

FY '19 Solicitation Notice Webinars – FAQs

General Resources and Contacts:

Where can I find the information and connection details for future EN Grant webinars?

There are no more scheduled webinars at this time; however, interested applicants can find the PowerPoint presentation and a recording of one of the webinars on our website:

<https://www.epa.gov/exchangenetwork/exchange-network-grant-program>

Are there examples of previous projects on the website?

Yes, there are lists of previous grant projects broken down by fiscal year posted on our website:

<https://www.epa.gov/exchangenetwork/previous-exchange-network-grant-projects>

Who can I contact at EPA HQ about the EN Grant program?

For general enquiries, please email Edward Mixon at mixon.edward@epa.gov or call him at (202) 566-2142.

For enquiries relating to our reusable shared services (RCS/SSRC), please contact Lico Galindo at galindo.lico@epa.gov, 202-566-2142, or Juan Parra at parra.juan@epa.gov, 202-566-1252.

Drafting an Application

Can a state agency submit more than one EN grant application?

A state agency can submit more than one EN grant application, but please note that we do not award more than one grant to a single agency. Therefore, if multiple applications are submitted, they would be in direct competition with each other.

Please note that in recent years, due to high grant application volume, we limit successful grant applications to one per state, territory, or tribe. This is to ensure the greatest geographic distribution of grants awarded (*see 'other evaluation factors' in section V-A*). Therefore, if multiple applications are received from the same state, territory, or tribe, the highest scoring application will be awarded the grant. In the case of a tie, the application which contains the highest incorporation of exchange network priorities will be awarded the grant.

We intend to apply for a single grant, but have two different divisions with different projects; can my grant application contain both projects?

Yes, your grant application can contain multiple goals, including ones that address different opportunities within the solicitation notice. For example, an application can contain both the development of a WQX flow and a product for EIS, as long as the proposal commits to the completion of both goals within the application.

As a note, this would be a single grant and not a partnership grant, as the application is coming from a single agency.

Is it possible to speak with the EPA regarding my project ideas and to see how well they align with EPA's current requirements?

The EPA has to be very careful in terms of what is communicated to potential applicants to prevent bias or unfair competitive advantages in the grant competition process. To this point, the EPA is not able to brainstorm specific project ideas or objectives with an applicant. However, we are able to provide clarification on the opportunities as written in our solicitation notice or provide general application guidance.

Is there someone I can reach out to discuss our project and see if there is a tool that seems appropriate to reuse or scale?

Again, the EPA must be very careful in terms of what is communicated to potential applicants to prevent bias or unfair competitive advantage. As such, we are unable to discuss specific project-appropriate tools and shared services with applicants. We recommend that applicants use the RCS [<http://www.epa.gov/rcs>], the SSRC database [<https://www.sscatalog.epa.gov>], or the E-E Community Inventory Platform [www.eecip.net] to search for existing reusable products and shared services.

Do CROMERR shared services count as reusable shared services?

Yes, CROMERR shared services do count as reusable shared services.

How can I assess whether the project costs within my budget are going to be considered reasonable by the EPA?

Each opportunity within the appendices lists specific activities and an affiliated cost range. These cost estimates serve as a guide to what the EPA considers a reasonable cost to achieve

the listed activities. If your projected costs exceed these estimates, please explicitly explain how you reached this figure within your budget narrative and why it exceeds the opportunity cost projected by the EPA program (see *appendices A and/or B*).

If the proposed activity is contingent on an EPA program that is still under development (eg. WebFIRE, as listed in the EIS opportunity on page A-3), how can I write the project narrative and determine the schedule?

If a program or service is written into an SN opportunity but it is not yet active, please write your application under the assumption that the service will be up and running in time for an October 1st project start date.

Can you provide a specific example of when an applicant would use in-kind services versus direct funding?

Example: The EPA's Drinking Water program has several contracts which they are making available to applicants conducting SDWIS Prime related projects. A grantee might choose to use a portion of their grant to access one of these contracts for the completion of specific goals or objectives as outlined in their application narrative. They elect this option because the experience that EPA contractors have with SDWIS systems makes them more cost effective than relying on the applicant's internal staff or another contractor. This same applicant might also have in-house staff doing project management and other SDWIS related activities. The costs of this internal portion of an applicant's grant tasks would be direct funding versus the in-kind funding that was used for the EPA contractors. The proportion for direct funding versus in-kind funding is specific to each individual project.

Can you please elaborate on the difference between contracts and subawards?

In a subaward situation, the roles of the grantee and partner (sub-grantee) are essentially interchangeable, but one of the agencies in this partnership has chosen to take a lead on the project. Both parties are taking on a portion of the work and both parties are gaining something that benefits their work. Often the funds dispersed to partners associated with subawards are for reimbursement of travel to partner meetings. By comparison, a contract situation is when the grantee is hiring someone to create a product for them. After the deliverable is produced, there is no need for continued communication with the hired individual(s).

Application Requirements and Guidelines

Does the '10 page limit' apply to my entire application or just the narrative section?

