

**U.S. EPA GREAT LAKES NATIONAL PROGRAM OFFICE
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative**

2023 Request for Applications to Create Great Lakes Environmental Justice Grant Programs (GLEJGPs)

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO)

Funding Opportunity Title: Great Lakes Environmental Justice Grant
Program (GLEJGP)

Announcement Type: Initial Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-I-R5-GL2023-GLEJGP

Assistance Listing Number: 66.469

Award Range: \$2,000,000 - \$20,000,000

Key Dates

Deadline for submitting questions via email about the RFA	August 4, 2023
Applicant webinars	Tuesday, May 23, 11:00 Eastern Standard Time (EDT) Approximately 6 weeks after posting (TBD) See RFA website for details
Closing Date and Deadline for submitting applications. Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (see Section IV for details.)	August 11, 2023, 11:59 Eastern Standard Time (EDT)
Expected notification to selected applicant.	October 2023 (estimated)
Expected announcement of award.	January 2024 (estimated)

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

This Request for Applications (RFA) solicits applications from eligible entities for up to six cooperative agreements to be awarded pursuant to the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan III](#) (GLRI AP III). This RFA is the Great Lakes National Program Office's (GLNPO's) major competitive grant funding opportunity for FY-23 and uses funding provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58, 2021 (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The purpose of the RFA is to help fulfill EPA's commitment to environmental justice (EJ) by establishing Great Lakes Environmental Justice Grant Programs (GLEJGPs) to be used for issuing and overseeing subawards for environmental restoration projects in underserved Great Lakes communities. Approximately \$30 million may be awarded in the form of up to six cooperative agreements. The number of cooperative agreements and total amount awarded is contingent upon funding availability, the quality of applications received, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

Note – Prior to naming a contractor (including consultants) or subrecipient in your application as a “partner”, please carefully review [Section IV.D](#), “Contracts and Subawards”, of EPA’s Announcement Clauses that are incorporated by reference in this announcement (See [Section I.H](#)). EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements as well as EPA’s rule on Participation by Underserved Business Enterprises in EPA Programs set forth in 40 CFR Part 33. The Agency does not accept justifications for sole source contracts for services or products available in the commercial marketplace based on a contractor’s role in preparing an application.

I.A. Background on Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) builds on the prior efforts of federal, state, and local agencies; Indian tribes; businesses; public interest groups; interested citizens; and others to develop a collaborative and comprehensive approach to restoring and protecting the Great Lakes ecosystem. Information about GLRI can be found at www.glri.us.

In addition to annual congressional appropriations to fund the GLRI, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58, 2021 (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or (BIL), provided \$1 billion in GLRI funding. This RFA is part of EPA's commitment to use IIJA funding to advance EPA's priority mission of advancing Environmental Justice (EJ).

Consistent with the Assistance Listing Number 66.469, this RFA is expected to result in the award of one or more cooperative agreements, as appropriate, to help implement the GLRI. EPA's authority to make awards covers both outreach and implementation projects in furtherance of the GLRI and Great Lakes Water Quality Act (GLWQA). (The principal goal of GLWQA is the restoration and maintenance of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem.) The statutory authority to carry out certain U.S. responsibilities under GLWQA and for GLRI funding is contained in the Clean Water Act Section 118 (c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322. Any environmental activities ultimately funded through this RFA must advance protection and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem in support of: 1) the most current [GLRI Action Plan](#)¹ (including other GLRI Action Plans that may be in effect during the term of the award); and 2) [EPA's Strategic Plan](#).

¹ GLRI Action Plan III covers federal fiscal years 2020-2024. EPA expects to issue an updated GLRI Action Plan to take effect in federal fiscal year 2025.

The activities to be funded under this announcement support achievement of EPA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this announcement will primarily support Goal 5 of EPA's Strategic Plan - Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities: Objective 5.2 – Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds. Information about EPA's Strategic Plan can be found [here](#). Additionally, awards made under this announcement will support Goal 2 of [EPA's 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan](#) "Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights" and Goal 1 "Tackle the Climate Crisis," Objective 1.2 – Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts of the [Strategic Plan](#).

I.B. Environmental Justice Background and Key Terms

Environmental justice (EJ) is a priority at EPA. The EPA's [Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights \(OEJECR\) defines EJ](#) as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies".

In addition, Goal 2 of [EPA's 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan](#) is: *Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights*. Goal 2 represents part of the EPA's fulfillment of [Executive Order \(EO\) 13985: On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), pursuant to which EPA developed its own [EPA Equity Action Plan](#).

[Executive Order 13985](#), *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, issued on January 20, 2021, stated that the federal government should pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

[Executive Order 14008](#), *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, issued on January 27, 2021, affirmed the Administration's commitment to advancing EJ by creating the Justice40 Initiative. The Justice40 Initiative, via Interim Implementation Guidance², established a goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including those in climate change; clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of critical clean water infrastructure—flow to underserved communities.^{3, 4}

In addition, Section 219 of Executive Order 14008 stresses that EJ and economic justice are key considerations to factor into governmental decision-making and that transforming underserved communities—historically marginalized, underserved, and overburdened—into healthy, thriving communities, and undertaking robust actions to mitigate climate change while preparing for the impacts of climate change across rural, urban, and Tribal areas are governmental priorities. The Executive Order also called for making EJ part of Agency missions by developing programs, policies, and activities to address the disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts on underserved communities, as well as the accompanying economic

² M-21-28: Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/M-21-28.pdf>

³ Ibid

⁴ EPA is currently in the process of defining the term "underserved communities."

challenges of such impacts.

Key environmental justice terms used in this RFA are introduced in the preceding policies, EOs, and interim agency guidance are defined as follows:

Community is used to refer to a group of individuals living in geographic proximity to one another, or a geographically-dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native Americans), where either type of group experiences common conditions.⁵

Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the adverse environmental and human health risks and/or harms resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies.⁶

Meaningful involvement denotes that all people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities which may affect their environment and/or health. The public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision, as community concerns are considered in the decision-making process, wherein decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.⁷

Equity means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.⁸

Underserved communities refer to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the above definition of "equity." These populations experience one or more variables which impact human health and the environment, including, though not limited to: persistent poverty; high environmental stress burdens, including impacts from climate change; racial and ethnic segregation; and impaired or limited access to healthcare.⁹

All communities, including underserved communities, should have opportunities to benefit from programs designed to protect and restore the Great Lakes, including the GLRI, and this RFA is intended to make such opportunities more readily available.

I.C. RFA Purpose and Explanation of Approach

⁵ M-21-28: Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/M-21-28.pdf>

⁶ 'Learn About Environmental Justice', US EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Executive Order 13985: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

⁹ M-21-28: Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/M-21-28.pdf>

The purpose of this RFA is to solicit applications for awards for one or more cooperative agreements through which recipients will develop and implement Great Lakes Environmental Justice Grant Programs (GLEJGP) in cooperation with EPA. This represents a new type of funding opportunity designed by EPA's GLNPO to implement the Administration's goal of directing funds to projects benefitting underserved communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms. In alignment with EPA Strategic Plan Goal 2 and the six priorities identified by the EPA in its Equity Action Plan, the GLEJGPs are being established to make GLRI funds available to underserved communities to promote the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes ecosystem in or near those communities.

EPA intends to make up to \$30 million available for one or more GLEJGPs via this RFA to provide funding for the implementation of environmental protection and restoration projects in underserved communities that will further the goals of the GLRI. This RFA expects to provide funding available for two types of applications: 1) applications that aim to create a GLEJGP to provide funding for projects in a particular region of the Great Lakes Basin; and 2) applications that aim to create a GLEJGP to provide funding for projects across the entire Great Lakes Basin.

For the basin-wide applications, EPA intends to provide funding for one GLEJGP that will operate across the entire Great Lakes Basin. Basin-wide applicants may request between \$10 million and \$20 million. For the applications focused on a particular region, EPA intends to provide funding for up to approximately five GLEJGPs. Regional applicants may request between \$2 million and \$10 million for their program.

While the primary goal of this RFA is the implementation of projects in underserved communities, EPA recognizes that many such communities may not have the capacity for pursuing such grants directly from EPA. Due to historical under-investment, these communities may lack the resources that would enable them to: 1) effectively prepare competitive federal grant applications that can be readily submitted and processed through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov); or 2) effectively comply with the wide array of requirements that accompany receipt of a grant from EPA, such as grant management and oversight, reporting, and close-out. Additionally, the awards process (i.e., the time it takes for a successful federal applicant to receive the funding) can be very time-consuming such that the awarded funding may not be made available to grantees for 6 months or more. This RFA and the resultant GLEJGPs reflect GLNPO's attempt to address this lack of resources by: 1) alleviating the administrative and other burdens faced by such communities when trying to apply for federal funds and; 2) where appropriate, providing technical support to selected Project Subrecipients that will better enable them to utilize and manage federal funds.

Key terms in the context of this RFA used to describe entities involved in the creation and maintenance of a GLEJGP are as follows:

Principal Recipient (PR): The "Pass-through entity" (as defined at [2 CFR 200.1](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-200/subpart-200.1)) which is the initial recipient of funding from EPA under this RFA and accountable to EPA for performance of the cooperative agreement including management and oversight of subrecipients.

Project Subrecipient(s): The "Subrecipient(s)" (as defined at [2 CFR 200.1](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-200/subpart-200.1)) selected by the Principal Recipient through the Project RFA process to complete Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)-funded projects under the supervision of the Principal Recipient and Coalition Member(s).

Project Request for Applications: (Project RFA): The process or program developed by the PR and Coalition Member(s) to solicit, identify, select, and fund applications for projects from communities or other organizations representing communities.

Coalition Member(s): Additional eligible entities in a coalition which support the work of the PR.

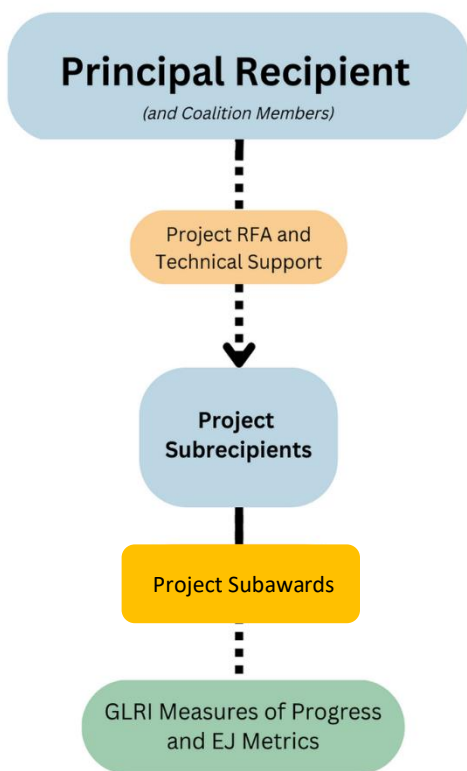
Coalitions: Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient. Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with EPA's Subaward Policy. The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332, subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a "partner" or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.

