

4. Mississippi River Region (HUCs 07 and 08)
For more details on location, please see [Appendix B](#).

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

I.A.1. EPA Gulf of Mexico Division Background and Authority

The GMD is a non-regulatory program of the EPA founded to facilitate collaborative actions to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico in ways consistent with the economic well-being of the Region. To carry out its mission, GMD continues to maintain and expand partnerships with State and Federal agencies, federally recognized tribes, local governments and authorities, academia, regional business and industry, agricultural and environmental organizations, and individual citizens and communities. For more information, please see <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico>. This Request for Applications (RFA) is expected to result in the award of assistance agreements. GMD's statutory authority to award assistance agreements is the Clean Water Act, §104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution. In addition, the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021*, directs EPA to "coordinate with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Gulf States, and other State, local, and private partners to leverage greater resources toward conservation projects on working-lands within the Gulf Region and Mississippi River Basin."

Funded activities must advance protection and restoration of the Gulf of Mexico watershed in support of [EPA's Draft 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 of the [Draft Plan](#). All applications must be for projects that support the goals and objectives identified above.

I.A.2. RFA Background

In the Gulf of Mexico watershed, farmers manage millions of acres of privately held working lands. While farmers are working in this watershed to provide the food, fuel, and fiber for the world, they are also managing challenges across the landscape to minimize nonpoint source pollution, specifically the excess nitrogen and phosphorous. These nutrients can enter waterbodies by being dissolved in runoff or attached to sediment via erosion. Excess nutrients delivered to the Gulf of Mexico come from sources across the entire watershed; many of which are delivered as nonpoint sources from the agricultural landscape. When elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorus enter waterbodies, the impact can be described as eutrophic (nutrient rich). When eutrophication of waterbodies occurs, it becomes possible for low dissolved oxygen levels (< 2 mg/L = hypoxia) to occur. For example, within the Gulf of Mexico, excess nutrients entering via the Mississippi river watershed has resulted in a large hypoxic zone that is commonly referred to as a dead zone, which can result in fish kills and a decrease in aquatic life.¹ In addition to problems associated with low dissolved oxygen, excess nutrients can cause harmful algal blooms (HABs) in marine and freshwater systems, which not only disrupt wildlife but can also produce toxins harmful to humans.

Farmers are often the first line of action in reducing nonpoint source pollution of nutrients across the agricultural landscape and have developed innovative practices and leadership models to share their knowledge with others. For more information on these practices, please see:

¹ For more information, see: [https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/C3D2F27094E03F90852573B800601D93/\\$File/EPA-SAB-08-003complete.unsigned.pdf](https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/C3D2F27094E03F90852573B800601D93/$File/EPA-SAB-08-003complete.unsigned.pdf)

<https://www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution/sources-and-solutions-agriculture>

