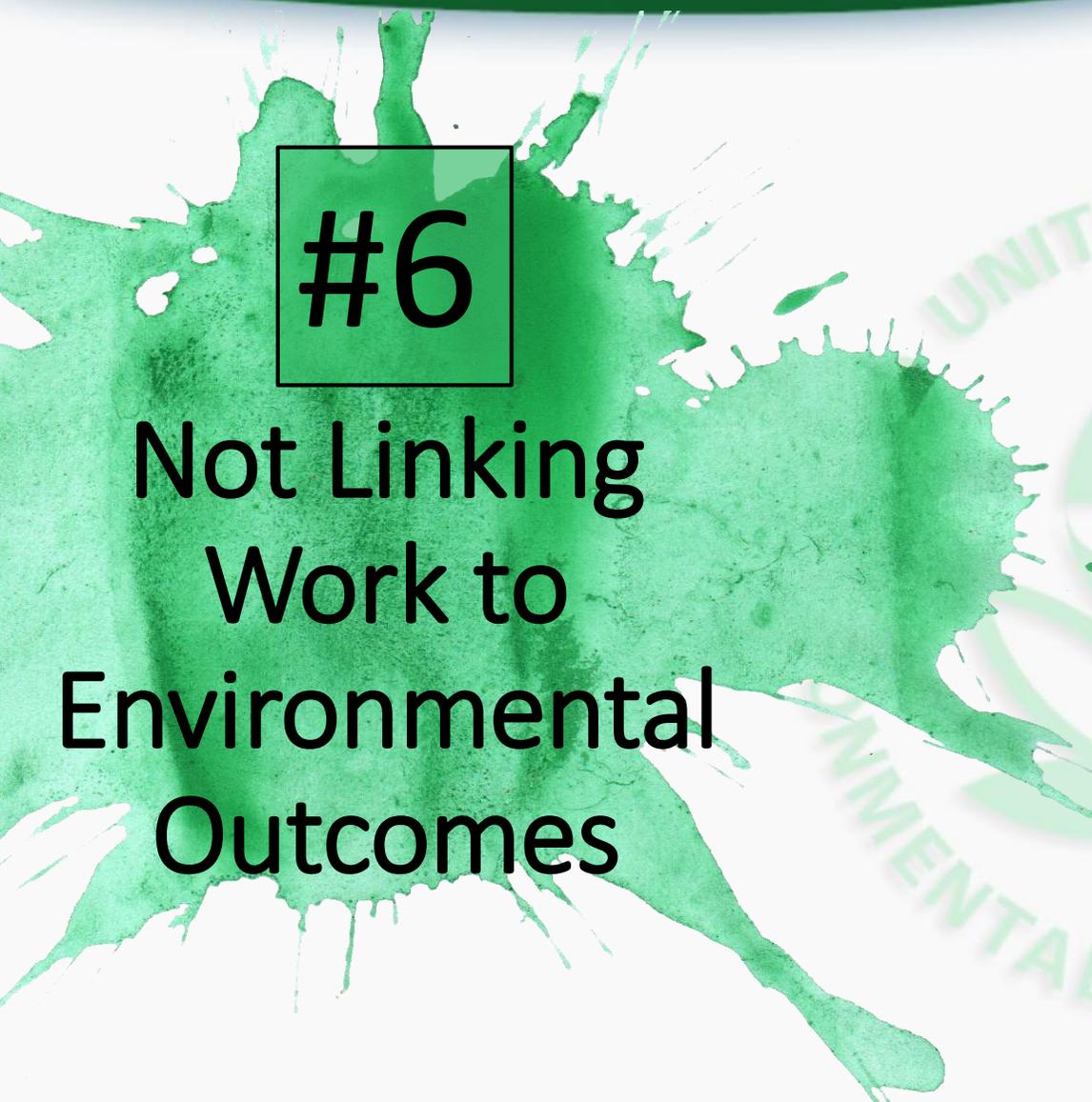
- Please be detailed about roles and responsibilities, listing individuals' program involvement as well as their name
  - If your application involves programmatic data, be explicit on how program staff are involved in the program and, if they are not, why
  - Be sure to include information regarding your interactions with the public or customers
    - How are you engaging them or responding to queries/issues?