Community/ies: 'Community' or 'communities' include governmental organizations, NGOs, and any entity eligible for a grant working at or within a specific locale, neighborhood, town, or city.

This RFA is not targeted directly at underserved communities themselves - instead it is targeted at a potential pass-through entity or entities with established relationships with underserved communities or with the ability to quickly build and sustain such relationships with those communities. Such entity or entities would compete pursuant to this RFA to become a Principal Recipient (PR)¹⁰. The PR would be the initial recipient of the RFA funding from EPA and would prepare, develop, implement, and oversee a competitive GLEJGP for the entire Great Lakes basin or a particular community or set of communities¹¹, i.e., a competitive subgrant solicitation and issuance program for underserved communities. The Principal Recipient would, pursuant to EPA oversight, administer the funding program for the community or communities, which would include the issuance of a Project RFA that would solicit applications from eligible entities or funding proposed environmental projects in communities. Project RFA applicants may include any entity eligible for a grant working at or within a specific locale, neighborhood, town, or city. Successful community applicants selected by the PR, the Project Subrecipients, will execute GLRI projects in underserved communities via subawards with the oversight of the PR.

¹⁰ An entity that is applying to be a Principal Recipient can consist of several groups, e.g., a coalition. Coalitions must apply to this RFA under a singular organization.

¹¹ Applicants to this RFA may choose to submit an application that covers a particular region in the Great Lakes or the entire Great Lakes basin. A particular region may be one Great Lake, a smaller watershed (or multiple watersheds), a State (or multiple States), a Tribe (or multiple Tribes), a city (or collection of cities) or some other geographic description.



The Principal Recipient(s) may choose to work with other partners who would serve as **Coalition Member(s)** to assist in the development and execution of a GLEJGP¹².

Proposed GLEJGPs must be implemented within the historic Great Lakes Basin, including projects impacting connecting waterways such as the U.S. portions of the St. Mary’s River, Lake St. Clair and the St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States) the Chicago River Watershed. Proposed projects must describe how they will either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or restore the Great Lakes or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health.

A successful application to this funding opportunity for the role of **Principal Recipient** should:

Describe approach and criteria for identifying “underserved communities” in the context of the proposed Project RFA and explain how these criteria will be used in its Project RFA application solicitation, review, and selection process. Applicants can use the tools offered at [EJScreen](#) and/or the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), in conjunction with other environmental, health, and climate risk indicators, to serve as the criteria for the identification of underserved communities. Applicants may also use narrative justifications.

- For applications focused on a particular region of the Great lakes, define the geographic boundaries of where the Principal Recipient will solicit and select local projects that will be funded through subawards;
- Describe the applicant’s existing connections to and relationships with underserved communities intended for inclusion in the Project RFA that will result in effective and meaningful communications between it and such underserved communities and/or describe the applicant’s ability and strategy for developing such connections and relationships with those communities;
- Demonstrate the ability to successfully develop, implement, and manage a Project RFA (i.e., drafting a Project RFA solicitation; reviewing applications; issuing subawards in a timely manner; effectively managing individual subawards in compliance with 2 CFR 200.332, EPA’s Subaward Policy, and EPA’s General Term and Condition “Establishing and Managing Subawards”; collecting semi-annual and final reports; collecting results for reporting in accordance with the GLRI Measure Reporting Plan; monitoring and evaluating project outputs and outcomes; and ensuring that projects are completed as planned) by itself or by leading a coalition of organizations;
- Describe an outreach approach that is broad and inclusive, to ensure all potentially interested underserved communities become aware of the Project RFA funding opportunity;
- Describe the approach to providing technical support to Project Subrecipients;

¹² Under this RFA, coalitions are not a requirement.

- Describe an application process that minimizes¹³ the administrative burden on Project RFA applicants; and
- Commit to being able to issue its first Project RFA within one year of being selected as a Principal Recipient.

We currently anticipate that the Project RFA(s) will provide for individual subawards benefitting underserved communities in the range of \$50,000 (small projects) to \$750,000 (large projects). All projects by Project Subrecipients must be completed by the end of the Principal Recipient's cooperative agreement project period. Except as otherwise agreed on a case-by-case basis between EPA and the selected Principal Recipient(s), such individual subawards must be for projects located within the historic Great Lakes Basin¹⁴.

In summary, the goals of this program will be achieved through a two-step process by which GLNPO would first provide money to a selected Principal Recipient, and that Principal Recipient would then independently (or through a coalition) establish and oversee a GLEJGP that includes the issuance of Project RFA(s) to award competitive subawards to eligible entities which will benefit underserved communities. The primary reason for taking this approach is to attempt to utilize, as the selected Principal Recipient or as Coalition Member(s), existing organizations who already have close contacts and effective relationships with, and are capable of effective communications with, underserved communities, and/or existing organizations who can quickly develop such contacts, relationships, and communications in order to:

- Disseminate information about their Project RFA(s) by connecting with local organizations, community leaders, and other members of the target community to increase involvement, knowledge, and engagement with the Project RFA(s);
- Work with potential applicants to help them through the Project RFA application process;
- Fairly review and evaluate project applications;
- Reduce the administrative burden of communities applying for a grant to undertake environmental restoration and/or protection activities;
- Select successful applicants;
- Work with successful applicants through the entirety of the project implementation process to ensure the project is successful and benefits the identified underserved community or communities;
- Monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes of the Project Subrecipients' projects; and
- Ensure all projects awarded are completed and closed out prior to the Principal Recipient's cooperative agreement project period end date.

EPA will provide funds to Principal Recipients to be used for cooperative agreements under this Funding Opportunity for up to 6 years. EPA expects to provide up to \$30 million for the GLEJGPs. Funds will be available for funding both: 1) development, implementation, and management of the Project RFA(s); and

¹³ Minimized while still ensuring all applicable administrative requirements are met. Please see EPA's [Subaward Policy](#) for more information.

¹⁴ Proposed projects must describe how they will either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or restore the Great Lakes, including projects impacting connecting waterways such as the U.S. portions of the St. Mary's River, Lake St. Clair and the St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States) and projects in the historic Great Lakes Basin, which includes the Chicago River watershed; or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health.

2) subawards to Project Subrecipients for on-the-ground GLRI work in underserved communities. Project Subrecipients must engage in activities in support of the GLRI Action Plan in effect at the time of their issuance, including:

- Habitat restoration/enhancement/protection (e.g., small watersheds, streambanks, wetlands);
- Invasive species control;
- Non-point source runoff reduction (e.g., green infrastructure, riparian restoration, shoreline stabilization, or stormwater/nutrient reductions that will ultimately improve water quality at beaches);
- Aquatic connectivity (e.g., dam removals, culvert replacements); and
- Hands-on, place-based Great Lakes environmental educational opportunities.

Note: Subawards may also include activities that improve communities' access and enjoyment of restored areas, provided they are a part of and enhance an eligible project that accomplishes and is directly related to one of the activities in the list above. Projects focused solely on access and recreational activities will not be considered.

Likewise, subawards may also include activities related to workforce development within communities, provided they are part of and enhance an eligible project that accomplishes and is directly related to one of the activities in the list above. Projects focused solely on workforce development will not be considered. Applications that choose to include workforce development activities should review the workforce development guidance and resources in [Section VI.B](#).

Projects focused only on monitoring and research will not be considered.

The term "subaward" means an award of financial assistance by any legal agreement made by the Principal Recipient to an eligible subrecipient. Except as otherwise agreed on a case-by-case basis between EPA and the selected Principal Recipient (s), applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA must be carried out within the historic Great Lakes basin.¹⁵ Applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA must address common challenges and the priorities identified within the GLRI Action Plan III as well as any subsequent GLRI Action Plans that may be in effect during the time of the award. Additionally, the successful applicant must comply with requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500 applicable to "pass-through entities" as well as [EPA's Subaward Policy](#) and [General Term and Condition \(T&C\) Establishing and Managing Subawards](#).

EPA is seeking cost-effective applications from eligible applicants desiring to be Principal Recipients to:

1. Develop and administer a Project RFA focused on activities within the scope of the GLRI available to underserved communities to promote the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes ecosystem in or near those communities.

¹⁵ Proposed projects must describe how they will either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or restore the Great Lakes, including projects impacting connecting waterways such as the U.S. portions of the St. Mary's River, Lake St. Clair and the St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States) and projects in the historic Great Lakes Basin, which includes the Chicago River watershed; or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health.

- a. EPA expects eligible applicants desiring to be Principal Recipients to provide funding for subawards to Project Subrecipients in the range of \$50,000 (small projects) to \$750,000 (large projects). However, applicants may justify a different subaward range as part of their application narratives. Subawards funded under the cooperative agreement must be completed prior to the end of the cooperative agreement project period as required by the terms and conditions of EPA's cooperative agreement;
- b. The environmental and financial benefits of the Project RFA will be targeted for underserved communities within the historic Great Lakes basin. Applications should include an approach that requires all subaward applications to include community engagement plans and/or strategies to ensure that projects have meaningful involvement and input from members of the target communities. Principle Recipients must provide a written commitment in their application to carry out activities within underserved communities in the Great Lakes geographic region
- c. The applicant should describe how they will ensure their Project RFA will strengthen existing partnerships with communities;
- d. Applications must describe how applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA will address and link to the relevant objectives and Measures of Progress identified within the [GLRI Action Plan III](#), including plans to adjust the linkages in the event of a new GLRI Action Plan being administered during the term of the award. Eligible project subawards and activities are not limited to, but include:
 - i. Projects that foster diverse, balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife;
 - ii. Prevention and/or control of invasive species;
 - iii. Projects that manage the pathways through which invasive species can be introduced into Great Lakes ecosystems;
 - iv. Planning and design for the implementation of non-point source pollution reduction projects (including agricultural and stormwater runoff);
 - v. Implementation of non-point source pollution reduction projects (including agricultural and stormwater runoff);
 - vi. Eligible habitat restoration and resilience projects;
 - vii. Education of the next generation about Great Lakes Ecosystems through hands-on, place-based Great Lakes environmental educational opportunities; and
 - viii. Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and EPA approves, that are consistent with the purposes of this RFA and the GLRI Action Plan III and any other GLRI Action Plan that may be in effect during the time of the award.
- e. The applicant should describe how they will ensure compliance with federal requirements for "Subrecipient Monitoring and Management in 2 C.F.R. § 200.331 through 2 C.F.R. § 200.333, i.e., EPA's "Establishing and Managing Subawards" General Term and Condition. EPA requirements for reporting environmental and/or programmatic outputs, outcomes, and metrics apply to the Project RFA and all subawards. This includes identifying how GLRI Action Plan III measures of progress (and any other GLRI Action Plan measures that may be in effect during the time of the award) and EJ metrics (see pages 17 and 18) will be collected from subrecipients and reported to EPA and the Principal Recipient's approach to monitoring and evaluating Project Subrecipient's project outputs and outcomes.