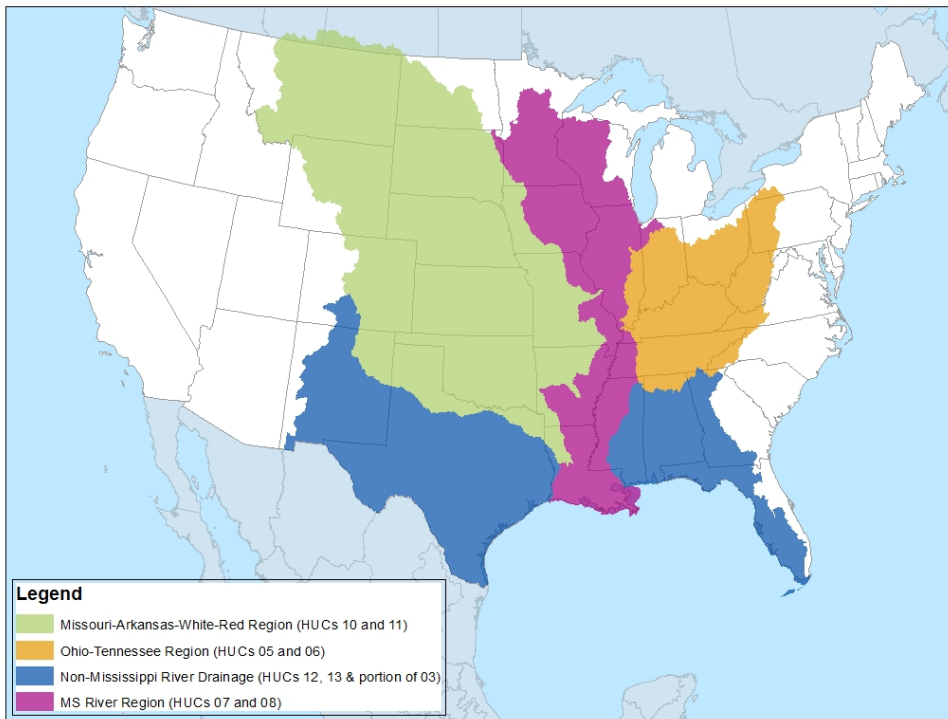
EPA’s Gulf of Mexico Division has awarded \$20 million to support projects to improve water quality, habitat and environmental education through farmer-led or farm focused organizations in the Gulf of Mexico watershed, including the upper and lower Mississippi River Basins. For information on farmer to farmer projects funded in 2017 and 2018, please see the Farmer to Farmer tab on the [EPA Gulf of Mexico story map](#).

I.B. Scope of Work

This RFA is seeking applicants for a direct award from EPA to provide competitive subawards to eligible entities that directly collaborate with underserved farmers on projects within the Gulf of Mexico watershed to achieve EPA’s Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives. **Subawardees MUST directly collaborate with farmers from underserved communities and/or underserved producers. Each of these is defined in the following links.** For a definition of underserved communities, please see the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). For a definition of underserved producers, please see the USDA definition found [here](#). Definition of “farmer” can be found in the RFA Terms.

EPA plans to award four cooperative agreements of up to \$3,000,000 per cooperative agreement. EPA plans to fund one cooperative agreement in each of the following geographic categories:

1. Missouri - Arkansas – White - Red Region (HUCs 10 and 11)
2. Ohio-Tennessee Region (HUCs 05 and 06)
3. Non-Mississippi Reiver Drainage (HUCs 12, 13 and a portion of 03)



For more details on location, please see [Appendix B](#).

Successful applicants for this activity will issue subawards to non-profit organizations, state and local governments, colleges, universities, and/or interstate agencies on a competitive basis to achieve the [EPA Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives](#). The recipient must comply with applicable provisions of 2 CFR Part 200 and the EPA Subaward Policy, which may be found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients>, including the National Term and Condition for Subawards, which may be found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-general-terms-and-conditions-effective-october-1-2021-or-later>.

The applicant must demonstrate experience running a competitive award program and the organizational infrastructure to manage subawards in alignment with 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart D (200.317 through 200.333). If your organization does not have experience with this, you may want to consider applying to the competitive subaward program funded by this cooperative agreement. When announced, the subaward competition information will be sent to EPA's Gulf of Mexico Division email list. Please send an email to gmp-rfp@epa.gov to be added to the list.

EPA Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives:

1. Novel or innovative techniques, methods, or approaches to improve adoption of resilient and sustainable practices;
2. Increase collaboration, including within and among farming communities;
3. Data collection and analysis to demonstrate the results of the applied technique(s), method(s) or approach(es); and
4. Effective communication of project results to the farming community to inform future farm management and to better understand the most cost-effective and sustainable farming approaches.

As stated previously, this RFA is seeking applications from eligible applicants to manage a Gulf of Mexico Historically Underserved Farmer to Farmer Grants Program, which entails issuing RFAs, identifying appropriate sub-awardees, and monitoring their progress to ensure timely completion of projects. Subawards should be for amounts ranging from \$75,000 to \$250,000. Note: applicants can identify a different range for each subaward as part of their application narrative and explain why they have chosen a different range. The subawards funded under the cooperative agreement are anticipated to have project periods ranging from three to four years and must be completed prior to the end of the cooperative agreement project period. The subaward projects must be completed in sufficient time to allow the cooperative agreement recipient to aggregate results, lessons learned and ensure subawardees have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs. Funds should be directed to subawards except for funds required to carry out the responsibilities below, or for communications, outreach, and administrative and technical assistance activities that directly support subawardees.