#7

## Partnerships in the Same State

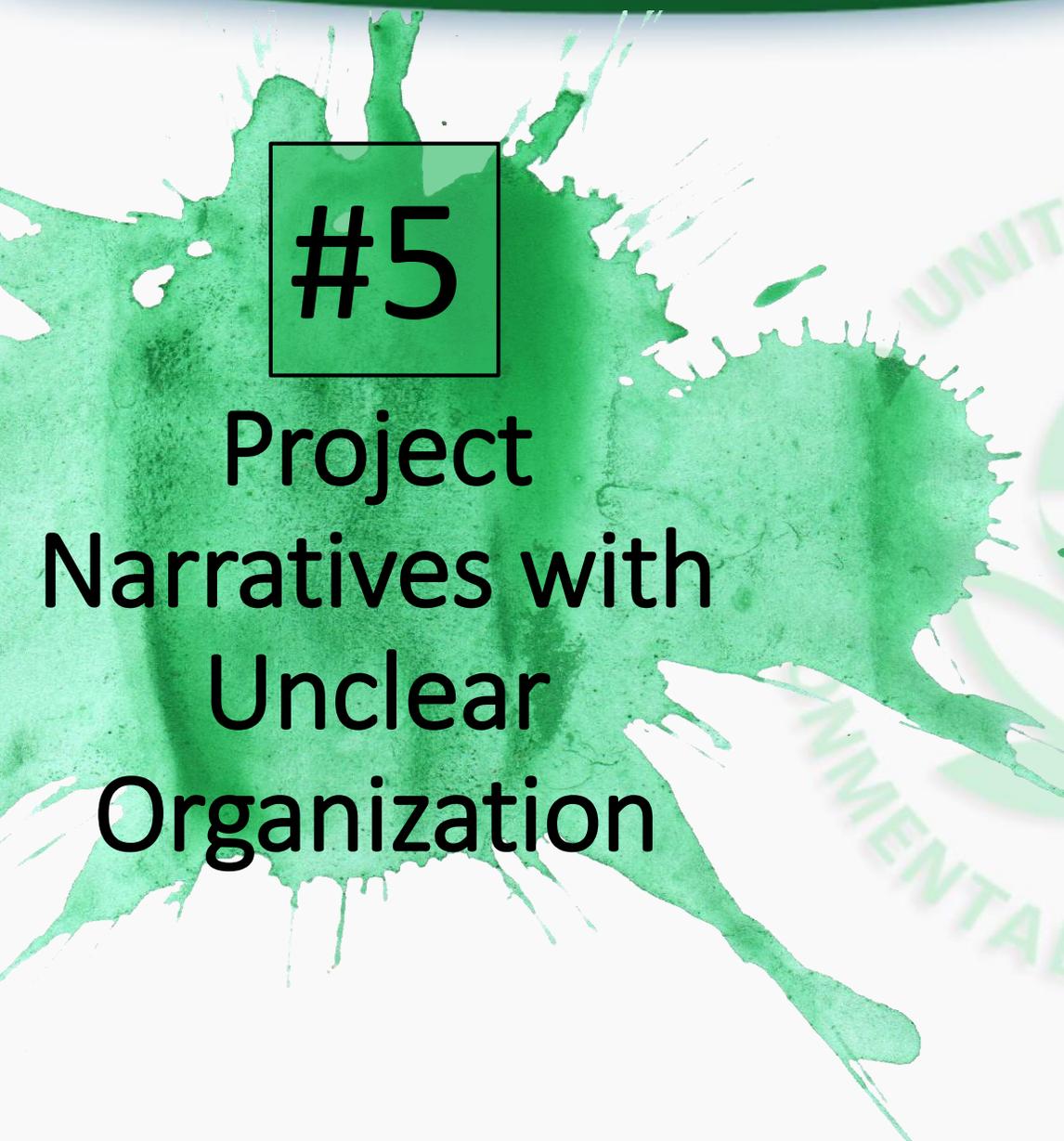
- Higher funding limit for eligible partnerships does not apply to partnerships within a single state, territory, or tribal government.
  - EG: State environmental health agency and environmental agency; state university and state environmental agency
- This does not mean that these types of partnerships aren't allowed, just that they will not be considered for higher funding



#6

## Not Linking Work to Environmental Outcomes

- Although it may seem obvious to you that your project is supporting environmental outcomes, it isn't always clear to reviewers
  - Reviewers need to see **explicit statements that connect your proposed work to environmental outcomes**



#5

## Project Narratives with Unclear Organization

- We strongly recommend following the **proposal organization as outlined in Appendix E.**
  - If you do not follow this outline, the reviewers can miss important elements of your proposal and you will lose points
  - The organization of your proposal serves as a direct link to the evaluation criteria



#4

## Including Too Much Information

- Only include information that will be scored in your Project Narrative
  - Please stay within the 10 page limit!
  - **Reviews will not consider required information that falls outside the limit**