Applicants should thoroughly describe their approach to conduct a competitive RFA which will identify potential projects and solicit project applications, as well as describing outreach strategies, frequency

and timing of solicitations, and methodologies for ensuring accessibility to all communities within the area covered by your application. Applicants must also thoroughly describe their methodology for evaluating subaward applications and selecting projects for funding in line with the priorities listed above, including criteria for evaluating projects and how funding decisions will be made. The description of project solicitation and application evaluation and selection should include discussion of why these strategies were selected and how they will assist the Principal Recipient [and Coalition Member(s), if applicable] in efficiently and effectively funding projects that will result in positive environmental outcomes for communities as well as how the methodology ensures a fair and equitable evaluation and selection process.

Evaluation criteria for the selection of Project Subrecipients via the Project RFA may include a variety of factors, but must include the following:

- The consistency of the project with the most current GLRI Action Plan¹⁶, including achievement of GLRI measures of progress.

Evaluation criteria should also include the following:

- An evaluation of the applying entity's ability to carry out the project and sustain expected outcomes after the initial project period is complete;
- Technical merit and feasibility of the project; and
- The project's linkage to other overarching plans, including but not limited to Lakewide Action and Management Plans (LAMPs), Domestic Action Plans, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, watershed management plans, and other relevant plans.

2. As appropriate, Principal Recipients will provide technical assistance to support, develop, and strengthen the skills and abilities of selected Project Subrecipients to succeed in the work. Applicants should discuss how they will be responsive in adjusting technical assistance resources in response to feedback from Project Subrecipients (including soliciting feedback on what technical support would be beneficial to their organizations), as well as the history, *i.e.*, previous work or partnerships, of their relationship with the Project Subrecipients. EPA anticipates that the applicant will:
 - a. Demonstrate a nuanced, detailed understanding of the specific environmental and socioeconomic challenges facing the target community/communities and provide an overview of how the proposed support will address the Project Subrecipients' primary EJ concerns and/or contribute to the organization's overall ability to design and implement projects covered under the GLRI.
 - b. Provide trainings, workshops, and other educational opportunities/resources that will help Project Subrecipients design and implement projects broadly accessible to underserved communities, such as:
 - i. Bookkeeping;
 - ii. Grant administration and reporting;
 - iii. Networking;
 - iv. Community engagement and partnership development;
 - v. Technical environmental data collection;
 - vi. Financial analysis and budget development;

¹⁶ GLRI Action Plan III has effective dates of federal fiscal years 2020-2024. EPA expects to issue an updated GLRI Action Plan to take effect in federal fiscal year 2025.

- vii. Workplan and schedule planning and project management;
- viii. Quality assurance plan development and compliance;
- ix. Operation and maintenance plan development;
- x. Compliance with applicable laws, regulations and permits relevant to the work being conducted (e.g., Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act);
- xi. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping;
- xii. Database creation and maintenance; and
- xiii. GLRI Action Plan measure tracking.

Projects may also wish to include trainings for Project Subrecipients on creating high-quality jobs and supporting workforce development initiatives through tools such as Community Benefits Agreements, local hire goals, and partnerships with labor unions and other workforce development partners.

- c. Ensure compliance with EPA requirements for reporting environmental and/or programmatic outputs, outcomes, and metrics.
- d. Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and EPA approves, that are consistent with the purposes of this RFA and authorized by Section 118(c)(7) of the Clean Water Act.

Applicants should demonstrate their ability and approach for creating and managing a GLEJGP by describing how they have experience or expertise working with communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including the history of the applicant’s relationship with the targeted underserved communities; and how the proposed efforts would result in improved EJ integration into GLRI implementation.

Eligible applicants can be a single entity or a lead entity with collaboration through subawards to other eligible applicant(s). Successful applicants may also procure services through contracts with for profit firms or individual consultants. Trainings, workshops, and other educational opportunities can be provided by the applicant or through procurement contractors or eligible subrecipients. All subawards must comply with Appendix B of [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#) and 2 C.F.R. §200.331 through §200.332. Contractors must be procured competitively as required by the Procurement Standards in 2 C.F.R. Parts 200 (§200.317 through §200.327 for procurement standards) and 1500. Additional guidance on compliance is available in EPA’s [Subaward Frequent Questions](#) and [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).

Applicants should incorporate adaptive management into their applications to address and continually improve both EJ and GLRI-specific outcomes within the proposed work. Inclusion of adaptive management addresses the development of EJ-specific outputs under the award by the Principal Recipient, which can demonstrate organizational preparedness for working in underserved communities. Examples may include but are not limited to, ground-truthing or trust building to demonstrate fair treatment and meaningful involvement and consideration of local or community-based climate resiliency and long-term maintenance of the project. The adaptive management strategy should include development of an evaluation plan for measuring success of the GLEJGP.

For purposes of the competition and the evaluation of applications, “underserved communities” is defined as “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. These

populations experience one or more variables which impact human health and the environment, including, though not limited to: persistent poverty; high environmental stress burdens, including impacts from climate change; racial and ethnic segregation; and impaired or limited access to healthcare.”

Applicants can use the tools offered at [EJScreen](#) and/or the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), in conjunction with other environmental, health, and climate risk indicators, to serve as the criteria for the identification of underserved communities. Applicants may also use narrative justifications to indicate disproportionate and/or adverse impacts in target communities.

A list of resources is available in [Section VIII](#).

I.D. GLEJGP Programmatic Elements

Consistent with achieving the goals described above, and the programmatic and environmental results identified in Section I.D, activities to be performed by the Principal Recipient applicant may include, but are not limited to:

1. Developing and implementing an outreach and engagement strategy to potential Project Subrecipients that is targeted to underserved communities along the U.S. portions of the St. Mary’s River, Lake St. Clair and the St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States) and in the historic Great Lakes Basin, which includes the Chicago River watershed;
2. Developing and implementing a methodology to ensure that the financial and environmental benefits of the Project RFA are targeted to underserved communities. Applicants can utilize review criteria, subrecipient eligibility, or any other methods that comply with the [EPA Subaward Policy](#) to achieve this goal;
3. Conducting a robust and transparent process for selecting subaward applications from Project Subrecipients, including: 1) working with EPA to review applications that address the priorities identified in this RFA; 2) responding to input from EPA; 3) considering the needs of underserved communities within the Great Lakes region; and d) articulating transparent review criteria and clear, simplified processes for receiving subaward applications as well as evaluating and selecting subaward applications;
4. Coordinating expert review of subaward applications, making selections, and/or providing advice to Coalition Member(s) on selections;
5. Awarding and managing subawards, including ensuring compliance by subrecipients with all regulatory fiscal, administrative, programmatic, and reporting requirements. The Principal Recipient should describe how they have the administrative capacity to manage subawards commensurate with the size of the subaward;
6. Assisting Project Subrecipients in meeting all administrative requirements (reporting, accounting) and developing grants management and reporting systems;
7. Convening at least one annual meeting for Project Subrecipients (and coalition members, if applicable) to update and learn from each other;
8. Managing subawards to achieve project activities and monitoring and evaluating outputs and outcomes and to comply with budgets, timelines, and federal and funding source requirements;
9. Submitting electronic semi-annual performance reports to EPA consistent with requirements

described in programmatic terms and conditions. Semi-annual reports, and brief updates as necessary, will summarize environmental as well as EJ outputs and outcomes of projects implemented through the subawards and outreach/support actions under this award. Reports will need to include any updates on project and program progress including any project or program issues, GLRI Action Plan measure results, location information, and EJ output results for each Project Subrecipient. Additionally, the Principal Recipient will develop an evaluation plan for measuring success for the GLEJGP over time; and

10. Other activities the applicant believes will achieve the goals of the RFA provided those activities are eligible for funding under Assistance Listing Number 66.469 as authorized by the Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7).

I.E. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs

Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7 requires EPA to link proposed assistance agreements to our Strategic Plan. EPA also requires grant applicants and recipients to adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements. See EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements (www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-03/documents/epa_order_5700_7a1.pdf).

The activities to be funded under this solicitation support the [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#). Awards made under this solicitation will support Goal 5 “Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities,” Objective 5.2 – Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds; Goal 2 “Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights,” Objective 2.2 – Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA’s Programs, Policies, and Activities; and Goal 1 “Tackle the Climate Crisis,” Objective 1.2 – Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts of the [Strategic Plan](#).

I.F. Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Metrics

A GLEJGP is intended to provide EPA funding for increasing the number of local, on-the-ground projects that best support the incorporation of EJ goals and priorities into implementation of GLRI objectives that directly and substantially benefit underserved communities. EPA recognizes that conditions in the region will change over time, in part in response to GLRI partners’ efforts, and EPA expects every GLEJGP to take an adaptive management approach that both creates and responds to experience and data.

For this RFA:

1. The term “outcome” means the result, effect or consequence that will be achieved by carrying out an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within a grant funding period. ***For this RFA, “Desired Outcomes” describe the conditions that EPA aims to achieve for the Great Lakes region that are found in the most current Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan, [GLRI AP III](#). Efforts to achieve these outcomes will steer the actions necessary to meet overarching GLRI priorities. These outcomes include:***
 - a. Underserved communities have an increased opportunity to benefit from programs to protect and restore the Great Lakes region;
 - b. Non-point source pollution from agriculture or stormwater runoff in the Great Lakes watershed is reduced;
 - c. Negative impacts of contaminants and nutrients in the waters and sediments of the Great

Lakes watershed and tributaries/embayments are reduced;

- d. System resiliency and function are maintained by protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitats;
 - e. System resiliency and function are maintained by diverse, balanced, and abundant populations of fishes, birds, and other wildlife;
 - f. The public is educated and involved in restoration and protection of habitats and living resources;
 - g. Residents have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to participate fully and equally in the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes;
 - h. Future generations have the knowledge and skills to become leaders and stewards for the Great Lakes;
 - i. Policy makers, resource managers, and other stakeholders have the informational resources to undertake collaborative efforts to restore and protect the Great Lakes;
 - j. Increased communication, development of partnerships and peer networks, and trust building with local organizations, community leaders, and residents of target communities;
 - k. Project Subrecipients have increased skill and knowledge to access federal funding in the future;
 - l. Actions are implemented through coordinated strategies by all levels of government and diverse stakeholders; and
 - m. Implementation is adapted and improved through the application of new information and knowledge.
2. 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 over the term of the grant funding period. **For this RFA, “Outputs (Actions)” are detailed activities that the applicant and its partners will undertake to work towards accomplishing desired outcomes and the 2020-2024 GLRI Action Plan III Goals.** Outputs for this RFA should reflect those expected activities in Sections I.C. and I.D. of this announcement. Examples include environmental activities from Project Subrecipients related to GLRI Focus Areas (see table on following page for relevant GLRI Measures of Progress); trainings/workshops/other activities completed as part of technical assistance provided by the Principal Recipient and/or Coalition Member(s); the transparent processes for managing the Project RFA including oversight of review processes for additional pass-through awards; and technical/administrative assistance provided to subrecipients.