Responsibilities of the successful applicant(s) include, but are not limited to:

- Administer a competitive subaward grant program for eligible entities to directly collaborate with underserved farmers on projects within the Gulf of Mexico watershed to support the Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives identified in I.B., including establishing guidelines for the program, issuing an RFA and coordinating the review of the applications. **Subawardees MUST directly collaborate with farmers from underserved communities and/or underserved producers. Each of these is defined in the following links.** For a definition of underserved communities, please see the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). For a definition of underserved producers, please see the USDA definition found [here](#).
- Advertise the program and assist potential applicants in a transparent manner that ensures that no applicant or group of applicants has an unfair competitive advantage during the competitions.
- Issue subawards to cost-effectively achieve the program objectives and environmental results.

- Disburse monies to subaward recipients in a timely manner to reduce unliquidated obligations and as required by the applicable grant regulations.
- Provide assistance to subawardees, which could include coordinating outreach, training, information resources, and/or technology transfer, but **must** include at least one annual webinar/meeting for subawardees to learn from each other and share with EPA.
- Establish and follow a system for monitoring subrecipient performance that includes the elements required by 2 CFR 200.332(d) and report the results of the monitoring in performance reports, including meeting EPA Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives and supporting historically underserved farmers.
- Attend a virtual meeting (3 – 6 months post award) to collaborate with the other recipients on development of items required by this grant, including approaches for tracking subawardee outcomes and outputs and reporting of environmental results, with the ultimate goal to improve consistency and efficiency in development of these items.
- Track the environmental results (quantitative and qualitative outputs and outcomes) of the subawards; and ensure the data and results are communicated to EPA GMD and other stakeholders and partners.
Measurement must be a key component of the projects that will ultimately receive sub-award funding and must provide data on quantitative environmental results.
- Document lessons learned from the subaward projects including any new successful methods, approaches, techniques or practices to improve sustainability of farming practices and ensure subaward project results are disseminated to the wider stakeholder community to inform future farm management.
- Avoid duplication of effort with related projects by ensuring redundant subawards are not being issued by related federal (e.g. Department of Agriculture’s Conservation and Innovation Grant (CIG) program) or non-federal partners (e.g. EPA Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer awardees)

In addition to considering the items above, applicants may also describe alternative approaches for managing and issuing competitive subawards as defined by this RFA.

Subawardee Activities

All Subawardee projects **must include at least one** of the following types of activities:

- Water quality focused. Examples: nutrient reduction with creative runoff treatment solutions; innovative year-round ground cover to limit erosion; planting field buffers; conservation tillage; managing livestock access to streams; address key manure nutrient management issues (e.g., phosphorus saturation in soil, ammonia emissions, alternative uses for manure nutrients); increase the implementation of nitrogen-use efficiency tools to better manage inorganic nitrogen inputs on cropland.
- Habitat focused. Examples: riparian zone improvement; observing environmental windows; restoration or protection of wildlife corridors; partner easements; landowner habitat planting/restoration; other innovative habitat ideas; conservation and restoration of perennially flooded grasslands and forests.
- Sustainable forest management. Examples: utilizing sustainable forestry practices that protect and maintain water quality and habitat; improving utilization of sustainable forestry practices through training, education, and public outreach; and monitoring effectiveness of sustainable practices

All Subawardee projects **must include both** of the following:

- Collaboration. Examples include: partner organizations replicating existing successes in watersheds to build stakeholder and farmer capacity through technical trainings and outreach, including subawards to local farmer organizations to demonstrate techniques; working with farmer-led organizations or consortiums to reach out to small farms that are having financial, technological or other challenges in adopting nutrient reduction practices and develop creative solutions to overcoming those barriers; working with farming

communities to stand up a farmer-led organization that provides technical assistance to farmers.

