

**Water Quality Benefits
Request for Applications (RFA)**

Informational Webinar Questions and Answers

December 15, 2021

1. May you please elaborate on the concept of willingness to pay (WTP) in the context of water quality and/or water body type?

Answer: WTP is the maximum amount of money an individual would pay to obtain an improvement (or avoid a decrement) in an environmental effect of concern. An example in the context of water quality and water body type might be a survey respondent who is willing to pay \$80 to improve the water quality in a local lake from fishable to swimmable.

2. What titles and/or roles are allowed for project participation by federal scientists?

Answer: Please refer to Section 3.C of the RFA. A member of a federal agency may not have a principal leadership role, receive salary, or augment their own agency appropriation unless their federal agency is authorized by law to receive funding. If a federal scientist or federally owned supplies are required for the research, please document approval and justification from their agency, however an EPA employee will not be permitted to work on this project.

3. May you please provide some examples of underrepresented waterbodies?

Answer: In table 2 (page 8) of the RFA, results are presented from a research study database that EPA currently uses for water quality and wetlands benefit meta-analyses. This table identifies waterbodies by type (coastal wetland, estuary, freshwater wetland, lake, and river/stream), which can help identify waterbody types that may be underrepresented.

4. Should the Environmental Justice (EJ) Research Area focus on drinking water? Also, should it focus on all water bodies?

Answer: The EJ research area can focus on human health risks, including drinking water quality. It can also include any waterbody type relevant to the proposed research question and does not have to include all waterbodies.

5. Is SAM.gov registration for institutions or individual PI's?

Answer: The registration is for Institutions. For more information on this, visit page 44-45 of the RFA. If you have further questions or need assistance with the SAM.gov registration process, please contact Debra Jones (jones.debram@epa.gov)

6. What does the "Physical Characteristics and Geography" at the end of the Research 3 title mean? There is no description of this provided in the RFA. Are proposals on physical characteristics and geography being solicited?

Answer: Since many of the research projects in this research area might be focused on specific geographic areas, part of what applicants would be assessing might be how physical or geographic characteristics impact water quality and certain types of benefits (i.e. catch-rate and fishery health). The distribution of benefits would be the EJ component. Other examples could include higher temperatures and the resulting increase in the occurrence of harmful algal

blooms or higher rainfall due to climate change resulting in flooding, loss of wetlands, or poor stormwater management.

7. Can research university employees with federal government affiliation serve as key personnel on a project?

Answer: No, federal employees should not be involved in the management of the award. However, the federal employee could still contribute to the research in a supporting role so long as it is at the direction of the recipient and the federal employee's agency does not have any concerns.

8. Regarding letters of support, does EPA have standard language to use?

Answer: There is no standard language to use. However, it must be limited to one page including the salutation and signature. The specific criteria for this can be found on page 40 in the RFA.

9. Is groundwater covered or can be classified as underrepresented water bodies?

Answer: Research funded under this RFA should be focused on surface water. Groundwater may be incorporated as needed, but surface water should be the primary focus.

10. What criteria do you use to determine that a specific waterbody is iconic?

Answer: While EPA does not have an official definition and criteria for identifying iconic waterbodies, pre-existing lists of criteria have included waterbody size, economic value, natural habitat for endangered and/or endemic species, and the presence of cultural landmarks/historical importance.

11. For Table 2 what is the "cut off" for the number of studies being considered as underrepresented? Would a surface waterbody be considered "underrepresented" if it didn't make the list? Would a drainage ditch be considered underrepresented?

Answer: Underrepresented waterbodies that EPA has considered are listed on Table 2 of the RFA (section I.B). There are no "cut offs" related to this table, but applicants should justify why a particular waterbody type and/or region would qualify as underrepresented.

12. Are waterbody types listed on table 2 considered underrepresented?

Answer: Table 2 of the RFA (section I.B) identifies valuation studies in a meta-analysis commonly considered in EPA analysis by major waterbody type and region. Waterbody types in this table may be considered underrepresented nationally or in a particular region. Applicants should justify why valuation of a particular waterbody would qualify as underrepresented.

13. Given the holidays, Infrastructure Bill, J40 Initiative, etc. is EPA holding steadfast to the 1/26 deadline for applications?

Answer: We do not expect to change the January 26 deadline.