Principal Recipients must develop specific outputs related to EJ. For example:

- a. The number community meetings or workshops throughout the lifetime of the cooperative agreement;
- b. GLRI Measure of Progress 5.1.1. Youth impacted through education and stewardship projects;
- c. The number of subawards to Project Subrecipients; and
- d. Program and project analyses, workshops, and/or reports implemented through an adaptive management process. For example, applicants will create a performance measurement and evaluation plan describing how they plan to track and monitor performance and progress throughout the project period. A performance measurement and evaluation plan will help the applicant gather insights, will be the mechanism to track successful progress, output and outcome strategies, and will provide the basis for developing lessons learned to inform future recipients.

The applicant should consider the following questions when developing outcome and output measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

- a. What are the measurable short-term and long-term EJ and environmental results the funded projects will achieve?
- b. How will you measure progress in achieving environmental (i.e., GLRI Action Plan-based) and EJ-specific outputs and outcomes?
- c. How will you know whether existing efforts in the target communities to address environmental, health, and climate-related concerns are succeeding or need improvement?
- d. How will you include the community in measuring their own progress and ensure they are tracking and reporting progress in areas they are interested in?

Measures of Progress and Metrics

The application must identify the relevant measures of progress from the GLRI Action Plan III that you expect project subawards will contribute. In this section of the application, please identify the projected results from all project subawards for the specific measures of progress listed below. If some project subawards are not expected to achieve a numerical result, please indicate in your application that some project subawards will not achieve a numerical result but will support the appropriate measures.

#	Recommended Applicable Measure of Progress from GLRI Action Plan III
2.1.2	Projects that manage pathways through which invasive species can be introduced to the Great Lakes ecosystem.
2.2.1	Acres where activities have been conducted to control aquatic/terrestrial invasive species.
3.1.1	Estimated pounds of phosphorus reductions from conservation practice implementation throughout Great Lake watersheds.
3.2.1	Estimated gallons (in millions) of untreated stormwater runoff captured or treated.
3.2.2	Miles of Great Lakes shoreline and riparian corridors restored or protected.
4.1.1	Acres of coastal wetland, nearshore, and other habitats restored, protected, or enhanced.
4.1.2	Miles of connectivity established for aquatic species.
4.2.1	Species benefited where actions have been completed to significantly protect or promote recovery of populations.
5.1.1	Youth impacted through education and stewardship projects.

Additionally, the following metrics for tracking EJ are required for this RFA:

- a. The number of Project Subrecipients receiving a subaward who have never before received EPA or GLRI funds;
- b. The number of community members engaged in the program as a result of Principal Recipient efforts. In the context of this RFA, ‘engaged’ denotes that community members are involved in planning, oversight, and/or execution, including providing, collecting, and applying community feedback within one or more elements of the proposed program and project(s).
- c. The number of community members engaged in the program as a result of Project Subrecipient efforts. In the context of this RFA, ‘engaged’ denotes that community members are involved in planning, oversight, and/or execution, including providing, collecting, and applying community feedback within one or more elements of the proposed program and project(s).
- d. The number of underserved communities where projects are taking place. The location of communities should be identified by ZIP codes and [HUC 8 or HUC 12 codes](#). Applicants can use

the tools offered at [EJScreen](#) and/or the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), in conjunction with other environmental, health, and climate risk indicators, to serve as the criteria for the identification of underserved communities. Applicants may also use narrative justifications to indicate disproportionate and/or adverse impacts in target communities.

- e. Applications that choose to include activities that improve communities' access and enjoyment of restored areas should identify metrics to measure and report these objectives.
- f. Applications that choose to include workforce development activities should identify metrics to measure and report on these objectives. Such metrics could include:
 - a. Individuals from underrepresented communities connected to high-quality career pathways in environmental work
 - b. Jobs that are created by this program are high-quality jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and uphold the [Good Jobs Principles](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Commerce

I.G. Statutory Authority

GLRI's statutory authority to award cooperative agreements is contained in the Clean Water Act, Section 118(c)(7), as amended by Public Law 114-322. EPA has authority to award grants and cooperative agreements for planning, research, monitoring, outreach, and implementation projects in furtherance of the GLRI and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

I.H. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to Sections III, IV, V, and VI of this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These provisions are important for applying to this solicitation and applicants must review them when preparing applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact listed in this solicitation ([Section VII](#)) to obtain the provisions.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

II.A. Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards

EPA expects to award approximately \$10 million to \$20 million for one basin-wide application and up to \$2 million to \$10 million for up to five regional applications. Each successful Principal Recipient will establish a GLEJGP over an approximately five-to-six-year period, subject to the availability of appropriated funding and Agency priorities. Regional applicants may request between \$2 million and \$10 million for their program to operate across a particular region within the Great Lakes, and basin-wide applicants may request between \$10 million and \$20 million. In total EPA expects to award up to \$30 million.

EPA plans to award incrementally funded cooperative agreements to the Principal Recipients to coordinate and manage GLEJGPs on behalf of EPA, contingent upon funding availability, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. While EPA expects future funding to become available, applicants should be aware that if future appropriations do not become available or significant changes are made to EPA's funding authority, EPA may be required to modify or cancel awards made under this announcement and determine whether and how to proceed. EPA expressly reserves the right to make no award.

Incremental awards add funds to an existing award that has been approved for a higher amount than has

been obligated thus far. Funds may only be added to the existing approved budget in the existing approved object class categories. Incremental funding is not guaranteed; rather, it is contingent on a range of factors – i.e., funding availability in subsequent years, the applicant’s performance history and programmatic priorities defined by EPA. The applicant must provide budget plans that detail the award activities to be performed during each project period.

The actual award amounts and number of cooperative agreements awarded described in [Section I](#) may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious applications received, Agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards.

II.B. Award Type

EPA intends to award up to approximately six cooperative agreements under this solicitation. Cooperative agreements provide for substantial involvement between EPA and the selected applicant(s) in the performance of the work supported. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial federal involvement for these cooperative agreements may include:

1. Close monitoring of the successful applicant’s performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
2. Collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
3. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.317 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.318, review of proposed procurements;
4. Approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award applicant);
5. Reviewing and commenting on content of subaward solicitations; and
6. Reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the applicant).

EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient. EPA staff will not direct, recommend or suggest that pass-through entities make subawards to particular entities. EPA personnel may, if requested by the successful applicant, serve as a technical advisor on the review of projects to the extent permitted by Section 10(b) of the [EPA Subaward Policy](#). EPA staff may also approve the substantive terms of subawards to ensure compliance with legal or policy requirements.

II.C. Expected Project Period

For this RFA, it is EPA’s expectation that the award, including all subawards, will have a total period of performance of up to six years (e.g., October 2023 – December 2029) with incremental funding provided on an annual basis. No commitment of funding will be made beyond the first year. The expected start date for the award resulting from this RFA is 10/01/2023.

II.D. Pre-Award Costs

As provided in 2 C.F.R. § 1500.9, applicants may incur pre-award costs 90 calendar days prior to award provided they include such costs in their application and the costs meet the definition of pre-award costs in 2 C.F.R. § 200.458. This definition of pre-award costs are those costs incurred prior to the effective date

of the award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the award where such costs are necessary to comply with the proposed delivery schedule or period of performance and are in conformance with the appropriate statute and cost principals. Costs incurred prior to EPA advising the successful applicant of their initial selection do not comply with this requirement. The approval of pre-award costs should be reflected in the budget period on the assistance agreement and if applicable, under a term and condition of the assistance agreement. Pre-Award costs incurred more than 90 calendar days prior to award require the approval of the EPA Award Official. Applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk (i.e., EPA is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if for any reason the applicant does not receive an award or if the award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs).

II.E. Partial Funding Provision

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed programs. If EPA decides to partially fund an application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process.

II.F. Additional Awards

EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

III.A. Eligible Applicants

Applicant Eligibility (Assistance Listing 66.469): Qualified non-federal entities eligible to apply for grants include non-federal governmental entities: State agencies; any agency or instrumentality of local government; interstate agencies; and federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations. Institutions of Higher Education and non-profit organizations are also eligible to apply. 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 applicants as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611. 'For profit' organizations, federal agencies, foreign entities, and individuals are not eligible applicants.

Non-profit Definition: Consistent with the definition of Nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Note that 2 CFR 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law.

Encouraging Minority Serving Institutions to Compete: EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available minds to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by including members of communities which may have not previously participated in such dialogues to participate in EPA programs. EPA also recognizes that scientific, technical, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) competence is essential to the Nation's future well-being in terms of national security and competitive economic advantage. For instance, the health and vitality of the economy is predicated, in part, on the availability of an adequate supply of scientists, technicians, engineers and mathematicians, to develop innovative technologies and solutions. In other words, this country must engage all available minds to address the challenges it faces.

For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in [Section III](#), including minority serving institutions (MSIs), to apply under this opportunity.

For purposes of this solicitation, the following are considered MSIs:

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#);
2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at [American Indian Tribally-Controlled Colleges and Universities](#);
3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#);
4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions](#); and
5. Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at [Predominantly Black Institutions](#).

III.B. Cost Sharing/Match Requirements

There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement as a condition of eligibility under this RFA. Although cost-sharing/matching is not required as a condition of eligibility under this competition, under Section V of this announcement EPA will take leveraging into account when evaluating proposals using the criteria in Section V.

Leveraging is generally when an applicant proposes to provide its own additional funds/resources or those from third party sources to support or complement the project they are awarded under the competition which are above and beyond the EPA grant funds awarded. Any leveraged funds/resources, and their source, must be identified in the proposal (See Section IV of the announcement). Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

Voluntary cost share is a form of leveraging. Voluntary cost sharing is when an applicant voluntarily proposes to legally commit to provide costs or contributions to support the project when a cost share is not required. Applicants who propose to use a voluntary cost share must include the costs or

contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424. If an applicant proposes a voluntary cost share, the following apply:

1. A voluntary cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations (2 CFR 200.306).
2. A voluntary cost share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
3. The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.
4. The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved project budget. If the proposed voluntary cost share does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR 200.

Other leveraged funding/resources that are not identified as a voluntary cost share. This form of leveraging may be met by funding from another federal grant, from an applicant's own resources, or resources from other third-party sources. This form of leveraging should not be included in the budget and the costs need not be eligible and allowable project costs under the EPA assistance agreement. While this form of leveraging should not be included in the budget, the grant workplan should include a statement indicating that the applicant is expected to produce the proposed leveraging consistent with the terms of the announcement and the applicant's proposal. If applicants propose to provide this form of leveraging, EPA expects them to make the effort to secure the leveraged resources described in their proposals. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during grant performance, then EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR Parts 200 or 1500.