The 10 page limit, as referred to several times during the webinar, is applicable only to the grant application's 'project narrative attachment form' or work plan. *Please see Appendix E for more information.*

To save space, do not include personnel resumes in the project narrative – add them as an appendix. Please see the question below, '*Do I Need To Submit the Resumes of Key Personnel?*', for more details on this subject.

Does the cover letter count as part of the 10 page limit?

Again, the ten-page limit only applies to the project narrative or work plan. As the cover letter is not part of project narrative, it does not count as part of the 10-page limit.

Does a 'Table of Contents' count as part of the 10 page limit?

Yes, a table of contents which outlines the content of the project narrative does count as part of the ten-page limit.

What exactly is required for the project narrative?

As can be found in Appendix E of the Solicitation Notice (page E-2), the project narrative must substantially conform to the following outline and content:

- 1. Project Description** – This should be a narrative description of the proposed work. If the proposal is for more than one project, it may be helpful to organize the introduction by goal. The purpose of the introduction is to help reviewers better understand what is being proposed.
- 2. Project Goals, Outputs and Outcomes** – Include a plan that will allow the applicant to track and report progress toward achieving the project's proposed goals. Reviewers will look for a table similar to the one included below as evidence of a plan to track and report progress. Using the table below as a model will ensure reviewers can see what major project outputs (major deliverables or events) you propose for each goal (a self-contained project), the

anticipated budget for each goal and output, when they are scheduled, and which outcomes leading to environmental results each proposed goal supports. Please see the table on page E-3 of the Solicitation Notice for suggested format.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of project participants for the applicant and any partners - If the project is not a partnership, list the personnel who are going to work on the project and what they will be doing. If the proposed project includes one or more formal partners, describe their roles within agencies or tribes.

4. Summarized qualifications of the project manager and other key personnel – Applicants must summarize the qualifications of the project manager and other key personnel who would perform the proposed work in the project narrative. Applicants may include resumes and biographical sketches as attachments but must include a summary in the narrative and indicate these items are attached. In the case an applicant is proposing to hire key personnel, the applicant should submit a statement of knowledge skills, abilities and qualifications as an attachment, and summarize this in the project narrative.

5. Programmatic Involvement – Applicants must describe programmatic involvement in the development and management of the project, including a listing of programmatic participants, positions and roles in the project. Briefly describe the programmatic resources and personnel involved in the project for the recipient and any participating partner. Highlight any expertise or past experiences that may be particularly helpful in carrying out the project. Any project that is not purely technical must have substantive program participation. Make sure that you describe that contribution.

6. Commitment to Reuse– Applicants should not spend grant funds on tools already developed and available for EN partner use. Partners must clearly identify which existing project-appropriate tools and shared services will be incorporated into the project. The proposal must also explicitly commit to registering tools they develop in grant-funded projects.

7. Budget Narrative – Applicants should identify budget amounts for each goal and each output. Occasionally EPA will decide not to fund an individual goal. This may happen when a proposed goal is not consistent with EN/EE priorities or when EPA decides the proposal is not adequate for other reasons. Because each goal represents a freestanding project, EPA may decide to fund other proposed goals in the same proposal. Knowing what each proposed project will cost makes it possible for EPA to adjust the total budget in these cases. Applicants should explain why the proposed budget is appropriate, how it relates to budget estimates in this notice, explain any indirect cost calculations, and include any other pertinent budgetary information.

8. Statement summarizing past performance – Applicants should identify any EPA assistance agreements similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed agreement performed in the last 3 years. Applicants with no past performance (have never received an EN grant) must indicate this in their project narrative. Applicants should also identify any tools, resources, services, and/or dataflows they have registered in RCS, produced by EN grant funds since 2011.

Can you clarify what the project narrative requirement ‘programmatic involvement’ means?

In many cases, the Agency receives EN grant applications from central IT offices that provide the IT infrastructure to environmental or health programs. With respect to EN grants, the term programmatic refers to that environmental or health program (e.g. water quality, underground storage tank, solid waste program, drinking water program, etc.) for which the applicant is developing an output. In other words, this is the client or the people who will be utilizing what is produced/implemented through the project. The applicant needs to describe how the stakeholders in these environmental and health programs will be involved in setting the requirements and development approaches for the proposed project.

Why doesn't the checklist in Appendix F contain the budget narrative, as was discussed in the PowerPoint presentation?

The budget narrative is a component of the project narrative, which is listed in Appendix F.

The project narrative attachment form, as detailed in Appendix E, is composed of the proposal's cover letter and its project narrative. The project narrative requires a (a) project description, (b) project goals, outputs and outcomes, (c) roles and responsibilities of project participants, (d) summarized qualifications of the project manager and key personnel, (e) programmatic involvement, (f) commitment to reuse existing EN products, **(g) budget narrative**, and (h) the statement summarizing past performance. We strongly recommend that this budget narrative is submitted in the form of the table as shown on page E-3, which outlines the outputs, output budgets, scheduled completion date, and outcomes as relate to each project goal.

Please do note that there is also a required 'Budget Narrative Attachment Form- for Submitting the Detailed Itemized Budget' which is sent to our grants office to expedite the award process. Please find the details for this required form on page E-5.

