Alignment with the E-Enterprise Digital Strategy (EEDS)

The EN Grant Program awards points through its evaluation criteria to projects that align with the principles of the E-Enterprise Digital Strategy (EEDS) (see criterion 3F in Section V-A 'Evaluation Criteria'). The EEDS is a shared vision to unlock the power of digital information, better coordinate IT systems and services, and deliver more responsive environmental protection. Applicants should provide specific information in the 'Project Alignment with the E-Enterprise Digital Strategy (EEDS)' section of their project narrative that addresses how their proposed project supports the following EEDS principles according to the EEDS evaluation criteria.

1. Build with an Information-Centric Approach: Environmental protection depends on access to quality information. The EEDS calls on state and tribal environmental agencies to invest in their data as a mission-critical asset that is accurate, available, and secure. Projects with an information-centric approach strive to make data FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. Data that are FAIR can be more easily integrated across agencies and programs and can be adapted to meet a variety of business needs. Information-centric projects treat data as a discrete product that can be accessed and reused in different contexts and for different purposes. Information-centric projects should embrace **an API-first approach** whenever possible. APIs or Application Programming Interfaces are powerful connectors that make data available in machine-readable formats. When data are made openly and securely available through APIs, they can be tagged, shared, secured, mashed up and presented to data consumers in an unlimited number of ways. Well-designed APIs can deliver the information needed to support a range of agency business needs including programmatic workflows, management and policy decisions, and public data access. An **API-first approach** seeks to follow these industry best-practices: (1) the API is the first user interface of an application; (2) the API comes first, followed by implementation; and (3) the API is described in usable documentation, enhancing searchability and functionality.

Example activity: With this principle's broad emphasis on data access and availability, there are many ways in which it may be reflected in a proposed EN project. As one example, an applicant may adopt an existing API (e.g., a federal API, an industry API) and adapt it to meet organizational business needs. Another example would be an applicant developing a set of APIs that provide access to environmental information in one or more program areas.

2. Adopt Shared Platforms: Agencies that share platforms and adopt a "build once, use many times approach" can reduce costs, accelerate innovation, eliminate wasteful duplication, and more easily share information. Taking a shared platform approach may include using common standards and practices, implementing collaborative technology solutions, reusing existing services and contracts, building for multiple use cases, participating in open-source communities, and leveraging public crowd-sourcing. Cloud-based platforms in particular create transformative opportunities to more seamlessly share data, collaborate on interactive modeling initiatives, and match computing resources with workloads.

Example activity: An applicant could align with this EEDS principle by developing or implementing a tool or service used by multiple organizations.

3. Adopt Customer-Centric Approaches: Customer voices should always drive the design of technology projects and process streamlining activities. Projects that use a customer-centric approach take the time at the outset to fully understand and document the customers' business needs. Customer-centric projects make content, data, and services more broadly available, accurate, accessible, and usable.