III.C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III.A., B., and C. to be considered eligible. 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. Only applications from eligible entities (see [Section III](#) above) that meet the following threshold eligibility criteria will be evaluated under these threshold criteria:

- i. Applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA must be eligible for funding. Applicants must provide a written commitment that all Project Subrecipient activities are carried out within underserved communities in the Great Lakes geographic region. Applicants can use the tools offered at EJSscreen and/or the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), in conjunction with other environmental, health, and climate risk indicators, to serve as the criteria for the identification of underserved communities. Applicants may also use narrative justifications to indicate disproportionate and/or adverse impacts in target communities.
- ii. Applications must be implemented within the historic Great Lakes Basin, including projects impacting connecting waterways such as the U.S. portions of the St. Mary's River, Lake St. Clair and the St. Lawrence River (at or upstream from the point at which the St. Lawrence River becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States) the Chicago River Watershed.
- iii. Applications must describe how their program will either: (i) protect, enhance, and/or

- restore the Great Lakes or (ii) protect Great Lakes ecosystem health, including human health.
- iv. Applications must describe how applicant activities and project subawards funded under this RFA will address and link to the relevant objectives and Measures of Progress identified within the [GLRI Action Plan III](#), including plans to adjust the linkages in the event of a new GLRI Action Plan being administered during the term of the award. This includes an evaluation criteria for the selection of Project Subrecipients via the Project RFA that includes the following: The consistency of the project with the most current GLRI Action Plan, including achievement of GLRI measures of progress.
 - v. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in [Section IV](#) of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. Where a page limit is expressed in [Section IV](#) with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
 - vi. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through [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 application 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 application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.
 - vii. Applications submitted outside [Grants.gov](#) and/or 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 application 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.
 - viii. Applications seeking funding below or above the specified amount of EPA funding will be rejected.
 - a. Applications seeking to create a Regional GLEJGP may request between \$2 million and \$10 million, inclusive, for their program to operate across a particular region within the Great Lakes.
 - b. Applications seeking to create a Basin-wide GLEJGP may request between \$10 million and \$20 million, inclusive, for their program
 - ix. Applications focused only on monitoring and scientific research will not be considered.

Ineligible activities: If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding. Ineligible activities include:

- i. Scientific research;

- ii. Activities that EPA cannot fund under the above-described statutory authority;
- iii. Applications focused solely on improving access and recreational activities;
- iv. Applications focused solely on workforce development activities; and
- v. Applicant activities and subaward activities occurring outside the historic Great Lakes basin except as otherwise agreed on a case-by-case basis between EPA and the selected Principal Recipient(s).

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

IV.A. Requirement to Submit through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](#) under this funding opportunity based on the Grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined here. Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in [Section IV.C. Technical Issues with Submission](#) below.

IV.B. Submission Instructions

1. [SAM.gov](#) (System for Award Management) Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the federal government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov](#) to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

If you have done business with the federal government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization's legal business name and address. Please review the Frequently Asked Questions for additional details on the difference.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues, or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday

– Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the [Grants.gov Applicant Registration](#) instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in Grants.gov. Please review the [Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles](#) and [Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

Please note that this process can take a month or more for new registrants. 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 application submission deadline.

Contact Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov to resolve technical issues with Grants.gov. 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. The Grants.gov Support Center is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays.

3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](#) and click the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

The electronic submission of your application for this funding opportunity must be made by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance. If the submit button is grayed out, it may be because you do not have the appropriate role to submit in your organization. Contact your organization’s EBiz point of contact or contact Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov

Applicants need to ensure that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose UEI is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the UEI listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM.gov account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov no later than **August 11, 2023, 11:59 PM ET**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. Please note that successful submission of your application through Grants.gov does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

IV.C. Technical Issues with Submission

If applicants experience technical issues during the submission of an application that they are unable to resolve, follow these procedures **before** the application deadline date and time (August 11, 2023, 11:59 PM ET):

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3. Send an email with the EPA-I-R5-GL2023-GLEJGP in the subject line to glri-rfa@epa.gov **before** the application deadline date and time and include the following:
 - a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s);
 - b. Description of the issue; and
 - c. The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, EPA may not be able to consider applications submitted outside of Grants.gov. Any application submitted after the application deadline time and date deadline will be deemed ineligible and not be considered.

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

EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by- case basis. EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to submit through Grants.gov due to Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov.

IV.D. Content and Form of Application Submission

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424);
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A);
3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54;
4. EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report; and
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form: Use this to submit your Narrative Proposal, prepared as described in [Section IV.D.](#)

Supporting Materials (optional attachments, using Other Attachments Form)

1. Resumes or curriculum vitae of staff that will be working on the GLEJGP;
2. Documents of non-profit status if appropriate;
3. Letters of Commitment from proposed coalition members or other partners;
4. Letters of Commitment from proposed sources of non-federal funding or other leveraging to the application. Cost share and leveraging of non-federal funds is not a requirement of this Funding Opportunity nor is there an evaluation factor in scoring your application. However, if applicants choose to propose cost share or leveraging, they should provide letters of commitment substantiating those commitments;
5. Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable (Other Attachments Form): You may submit a copy of your organization's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or Indirect Cost Rate proposal using the Other Attachments Form as part of the application package if your proposed project budget includes indirect costs. The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is not included in the 15-page single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. See [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information.

Content of Narrative Proposal

Narrative Proposals (including the Summary Information Page, Project Narrative, Maps, Charts and Figures, and Meeting/Conference/Workshop Information) must be no more than 25 single-spaced pages in length and include the items below in the requested order. Excess pages will not be reviewed. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures must be included in the Narrative Proposal and are part of the page limit. Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures that are submitted as a separate attachment will not be reviewed.

Each Narrative Proposal must be formatted for 8½" x 11" paper and should use no smaller than an 11-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins and include the information below. Do not use a "double column" (aka newspaper) format. Readability is of paramount importance. Do not include more than one application in any file. Please do not zip the file or use a zip extension for your file because it will not be accepted.

1. **Summary Information Page** (should not exceed one page). Please provide the following information on a single page:
 - a. **Funding Opportunity Number**: Identify the funding opportunity number;
 - b. **Project Title**: Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience;
 - c. **Applicant Information**: Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, and email address. Do not include private information;
 - d. **Proposed Funding Request**: The total dollar amount requested from EPA. (Make sure it is within the limits specified in [Section II.A.](#) or your application will be rejected);
 - e. **Project Duration**: Provide beginning and ending dates using anticipated award lifetime guidance in [Section II.C.](#);

- f. Brief Project Description.** Summarize the purpose of proposed program in 200 words or less in a clear and succinct manner using plain language. Describe the activities to be performed, as well as the anticipated deliverables and expected outcomes, and intended beneficiary(ies). Also include environmental key terms which could be used as search terms. Do not use acronyms. Should the application be selected, and a grant awarded, this description may be posted to the EPA Web. EPA reserves the right to make unilateral changes to conform to posting requirements ([examples of project descriptions](#)); and
- g. Project Location:** Specify a single, representative project location within the Great Lakes basin, including 8- or 12-digit HUC code ([Find HUC code](#)), and latitude and longitude specifying decimal degrees, even if the work will be done at multiple locations or by applicants who are located outside the Great Lakes basin. Please include the reason for the location you identify if that is not self-evident. Please also include project specific location information: cities, states, zip codes, and congressional districts. You can list up to five of each.
2. **Project Narrative:** The Project Narrative (also known as a workplan) for the proposed program must explicitly describe how the proposed program meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III of this RFA (including the threshold eligibility criteria in [Section III.C](#)). The Project Narrative must also address items A-F below, which correspond to evaluation criteria in [Section V.B](#). The Project Narrative should be organized in the order and with the headings and information requested below. Details and associated point values for each section of the workplan are described in [RFA Section V](#) below. The Project Narrative must also address each individual ranking criterion in [Section V.B](#). Additional pages beyond the 25-page limit will not be considered. **Note:** Forms SF-424, SF- 424A, 5700-54, 4700-4, negotiated indirect cost agreement, and supporting materials are **not** included within the page limit.

A. Program Approach

Project RFA: Demonstrate how your organization can undertake a multi-phase subaward grants program to encompass the GLEJGP Project RFA elements described in [Section I.D](#).

Thoroughly describe your approach for identifying potential projects and soliciting subaward applications, including outreach strategies, frequency and timing of solicitations, and methodologies for ensuring accessibility to all communities within the area covered by your application.

Thoroughly describe your methodology for evaluating subaward applications and selecting projects for funding, including criteria for evaluating projects and how funding decisions will be made. The description of project solicitation and application evaluation and selection should include discussion of why these strategies were selected and how they will assist the Principal Recipient (your organization) in efficiently and effectively funding projects that will result in environmental outcomes for communities as well as how the methodology ensures a fair and equitable evaluation and selection process.

Evaluation criteria may include a variety of factors, but must include the following:

- The consistency of the project with the most current GLRI Action Plan¹⁷, including

¹⁷ GLRI Action Plan III has effective dates of federal fiscal years 2020-2024. EPA expects to issue an updated GLRI Action Plan to take effect in federal fiscal year 2025.

achievement of GLRI measures of progress;

Evaluation criteria should include the following:

- An evaluation of the entity’s ability to carry-out the project and sustain expected outcomes after the initial project period is complete;
- The project’s linkage to other overarching plans, including but not limited to Lakewide and Action Management Plans (LAMPs), Domestic Action Plans, Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, watershed management plans, etc.; and
- Technical merit and feasibility of the project.

Include a detailed overview of how your organization plans to increase participation in underserved communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental, climate, economic, and human health risks or harms, which are the focus of this RFA.

Demonstrate how you plan to report progress towards the existing GLRI Action Plan III Measures of Progress (see the “About” heading at <https://www.glri.us/about>) to contribute to achieving the goals and priorities in the GLRI Action Plan III by allowing underserved communities to benefit from programs to protect and restore the Great Lakes and have equal access to the decision-making process.

Demonstrate how your team can provide technical assistance to Project Subrecipients, *e.g.*, expertise and/or access to expertise, administrative/fiscal capacity and efficiency; communication and facilitation skills, access to technology, etc., including ensuring compliance with the Subrecipient Monitoring and Management requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and EPA’s Establishing and Managing Subawards General Term and Condition.

Underserved Communities in the Great Lakes Region: Applicants must provide a written commitment that all Project Subrecipient activities are carried out within underserved communities in the Great Lakes geographic region.

Describe your approach and criteria for identifying “underserved communities” and how the criteria will be used in your Project RFA application solicitation, review, and selection process. Applicants can use the tools offered at [EJScreen](#) and/or the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), in conjunction with other environmental, health, and climate risk indicators, to serve as the criteria for the identification of underserved communities. Applicants may also use narrative justifications to indicate disproportionate and/or adverse impacts in target communities.