Do I need to break down internal and external (contractor) costs in the budget narrative (within the project narrative)?

In addition to mapping costs to goals and objectives, the applicant should include a table in the budget narrative section that distinguishes between internal staff costs versus contractual costs. The information in the budget narrative should match the information required in form 424A -'Budget Information for Non-Construction', which includes breakdowns by personnel costs, indirect costs, fringe costs, subawardee costs, contractor costs, etc. It is critical that the costs in the 424A form match what is in the budget narrative of the application narrative.

Do I need to include contractors under key personnel?

Yes, you should indicate the name, qualifications, and project responsibilities of the contractors whose services you intend to use in the key personnel section of your project narrative.

Can I refer to key personnel by position title or do I need to include names?

Yes, please include the names and relevant qualifications of all key personnel in the project narrative. If you haven't hired for the position yet, please write something to the effect of: 'we are in the process of procuring a person and they will have the following qualifications...'

Do I need to submit the resumes of key personnel?

Though this is not a requirement, it is good practice to include the resumes of key personnel in the application appendices if possible. These can serve as helpful references for EPA folk during the review process if clarification is needed. However, it is a requirement to include personnel summaries in the project narrative as detailed in Appendix E of the solicitation notice.

Is an approved 2019 IDC (indirect cost rate) agreement sufficient for the FY19 proposals?

Yes, if the award is made before the indirect rate agreement expires.

For tribal applicants- If you do not have a current rate when you submit your application, your yearly budget should be calculated based on the proposal you submitted to DOI/IBC for the current year IDC agreement.

The IDC is often out of the hands of the tribes; are letters from a tribe's controller a sufficient alternative to an IDC agreement?

No, letters from a tribe's controller are not sufficient; rates must be set through an official proposal with the Department of the Interior (DOI)'s Interior Business Center (IBC).

Eligibility/Opportunity Questions

In the past, we received a grant for collection pollution data on our lake and requested funds for expanding our data storage. This year, our project is collecting a different kind of data on different waterways, but we again are going to need funding for additional storage space. Does this count as requesting funding for something that has been done in the past?

No; as this proposal is requesting funding for storing a different type of data, this is not a redundant request. This proposal would therefore be eligible for funding.

Would Primacy transition from SDWIS/State to SDWIS Prime, and related activities, be eligible for an EN Grant?

The SDWIS [Safe Drinking Water Information System] opportunity in Appendix A of the solicitation notice (page A-22 and A-23) contains a range of activities available for funding relating to SDWIS Prime transitions.

See, for example, the following funded activities:

- Adopting and deploying SDWIS Prime and CMDP – including, but not limited to developing a transition plan, data cleanup, data migration and training to move a drinking water primacy agency from their legacy systems to SDWIS Prime and CMDP. Eligible activities also include but are not limited to training of agency, public water system and laboratory personnel in system usage and system testing. Please note that states should not adopt CMDP independent of SDWIS Prime because it would result in significant extra work.
- Repurposing the legacy SDWIS State database as a local data store serving as an intermediary between SDWIS Prime and the primacy agency's interfacing applications, including a mechanism for synchronizing data with SDWIS Prime, leveraging Virtual Exchange Services for this data exchange. EPA readiness to support this activity is dependent on completion of current VES pilot activities from previous EN grant projects.

[Laws and Regulations Services, Page B-18]

Is the Laws and Regulations Services registry public and in production now?

Yes, the Laws and Regulations Services registry is live, but does not yet have its own user interface (see details below). The EPA is looking for partners in the form of a cooperative agreement to catalog applicable state/territorial/tribal laws within the LRS and show their association to federal regulations. This opportunity is also open to partners who would like to work with the EPA in integrating their independently managed 'laws and regulations' databases with the EPA's service.

Can you provide more details on the LRS?

The LRS is a catalog of federal laws relevant to EPA, the regulations that implement those laws, and the EPA programs that oversee those regulations.

The first component, the *laws*, contains the titles and sections (and subsections, etc.) of each law. The second component, the *federal regulations*, contains the code that implements a particular part of the law as found within the Government Publishing Office (GPO)'s annual Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The third component lists the *EPA program(s)* that manage specific regulations.

What is the GPO and how does it relate to this EN Grant opportunity?

The GPO is the part of the federal government that publishes information. The GPO has two relevant websites: one that hosts US code and another that hosts the code of federal regulations. These two websites are not linked and therefore the LRS was created to pull the relevant information from both sites and host it in one location, allowing users to better understand how the EPA manages the laws and regulations for which it is responsible.

How can I access the LRS?

Currently, there is no interface for the LRS that allows direct user access. There is, however, a web service available for LRS at <https://ofmpub.epa.gov/lrswebservices/>. The LRS has also been incorporated into another system called the Federal Regulation Finder. Users can access this through the test environment for the e-enterprise portal [the e-enterprise portal is projected to be live in April 2019]:

<https://test.e-enterprise.gov/>

Click the link above, select 'browse as guest' in the upper right-hand corner, agree to the terms to access the site, and select 'skip this' in the pop-up menu. The Federal Regulation Finder, in which a user can search by either substance name/CAS # or keyword, can then be found at the bottom-left of the page.