- Sustainable and resilient agricultural operations. Examples include: identifying vulnerabilities to climate-related risks including understanding potential exposures (e.g., weather variability such as drought, flooding, etc.); exploring the social, economic, cultural, and technical implementation challenges and opportunities for making fundamental changes to the way we farm in the watershed to ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture; developing adaptive capacity or resilience to respond, recover and transform continued operations after exposure that will result in reduced soil nutrient losses and improved downstream water quality. (For more information on farming resilience, see <https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Bulletins/Cultivating-Climate-Resilience-on-Farms-and-Ranches.>)

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. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III.A., 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 [Predominately Black Institutions](#)

I.C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage, Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes and Performance Measures Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7A1, “Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements,” EPA must link proposed assistance agreements with the Agency’s Strategic Plan. EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7A1, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements, <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements>).

1. Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan The activities to be funded under this solicitation support [EPA’s Draft 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 of the [Draft Plan](#). All applications must be for projects that support the goals and objectives identified above.

2. Environmental Results Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs and, to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the objectives described above.

a. Outputs

Environmental outputs (or deliverables) refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work

product related to an environmental goal or 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 during an assistance agreement project period. Outputs are required and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Number of subawards to eligible entities to directly collaborate with underserved farmers on projects to support the Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives identified in I.B;
- Development and verification of subawardee tracking (reporting) process to track expenditures and environmental results/data; this must include quarterly progress reports of subrecipient activities such as:
 - Number of farmers or farming communities that adopt sustainability and resiliency practices
 - Number of farmers or farming communities that adopt practices that lead to reduced nutrient losses and improved water quality
 - Estimation of nutrient reduction, habitat improvement, and/or sustainable forests protected
 - Numbers of acres and/or miles of conservation practices adopted
 - Number of restoration, watershed, and/or land use plans designed, developed, or adopted
- Farmer to farmer education events/presentations (report number of events and participants) that share the successful outcomes, lessons learned, technologies developed, approaches gleaned, and best practices employed; and
- Number of new sub-watershed wide and/or regional coalitions, partnerships or efforts resulting from investments under this grant award;

Progress reports and a final report are required outputs, as specified in Section VI.C., Reporting, of this announcement.

b. Outcomes

Environmental outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective and are used as a way to gauge a project's performance. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must also be quantitative. Outcomes may be short term (changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (changes in condition of the natural resource).

Applicants **must** demonstrate how their proposed project will achieve the following outcomes/results:

- Change in willingness to adopt practices as a result of project outreach. For example, number of farmers who intend to adopt or are adopting practices as a result of project outreach.
- Improved resiliency of farming operations (climate, financial, etc).
- At least one of the following:
 - Acres AND Type of habitat enhanced, protected or restored over the life of the project with quarterly milestones clearly reflected. An initial baseline must be included to provide an accurate view of progress OR based on before and after project measurements
 - Improvement in at least one water quality (WQ) parameter in a water body and/or segment over the life of the project with quarterly milestones clearly reflected. An initial baseline must be included to provide an accurate view of progress OR based on before and after project measurements (or best practice WQ monitoring periods). Examples of WQ parameters that could be demonstrated in a WQ improvement project include but are not limited to: excess nutrients, turbidity, total suspended solids, dissolved oxygen, pH, and temperature.

Additional outcomes may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Pollutant (e.g., nutrients, sediment) load reductions in the Gulf of Mexico watershed.
- The number of pounds of nitrogen, phosphorus, or sediment discharge avoided.
- Improvements made to state, county, or local environmental programs, requirements or policies that better protect public health and the environment.
- Improved collective knowledge about more efficient farming practices, resulting in reduction in the pollution in segments of the Gulf of Mexico watershed.
- Cost savings resulting from project implementation.

Additional information regarding the EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at: www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements.

3. Performance Measures The applicant should also develop performance measures they expect to achieve through the proposed activities and describe them in their application. These performance measures will help gather insights and will be the mechanism to track progress concerning successful processes and output and outcome strategies and will provide the basis for developing lessons to inform future recipients. It is expected that the description of performance measures will directly relate to the project outcomes and outputs. The following are questions to consider when developing output and outcome measures of quantitative and qualitative results:

- What are the measurable short term and longer term results the project will achieve?
- How does the plan measure progress in achieving the expected results (including outputs and outcomes) and how will the approach use resources effectively and efficiently?