Describe your organization’s approach to involving target communities in the development of your Project RFA to best address community-specific Environmental Justice concerns. Also, describe your organization’s approach to soliciting applications under the Project RFA so that projects are community-driven, *i.e.*, the proposed project is strongly supported and informed by the community, and/or community-led, *i.e.*, the community is at the head of a project.

B. Environmental and Programmatic Results

Demonstrate your plan to measure, monitor, evaluate, and track programmatic, EJ, and environmental results, as well as your outreach strategy for ensuring communication of project results among the Project Subrecipients, Coalition Member(s) (if applicable), and the broader Great Lakes region.

GLRI AP III Measures of Progress: All project subawards selected for funding under the **Project RFA** must support one or more of the [GLRI Action Plan III Measures of Progress](#) (available on page 5 of the linked document). If a new GLRI Action Plan is implemented during the award, the application should address how any Measures of Progress may be adjusted to reflect the new GLRI Action Plan. Describe your proposed outreach strategy for engaging the target community/communities on the project(s) and how this strategy relates to furthering the GLRI.

Environmental Justice Metrics: Describe, to the best of your ability, how the Project RFA will respond to identified community needs. Consider and explain how the planned projects will support and/or engage existing efforts to address disproportionate and adverse environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts, including the accompanying economic challenges of these and other impacts resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the underserved communities.

Though applicants are encouraged to utilize additional, tailored EJ metrics for reporting, the following metrics for tracking EJ are required for this RFA:

1. The number of organizations (**Project Subrecipients**) getting a subaward who have never previously received EPA or GLRI funds.
2. The number of community members engaged. In the context of this RFA, 'engaged' denotes that community members are involved in planning, oversight, and/or execution, including providing, collecting, and applying community feedback within the confines of the program and project(s).
3. The number of underserved communities where projects are taking place. The location of communities should be identified by ZIP codes **and HUC 8 or HUC 12 codes**. Applicants can use the tools offered at [EJScreen](#) and/or the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), in conjunction with other environmental, health, and climate risk indicators, to serve as the criteria for the identification of underserved communities. Applicants may also use narrative justifications to indicate disproportionate and/or adverse impacts in target communities.

Describe how you will develop an evaluation plan for measuring the success of the GLEJGP that utilizes adaptive management tools and related projects in the context of EJ throughout the award, such as analyses, workshops, and/or reports. Applicants will create a performance measurement plan describing how they plan to track and monitor their performance and progress throughout the GLEJGP period. A performance measurement plan will help the applicant gather insights, will be the mechanism to track successful progress, output and outcome strategies, and will provide the basis for developing lessons learned to inform future recipients.

Outputs and Outcomes: Applicants will also consider the following questions when developing outcome and output measures of quantitative and qualitative results (applicable to all components of the program):

1. What are the measurable short-term and long-term EJ and GLRI (environmental) results the funded projects will achieve?
2. How will you measure progress in achieving the expected results (GLRI-specific and EJ-specific outputs and outcomes)?
3. How will you know whether program and project efforts are succeeding or need improvement?
4. How will you solicit, incorporate, and adapt to feedback from the target community/communities throughout the lifetime of the award?

C. Programmatic Capability in Environmental Justice in the Great Lakes Region

Disproportionate and adverse environmental, human health, climate-related and other cumulative impacts related to the scope of the GLRI AP III, as well the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, may result when greater pollution burdens and/or consequences, and the impact of them, are more likely to affect or have affected the underserved communities described in this solicitation. The impacts may result from various factors including but not limited to being a function of historical trends and policy decisions.

Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards; unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status; cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes; and degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation. Please visit Section VIII for additional links.^{18, 19}

Include a detailed narrative which demonstrates your organization's understanding of the specific needs of the underserved Great Lakes communities you are planning to work with/in and how existing efforts to address environmental, health, and climate-related hazards or concerns in the target communities are succeeding or need improvement.

Describe your organization's experience, familiarity, and ability to work with and engage the participation of underserved communities and community-based organizations, including identifying and achieving buy-in of key community and opinion leaders in underserved communities, and in educating such communities as necessary to ensure they can effectively and equally participate in environmental issues. Detail the history of your organization's relationship with the community/communities you intend to engage for the GLEJGP and how the proposed activities fit into larger, longer-term goals for the communities.

Demonstrate how planned engagement/outreach/support activities by the GLEJGP will address

¹⁸ For information and additional considerations on the US EPA's Environmental Justice work with federally-recognized tribes and Indigenous peoples, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-tribes-and-indigenous-peoples>.

¹⁹ As a reminder, small tribes and underserved unincorporated communities may not appear on traditional mapping tools such as EJScreen. Efforts to conduct targeted outreach hard-to-reach communities to identify communities who need key infrastructure projects and social activities is encouraged.

the disproportionate and adverse environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts of the target community/communities. Also include how the GLEJP will address the accompanying economic challenges of these and other impacts resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the underserved communities. Information about these definitions is available in [Section I.B](#). You may also provide details about the anticipated long-term impacts of the GLEJP, through built relationships or other presence in the community by your organization.

Applications will be assessed on how the GLEJGP benefits underserved communities, including those that have experienced a lack of resources or other impediments to addressing the impacts identified above that affect their community. This includes the extent to which the GLEJGP engages communities, especially: 1) residents in the community who will be directly affected by the project; and 2) residents who are members of multiple historically excluded groups (such as people with disabilities or elderly persons) to ensure their meaningful participation in the GLEJGP.

D. Past Performance

Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements, but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe:

1. Whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;
2. 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;
3. Your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed program, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed program; and
4. Whether any of these agreements included subawards subject to the Subrecipient Monitoring and Management requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

If you include EPA assistance agreements in your list, provide the EPA grant number.

In evaluating applicants under these factors in [Section V](#), EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and will 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 your organization does not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information for federal grants, please provide information about any award management for previous grants. If you do not have relevant or past performance or reporting information for any awards, please indicate this in the application 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.

However, if EPA identifies previous grants to your organization, EPA will perform the review based on information in its grant records.

E. Transferability of Results

Demonstrate how you will support and communicate lessons learned from the proposed activities, including how you will provide results, information materials, and analyses to EPA and key GLRI partners in a timely manner. Demonstrate how you will work with subrecipients to report and present on their activities both during, and after, the life of the award.

Please describe your strategy to promote, grow, and sustain the GLEJGP. Strategies may include:

1. Facilitating and mentoring participants in sustained partnering and implementation efforts;
2. Communicating and transferring the successes and lessons learned of the project subawards through vigorous outreach via traditional and new channels; and
3. Other innovative solutions and approaches.

F. Budget Narrative

The application should include an annualized budget and budget detail narrative for the program, corresponding to the workplan project narrative covering each year of the program. Your organization should provide a detailed breakdown of all proposed costs and their application within the Narrative Proposal, as well as establish the reasonableness, necessity, and allowability of all proposed costs.

Cost-effectiveness: Demonstrate how your application will be cost-effective, include details such as:

1. Organizational costs, indirect costs, and overhead costs not included in the indirect cost rate;
2. Process for determining that subawards are cost-effective;
3. Organizational resources brought to the effort;
4. Prudent cost-allocation over the life of the award and consistency with proposed budget detail; and
5. Ability to perform tasks within the operational range of budgets provided by this RFA.

Timely Expenditure of Funds: Demonstrate your approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner within the cooperative agreement project period.

Guidance on preparing proper budget information can be found Appendix 2 on pages 36-39 of in EPA's Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02>. Your budget detail should reflect the relevant aspects of your budget narrative. Also note that if you name subrecipients and/or contractor(s) in your application to assist with the proposed program, you should pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found in [Section IV](#).

Your Project Narrative must also address all evaluation criteria listed in [Section V](#) of this announcement.

Applications submitted through grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from grants.gov within 2 business days after submitting the application through grants.gov, please contact **Cara Walsh** at glri-rfa@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

V.A. Evaluation Process

After EPA reviews applications for threshold eligibility as described in [Section III](#), eligible applications will be reviewed by a team of EPA professionals with a working knowledge of the technical and programmatic aspects needed to rigorously evaluate GLEJGP applications. All reviewers will sign a conflict-of-interest statement indicating there is no real, or perceived, conflict of interest.

V.B. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated and scored by reviewers using the criteria listed below. Each application may receive up to **125** points. Your application materials should fully address these criteria.

Criterion	Description of Evaluation Criteria	Points
<p>Program Approach</p>	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which:</p> <p>1. Project RFA: The applicant demonstrates the ability and approach for managing a subaward grants program which encompasses the GLEJGP program elements described in Section I.D. through the following (10 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying plans to engage target communities and solicit and select project applications, delineating how a fair and transparent process for identifying new project subawards will be implemented, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clearly stating the evaluation criteria to be used for the subaward project selections, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An evaluation of any possible Project Subrecipient's entity's abilities to carry-out the project and sustain expected outcomes after the initial project period is complete; ▪ The consistency of the project with the GLRI Action Plan, including achievement of GLRI measures of progress; ▪ The project's linkage to other overarching plans, including but not limited to LAMPs, Domestic Action Plans, Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, watershed management plans, etc.; ▪ The technical merit and feasibility of the project. • Ensuring that project subawards will contribute to the existing GLRI AP III measures of progress; help achieve the goals and priorities in the GLRI AP III; and allow all communities to benefit from programs to protect and restore the Great Lakes and have equal access to the decision-making process. • Ensuring that project subawards will include target community involvement and deliver environmental justice benefits in underserved communities through activities directly related to the GLRI Action Plan (GLRI AP III). • If leveraging is proposed, applicants will also be evaluated based on how they will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance (e.g., if they have letters of commitment), the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role and impact the leveraged funds/resources will play to support the proposed project activities. <p>Applications will be scored on how well the Project RFA will result in projects that exhibit: 1) a diversity of project types; 2) distribution</p>	<p>30</p>

across the geographic project region identified within the application; and 3) representation of the needs of the target communities.

2. **Technical Support:** The applicant demonstrates the administrative capacity to provide technical support, as referenced in [Section I.C](#), to Project Subrecipients as needed to achieve the objectives of the GLRI Action Plan as described in Section I.C, by **(10 points)**:
 - Ensuring Project Subrecipient compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and the General Terms and Conditions of EPA cooperative agreements;
 - Providing oversight for administrative, travel, fiscal, and reporting tasks, as well as technical, outreach, and management action support to Project Subrecipients. Applicants will ensure Project Subrecipient compliance with all federal reporting and project oversight requirements, e.g., quality assurance and financial reporting;
 - Securing and/or providing relevant staff expertise, qualifications, staff knowledge, and/or other experts experienced and qualified to successfully achieve GLRI AP III goals as described in [Section I.C](#).; and
 - Describe how Project Subrecipients will be engaged to identify technical assistance needs, including how the applicant will respond to these needs by supplementing training, programming, or other resources.