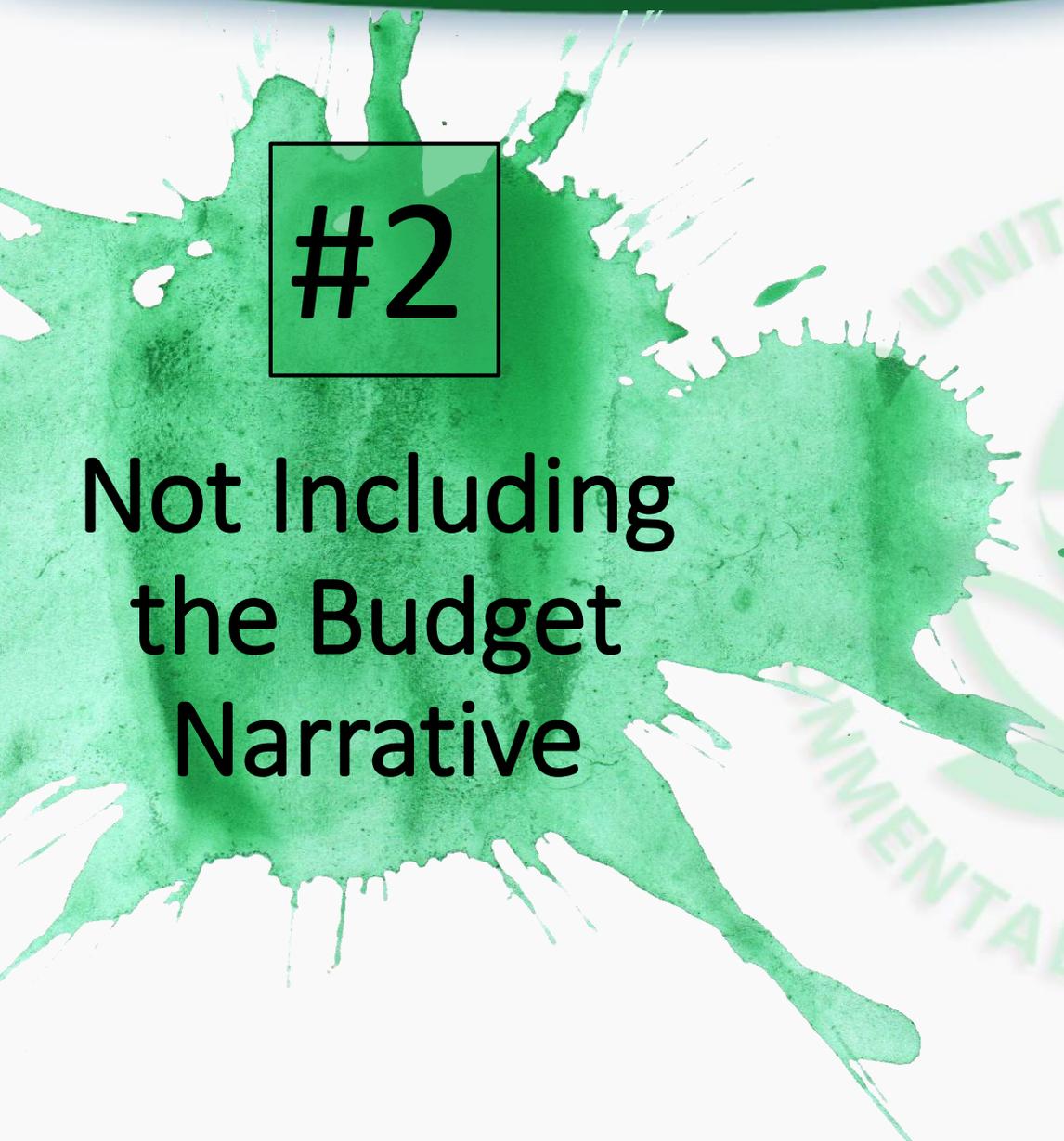


#3

## Unrealistic Project Timelines

- Setting overly ambitious timelines frequently results in grants requiring modifications post-award to extend the project period.
- We suggest that applicants build in time for approvals and delays

*Use the full 3 year period; you can always finish early if preferred!*



#2

## Not Including the Budget Narrative

- Reviewers evaluate the appropriateness of an applicants budget, using the cost estimates provided in the [appendices A & B](#).
- Tell us why your budget is appropriate and how you've arrived at that figure:
  - Should be a written paragraph
  - Explain your indirect cost calculation, including any modifications!
  - Budget for **each goal** and **each output** in the table format provided ([appendix E](#))
    - Outputs must include a timeline and dollar amounts
  - Travel descriptions must include location and purpose of the trip



#1

## Mismatching Budgets

- Ensure the budget in your *project narrative*, *424 forms*, and *detailed itemized budget* all match before you submit your final application package
- Check the indirect cost rate and calculation across your budget objects

# Stay Connected



- Subscribe to EN Alerts
- Participate in EN Stakeholder conference calls
- Visit our exchange network website for the latest information!

[epa.gov/exchangenetwork](https://epa.gov/exchangenetwork)

# Contact Us

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# Questions?

Please feel free to ask questions over the phone or type questions into the chat box

To ask a question on the phone, please **dial \*6** to unmute your phone line

*When your question has been answered, please mute yourself by dialing \*6*

*This preserves the audio quality of the call*