I.D. RFA Terms

Demonstration: For the purposes of this RFA, EPA is defining "demonstration" as new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. The applicant must clearly explain in the proposal how the technologies, methods, or approaches used are new or experimental and how the project otherwise meets the requirements of a demonstration as described in this RFA. If your project uses technologies, methods or approaches that have been used previously in other geographic areas and/or other situations, then your proposal must include an explanation as to how your demonstration project is different from prior projects. The applicant must also explain what will be learned from the demonstration project.

Farmer: For the purposes of this RFA, EPA is defining "farmer" as those individuals that make management decisions concerning agriculture lands, including cropland, forestland, and grazing lands. Collaboration and/or coalitions between organizations are encouraged, including collaboration that increases knowledge transfer.

II: AWARD INFORMATION

II.A. Award Amounts

The estimated amount available under this announcement is approximately \$12 million. The amount of federal funding per award is up to \$3,000,000. **Applications seeking EPA funding in excess of that amount will be rejected.** EPA anticipates awarding 4 cooperative agreements under this solicitation. The number of cooperative agreements EPA will fund as a result of this RFA will be based on the quality of applications received, the

availability of funding, and other applicable considerations. The successful applicants should provide EPA with a negotiated workplan covering distinct one-year periods of performance for each year of the project. Subawards awarded under the cooperative agreement are anticipated to have project periods ranging several years but need to be completed in sufficient time for the recipient to aggregate results and ensure the subawardees have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs prior to the end of the project period for the cooperative agreement. EPA expects funding for each subaward will range from \$75,000 to \$250,000. Note: Applicants can identify a slightly different range for each subaward as part of their project narrative and explain why they have chosen a different range.

II.B. Anticipated Project Start and End Dates

This RFA instructs applicants to submit certifications and other documentation required for a full and complete funding package so that their projects could, if selected, proceed expeditiously. The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation will begin in Calendar Year 2022. Proposed project periods may be up to five years.

II.C. Funding Type

Successful applicants will be issued a cooperative agreement as appropriate. A cooperative agreement is an assistance agreement that is used when there is substantial federal involvement with the recipient during the performance of an activity or project. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the performance of the project. The grantee will make the final subaward selections and administer the subawards. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial EPA involvement for the project selected may include:

1. Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
2. Collaboration during the performance of the scope of work and budget;
3. In accordance with the applicable regulations at 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart D (200.317 through 200.326), as appropriate, review of proposed procurements;
4. Review of evaluation criteria and in selecting subawardees (the final decision on the evaluation criteria rests with the recipient);
5. Review the subaward competitive solicitation and may provide comments to ensure consistency with the applicant's scope of work (the recipient is responsible for the content of, and all final decisions regarding, the subaward competitive solicitation including the disposition of any EPA comments on the subaward competitive solicitation);
6. Participation in the review process for selection of subawardees (the majority of the selection panel members must be non-federal members);
7. Review and approval of the substantive terms of subawards to verify compliance with federal requirements (the final decision on the selection of subawardees rests with the recipient); and
8. Provide access for the recipient to EPA scientific expertise, sampling protocols, publicly available data, and other forms of technical assistance, should the request be made by the recipient and EPA has available personnel.

II.D. Additional Funding Information

Additional Awards: EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, 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.

Award Funding: Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

Future Funding: Selection or award of funding under this RFA is not a guarantee of future funding.

Partial Funding: In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. 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.

Pre-Award Costs: Recipients may incur otherwise eligible and allowable pre-award costs up to 90 days prior to award at their own risk without prior approval of EPA's award official. Pre-award costs must comply with 2 CFR 200.458 and 2 CFR 1500.8. If EPA determines that the requested pre-award costs comply with the relevant authorities, and that the costs are justified as allocable to the project, then these costs may be included as allowable expenditures at the time that the assistance award document is prepared. However, if for any reason EPA does not fund the application or the amount of the award is less than the applicant anticipated, then EPA is under no obligation to reimburse the applicant for these costs incurred. Thus, applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk. Costs incurred more than 90 days prior to award require the approval of EPA Region 4's grant official.