3. **EJ and Community Involvement:** The applicant’s demonstrated familiarity with the institutional, environmental, and socio-economic conditions of the Great Lakes region, including **(10 points)**:
 - Comprehension of the target community’s history and its relationship to the conditions stated above;
 - Current relationships with target community leaders and organizations, as well as past and/or present projects within the target community or projects conducted with similar underserved communities;
 - A detailed understanding of the specific needs of the target community or communities, linked to the EJ and GLRI AP III measures specified in [I.F. Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Metrics](#);
 - The applicant’s approach, encompassing the Project RFA and ability to provide technical assistance, to involve the target communities in addressing community-specific Environmental Justice concerns through the GLEJGP;
 - Evidence of how the award projects will be either community-

	<p>driven or community-led; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the applicant’s planned process for handling project changes, e.g., partner changes or disputes, with input from the community. 	
<p>Environmental and Programmatic Results</p>	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental, Programmatic, and EJ Results: The applicant demonstrates the ability to support multiple types of metrics throughout the lifetime of the cooperative agreement, including (10 points): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed overview of how the projects will connect to and improve implementation of the GLRI AP III; • Identification of the GLRI-specific Measures of Progress supported by the initial project and identified subawards; and • The proposed outreach strategy for ensuring communication of project results among the target community/communities; award subrecipients; GLRI partner organizations; and the broader Great Lakes region; • Identification of the EJ metrics supported by the initial project and identified subawards including (but not limited to) required measures; • Describe how the Project RFA will respond to identified community needs; • Describe a strategy to monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes of the Project Subrecipients’ projects; and • Explain how the Project RFA will support and/or engage existing community-level efforts to address disproportionate and adverse environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts, that have affected and/or currently affect the target community/communities. 2. Outputs and Outcomes: The applicant demonstrates capacity to support compliance with outputs and outcomes (results) reporting, considering (10 points): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measurable short-term and long-term EJ and GLRI results (environmental and programmatic) the funded 	<p>20</p>

	<p>projects will achieve;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How progress will be measured by the applicant in achieving the expected results; • How the applicant will ensure compliance with rules for reporting environmental and/or programmatic output, outcome, and GLRI-specific metrics for the recipient and subrecipients; • How the applicant will work with subrecipient organizations to address delays, issues, and/or other changes to management actions; • How negotiated metrics will be collected from subrecipients and reported to EPA, including how the Principal Recipient will ensure consistency in metrics reporting; and • How the applicant will solicit, incorporate, and adapt to feedback from the target community/communities throughout the lifetime of the award; • How the Principal Recipient will develop and employ an evaluation plan that includes adaptive management tools, techniques, and/or products to continually improve EJ and GLRI-specific outcomes throughout the course of the award. 	
<p>Programmatic Capability in Environmental Justice</p>	<p>Applications will also be evaluated on the extent and quality to which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The applicant illustrates an understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities facing underserved communities in the Great Lakes region experiencing and/or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, including (5 points): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insight into how existing efforts to address disproportionate environmental and human health risks are succeeding; need improvement; or can be improved; • The specific approaches proposed to address them through this opportunity and how the applicant’s efforts will support GLRI AP III goals as described in Section I.C; • The applicant’s understanding of “underserved community”, including community-level environmental justice concerns, as related to their proposed GLEJGP and how this understanding will be used in Project RFA application solicitation, review, and selection process. Note that definitions of “environmental justice” and “underserved community” must be in accordance with EPA guidance (Justice40, EO, etc.); e.g., race may not be used in the application solicitation, review, and selection process. 	<p>30</p>

**Programmatic Capability
in Environmental Justice**

2. The applicant’s experience, familiarity, and capacity to engage with communities, including the identified target communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harms, by **(10 points)**:
 - Connecting with local organizations, leaders, and other members of the target community;
 - Achieving buy-in of key leaders in communities experiencing or affected by adverse and disproportionate environmental and human health risks or harm; and
 - Communicating with and, as necessary, educating affected underserved community members to ensure their ability to effectively and equally participate in discussion, plans, and projects pertaining to local environmental issues; and
 - Meeting the language needs of community members.

3. The application addresses disproportionate and adverse environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts in target communities, such as **(5 points)**:
 - Confronting the economic challenges and/or adverse health impacts resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions which affected and/or currently affect the target community; and
 - Illustrating how the program will further reach affected underserved populations in the target community described in [Section I.C.](#) of the solicitation and within the scope of the GLRI AP III.

4. The program’s approach to engaging and involving the target community or communities, including **(10 points)**:
 - The applicant’s knowledge and relationship to the affected underserved communities that have experienced a lack of resources and/or other impediments toward addressing the impacts identified above;
 - The extent to which the program prioritizes the fair treatment and engagement of the target community or communities, especially residents who will be directly affected by the program and project(s); and
 - The extent to which the applicant involves/will involve community members directly impacted by the program and project(s) who are members of historically excluded groups and/or who are members of multiple historically excluded groups who may face further marginalization within the

	<p>community, such as people with disabilities or elderly persons.</p> <p><i>Note: Disproportionate and adverse environmental, human health, climate-related and other cumulative impacts related to the scope of the GLRI AP III, as well the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, may result when greater pollution burdens and/or consequences, and the impact of them, are more likely to affect or have affected the underserved communities described in this solicitation. The impacts may result from various factors including but not limited to being a function of historical trends and policy decisions.</i></p> <p><i>Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards; unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status; cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes; and degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation. Please visit Section I.B.</i></p> <p><i>For information and additional considerations on EPA’s EJ work with federally-recognized tribes and Indigenous peoples, please visit:</i></p> <p>https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-tribes-and-indigenous-peoples</p> <p><i>As a reminder, small tribes and underserved unincorporated communities may not appear on traditional mapping tools such as EJScreen. Efforts to conduct targeted outreach hard-to-reach communities to identify communities who need key infrastructure projects and social activities is encouraged.</i></p>	
<p>Past Performance</p>	<p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed program considering:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The applicant’s past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to 	<p>15</p>

	<p>Section IV.D. of the solicitation (3 points).</p> <p>2. The applicant’s history of meeting the reporting requirements under each assistance agreement identified in response to Section IV.D of the solicitation, including (3 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements; • 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 or not, and why progress was not made. <p>3. Organizational experience in successfully planning for and executing management actions, <i>i.e.</i>, milestones chart and progress monitoring, as well as management action plans for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed program (3 points).</p> <p>4. Specific applicant staff expertise, qualifications, and knowledge; or detailed plans for applicant staff to obtain the required expertise, qualifications, and knowledge to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed program (3 points).</p> <p>5. Experience in managing subawards subject to 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Applicants may include experience managing subawards for non-federal grants to provide additional evidence of subaward management (3 points).</p> <p><i>Note: In evaluating applicants under Items 1 and 2 of this criterion, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and will 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).</i></p> <p><i>If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information for federal grants, please provide information about any award management for relevant previous grants.</i></p> <p><i>If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance, this must be indicated in the application which will receive a neutral score for these subfactors; 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, or if EPA identifies previous grants to your organization, EPA will perform the review based on information in its grant records.</i></p>	
Transferability of Results	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they:</p> <p>1. Include a detailed plan to gather and develop information to respond to and communicate lessons learned from the proposed</p>	15

	<p>GLEJGP-building activities, including (8 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a detailed means of adaptative management approaches, including trust-building and ground-truthing, to be employed during the project period, including means of accepting, and, when possible, incorporating feedback from community members who are most impacted by the undertaken project or projects during the lifetime of the award; • Documenting and distributing results, including information materials and analyses, in a timely manner to EPA and to key partners in the Great Lakes region and other appropriate audiences; • Ensuring subrecipients are available to present or report on their subaward activities as needed; • Being available to present results both during and after the life of the award; • Describing resources and strategies that the Principal Recipient has in place to successfully pivot and adapt based on lessons learned in real time; and • Describing a communications plan for the Principal Recipient to communicate with EPA and subrecipients about progress or issues in real time. <p>2. Propose a strategy to promote, grow, and sustain the GLEJGP by (7 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating and mentoring participants in sustained partnering and implementation efforts, as well as in innovative solutions and approaches; and • Communicating and transferring the successes and lessons learned of the project subawards through vigorous outreach via traditional and new channels. 	
<p>Budget Narrative</p>	<p>Applications will be evaluated on the strength and clarity of the provided budget narrative and cost-effectivity measures, and the organizational plans for ensuring timely expenditure of awarded funds, including:</p> <p>1. The proposed budget narrative (5 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a detailed breakdown of all proposed costs and their application within the Narrative Proposal; and • Establishes the reasonableness, necessity, and allowability of all proposed costs. <p>2. The applicant establishes that the application is cost-effective,</p>	<p>15</p>

	<p>including consideration of factors such as (10 points):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational costs, indirect costs, and overhead; • Subaward costs compared with anticipated results of projects; • Prudent cost-allocation over the life of the award and consistency with proposed budget detail (by year and overall); and • Ability to perform tasks within the operational range of budgets provided in this RFA. <p>3. The applicant clearly outlines the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be disbursed and/or expended in a timely and efficient manner within the project period, such as (but not limited to): specific software, management actions, and/or applicant staff expertise. (5 points)</p>	
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V.C. Review and Selection Process

Applications will first be evaluated against the Threshold Eligibility Criteria listed in [Section III.C](#). Only those applications which meet all the threshold criteria will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by a review panel composed of federal agency staff.

Final funding decisions will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decision, the selection official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider program priorities and geographic representation.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses.

VI.A. Award Notification

EPA anticipates successful applicants will be notified by telephone, electronic, or postal mail. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or to the project contact listed in the application. This notification informs you that your application has been selected and is being recommended for award. It is **not** an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made the EPA Region 5 Grants Office. Only a grants management officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. Selection does not guarantee an award will be made since issues discovered during the award process may affect EPA’s ability to make the award to an applicant. In addition, a successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., workplan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants management officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

VI.B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Applicants selected for federal funding may need to adjust their forms prior to award. EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final cooperative agreement amount and workplan content prior to award consistent with Agency policies.

Incurring Costs

Funding eligibility ends on the date specified in the award. The time expended and costs incurred in either the development of the application or the final assistance application, or in any subsequent discussions or negotiations prior to the award, are neither reimbursable nor recognizable as part of the recipient's cost share.

Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans

Quality system documentation (i.e., quality assurance project plans or quality management plans) is required for grants involving the use or collection of environmental data. EPA must have this documentation within 90 days of award, and it must be approved before grantees commence activities associated with the use or collection of environmental data. Applicants should budget time and resources for developing quality system documentation. Applicants that do not do so may have to fund the quality system documentation and any necessary project changes out of their own funds. A significant percentage of EPA's previously awarded GLRI grants required quality system documentation. Please review specific guidance on GLNPO's quality management and [quality assurance](#).

Build America, Buy America

Applicants should be aware that if their applications include using Federal funds for a project, including projects carried out by subrecipients, that includes the purchase of goods, products, and materials on any form of construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States for identified EPA financial assistance funding programs, they must comply with the following Term and Condition if they are selected for award. Applicants should direct questions about this requirement to the program Point of Contact listed in Section VII for the Notice of Funding Opportunity Notice.

- a. The recipient is subject to the Buy America Sourcing requirements under the Build America, Buy America provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (P.L. 117-58, §§70911-70917) for the types of infrastructure projects under the EPA Program and activities specified in the chart, "Environmental Protection Agency's Identification of Federal Financial Assistance Infrastructure Programs Subject to the Build America Buy America Provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act." None of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project of infrastructure unless all iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project are produced in the United States. The Buy America preference requirement applies to an entire infrastructure project, even if it is funded by both Federal and non-Federal funds. The recipient must implement these requirements in its procurements, and these requirements must flow down to all subawards and contracts at any tier entered into by recipients or subrecipients. For legal definitions and sourcing requirements, the recipient must consult EPA's Build America, Buy America website and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Memorandum M-22-11, Initial Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy America Preference in Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Infrastructure.

b. When supported by rationale provided in IIJA §70914, the recipient may submit a waiver to EPA on its own behalf or on behalf of subrecipients. Recipients should request guidance on the submission instructions of an EPA waiver request from the EPA Point of Contact listed in Section VII of the funding opportunity announcement. A list of approved EPA waivers (general applicability and project specific) is available on the EPA Build America, Buy America website.

c. For questions regarding the applicability of the Build America, Buy America Act requirements to this announcement or if there is an approved waiver in place, please contact the EPA Point of Contact listed in Section VII of the funding opportunity announcement.

Workforce Development

Workforce development activities funded under this Funding Opportunity should reflect best practices for workforce development and expanding economic opportunity for underserved workers. Effective workforce development requires a full ecosystem of activities that aide in connecting an individual to a high-quality career pathway – from helping them explore their career interests, addressing barriers to employment, connecting them with industry-recognized training, assistance with job search, and support in retaining the job. This requires a robust workforce development ecosystem built on strong partnerships across numerous sectors, community-based organizations, training providers, educational institutions, employers, labor unions, supportive service providers, and more.

Examples of activities that make up a strong workforce development ecosystem include but are not limited to:

- Recruitment, outreach, and workforce pipeline development
- Training and pre-training readiness programs
- Job search and retention support
- Upskilling and reskilling workers
- Mentorship opportunities
- Youth programs
- Partnership development and employer engagement

The [U.S. Department of Commerce](#) developed the following set of best practices for highly effective workforce investments. Applicants are strongly encouraged to design applications with these practices in mind.

Highly effective workforce investments:

- Are employer led to ensure skilled workers are connected to quality job opportunities.
- Are guided by multiple community partners such as educational institutions, labor unions, community-based organizations, and economic development organizations.
- Include wrap-around services to support the most vulnerable populations.
- Increase educational and workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Prioritize proven earn and learn models like Registered Apprenticeships.
- Lead to stackable, industry-recognized credentials and ensure that information about credentials is publicly accessible through the use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability.

- Measure and evaluate outcomes such as workers' employment and earnings. Ensure that data is transparent, actionable, and linked back to those executing programs.
- Build sustainable systems and partnerships that endure to serve employers and workers beyond the federal investment.
- Connect workforce development to economic development.
- Are coordinated across the federal government.
- Encourage the use of other government and private funding.

Challenges and Barriers

Residents of disadvantaged, underserved, and under-represented communities face a range of challenges to finding and taking advantage of workforce opportunities. Effective workforce development programs should include robust support services to address these challenges and help participants overcome them.

Examples of these challenges and barriers include:

- Lack of a driver's license and other transportation barriers
- Lack of access to high quality childcare
- The "benefits cliff," or losing access to crucial benefits such as SNAP and Medicaid when beginning full-time work
- A history of trauma and other mental health challenges
- Lack of a high school diploma or GED
- Involvement with the criminal justice system and stigmatization of individuals with a criminal record
- Poor literacy skills and limited exposure to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)
- Lack of access to a computer at home
- Lack of access or opportunity to train or compete for high-paying jobs

Workforce Development Resources

- [WorkforceGPS](#): Online Technical Assistance website created by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration to help build the capacity of America's public workforce investment system.
- [Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook](#): The Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes this handbook that discusses the job outlook for occupations, including rate of growth, compensation, and other key indicators.
- [Department of Labor - Good Jobs Initiative](#): The Good Jobs Initiative, led by the Department of Labor, is focused on providing critical information to workers, employers, and government as they work to improve job quality and create access to good jobs free from discrimination and harassment for all working people.
- [Building Pathways to Infrastructure Careers: Framework for Preparing an Infrastructure Workforce](#): Department of Labor guidance on best practices for building strong workforce systems that produce high-quality education, training, and employment opportunities for all workers and an extensive list of workforce resources.
- [American Job Centers](#): Information about the national network of American Job Centers, or One-Stop career centers, that help workers, job seekers, and employers find the services they need.
- [Pre-Apprenticeship Resources](#): List of resources assembled by the Department of Labor about building strong pre-apprenticeship programs.

- [Registered Apprenticeships](#): Information from the Department of Labor’s apprenticeships office on existing Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), starting a new RAP, and best practices.
- [Department of Labor’s Youth Employment Vision and Strategies](#): Best practices and strategic goals from the Department of Labor focused on youth and young adult training and employment.
- [Sample Case Management Documents](#): Templates and sample documents to assist training programs with building a case management program.
- [Transition Services Toolkit for Adult Education and Developmental Bridge Programs](#): A toolkit to for adult education providers working with populations with high employment barriers to evaluate their existing policies and practices to find opportunities for improvement.
- [Department of Energy - Map a Career in Clean Energy](#): Career maps from the Department of Energy outlining occupations and skills for careers in select clean energy fields.
- [Department of Energy - Better Buildings Initiative Workforce Accelerator](#): Resources focused on improving building energy efficiency and decarbonization.

VI.C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.329, the award recipient will agree to submit performance reports that include brief information on each of the following areas: 1) A comparison of actual accomplishments to the outputs/outcomes established in the assistance agreement workplan for the period; 2) The reasons why established outputs/outcomes were not met; and 3) Additional pertinent information, including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high-unit costs.

Additionally, the recipient agrees to inform EPA as soon as problems, delays, or adverse conditions which will materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement workplan are known.

1. **Semi-annual progress reports:** Starting with the first full reporting period after the issuance of the award, the recipient shall submit semi-annual progress reports (electronically) to the EPA Project Officer by **April 15 but no later than April 30** and by **October 15 but no later than October 30** of each year, through the life of the assistance agreement. Reporting periods shall be the 6-month periods from October 1 to March 31 and April 1 to September 30. Progress reports shall document progress in writing and in pictures, for the cooperative agreement during the immediately preceding reporting period and must contain sufficient information in order to ascertain that the workplan is being carried out as specified in the assistance agreement. Progress reports shall describe all the following that apply:
 - a. Work accomplished for the period; quantifying results achieved. Specify any incremental and cumulative (from October 1, 2023, on) results achieved during the reporting period for all applicable GLRI Action Plan measures (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-10/documents/glri-action-plan-3-201910-30pp.pdf>), and with any direction provided by your EPA Project Officer and the GLRI Action Plan Measures Reporting Plan as periodically updated by the EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding>, particularly:
 - b. Object Class Category changes;
 - c. Corrective actions;
 - d. Projected new work;

- e. Percent completion of scheduled work;
- f. Percent of budgeted amounts spent;
- g. Any change in principal investigator;
- h. Any change needed in project period;
- i. Date and amount of latest drawdown request; and
- j. Delays or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement workplan.

The EPA Project Officer must be able to determine that all mission support products, services, information or data generation and use, including technology development and verification, is performed in accordance with EPA policies and the assistance agreement. To develop your progress report, you may use the outline at <http://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding>.

2. Final Report: The Final Report shall incorporate project outputs and summarize the nature and extent of the project, methodologies employed, significant events and experiences, a compilation of the data collected, and results achieved. Results shall include the cumulative results achieved during the project period for all applicable GLRI Action Plan measures described in element 1 of the Semiannual Progress Report condition above. The final report shall also include analysis of the data, conclusions, and recommendations. The final report shall incorporate photo documentation of the project and environmental progress under the project at appropriate phases, and appropriate illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, and maps to express the data and findings. In order for the report writing costs to be eligible under the award, they must be incurred before the project end date. Electronic and paper versions of the **Final Report shall be submitted no later than 120 days after the end of the project period.** All work products shall carry attribution to the U.S. EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for funding assistance and should also acknowledge significant contributions by others. If applicable, the Final Report shall include:

- a. A database (Excel or similar format) of field and laboratory data including but not limited to latitude-longitude, date, time, field observations, parameter data, laboratory analysis, QA duplicates/replicates; and
- b. Model files including input-output data, model code, model output, and peripheral and post-processing utilities.

3. Subaward Performance Reporting

The recipient must report on its subaward monitoring activities under [2 CFR 200.332\(d\)](#). Examples of items that must be reported if the pass-through entity has the information available are:

- a. Summaries of results of reviews of financial and programmatic reports;
- b. Summaries of findings from site visits and/or desk reviews to ensure effective subrecipient performance;
- c. Environmental results the subrecipient achieved;
- d. Summaries of audit findings and related pass-through entity management decisions; and
- e. Actions the pass-through entity has taken to correct deficiencies such as those specified at [2 CFR 200.332\(e\)](#), [2 CFR 200.208](#) and the [2 CFR 200.339](#) Remedies for Noncompliance.

VII. AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

For any administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact Cara Walsh via email at [GLRI-](#)

RFA@epa.gov . All questions must be received in writing via email with the reference line referring to this RFA (RE: RFA EPA-I-R5-GL2023-GLEJGP) by **August 4, 2023**. All questions and answers will be posted at this [link](#). Details about informational webinars for this RFA will also be posted on the [RFA website](#). We encourage all applicants to sign up for our mailing list and register with us at: [https:// www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-news-email-list](https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-news-email-list).

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

In developing the application, the applicant may find the following documents and webpages helpful:

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Program website: <https://www.glri.us/>
- GLRI Action Plan III: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/documents/glri-action-plan-3-201910-30pp.pdf>
- EPA FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan
- EPA Office of Environmental Justice: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>
- EPA Environmental Justice for Tribes and Indigenous Peoples: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-tribes-and-indigenous-peoples>
- Justice40 <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40-epa>
- EJ Screen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>
- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>