III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

III.A. Eligible Entities

In accordance with Assistance Listing 66.475, applications will be accepted from governmental entities, including state agencies, interstate agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, institutions of higher learning (i.e., colleges and universities), and non-profit organizations (as defined at 2 CFR 200) are eligible to apply for funding under this RFA. 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. While not considered to be a nonprofit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA. 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. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

EPA 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. Minorities, women, and persons with disabilities historically have been under-represented in the STEM fields. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants including, women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to apply.

- **Competitive Subawards.** Eligible entities for competitive subawards issued by the successful applicant are the same eligible entities listed above. For the purposes of this announcement, EPA has determined that for-profit entities are ineligible for the competitive subaward program. EPA award officials will disapprove the costs of proposed subaward work to 501(c)(4) organizations identified in a subaward application, or workplan changes requiring prior approval, if the work involves lobbying activities or would otherwise violate the principles of EPA's subaward policy.

III.B. 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 subawardee(s) of the recipient. Subawards and subgrants must be consistent with the definitions of those terms in 2 C.F.R. 200.92. The recipient must administer the grant, 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 C.F.R. 200.332(d), subrecipients or subgrantees are accountable to the recipient or grantee for proper use of EPA funding.

Coalitions may not include for-profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards. For-profit organizations are eligible to receive contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 C.F.R. § 200.319, as applicable. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. (Please see 2 C.F.R. § 1500.10, formerly at 40 C.F.R. § 30.27(b) or 31.36(j), as applicable.) For additional information, please review the following Federal Register: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-7867.pdf>.

III.C. Match or Cost-Share

There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement as a condition of eligibility under this RFA.

III.D. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the applicant by the time of application submission will result in elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications from eligible entities listed in Section III.A that meet these criteria by the time of application submission will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this RFA. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified by e-mail within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

- **Substantial Compliance:** Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section I.B of this announcement or else they will be rejected. ***Where a page limit is stated for the Project Narrative in Section IV.D, pages in excess of the limitation will not be reviewed.***

- **Grant.gov submission:** In addition, 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.**
- **Application Deadline:** Applications submitted 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.** Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with Rachel Houge (GMP-RFP@epa.gov) as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
- **Project Scope:** Applications must address how the applicant will establish and manage a competitive subaward program to eligible entities to directly collaborate with underserved farmers on projects within the Gulf of Mexico watershed to support the [Gulf of Mexico Farmer to Farmer objectives](#) identified in I.B.
- **Environmental Results:** Applicants must identify estimated or anticipated environmental results in their application and should identify MAJOR anticipated results on the Summary Information page.
- **Project Location:** For an application to be considered eligible for funding, planned geographic focus of your subaward competition must be within the Gulf of Mexico watershed in ONE of the four geographic areas:
 - a) Missouri - Arkansas – White - Red Region (HUCs 10 and 11)
 - b) Ohio-Tennessee Region (HUCs 05 and 06)
 - c) Non-Mississippi Reiver Drainage (HUCs 12, 13 and a portion of 03)
 - d) Mississippi River Region (HUCs 07 and 08)
 For more details on location, please see [Appendix B](#).
- **Funding Request Limit:** Applications seeking funding in excess of the specified maximum amount of EPA funding of \$3,000,000 will be rejected.
- **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.

III.E. Ineligible Activities

The following are ineligible activities:

- Projects that do not comply with Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order; or specified as a required mitigation measure under a state, local, or federal permit for a specific project; however, grant funding may be used to enhance or expand such projects beyond minimum requirements for compliance.
- Work involving only routine maintenance of storm water infrastructure and other facilities
- Projects which fall under the existing planning responsibilities of an individual state or local government (e.g., development of TMDLs or MS4 permits)

- Solely “gray infrastructure” projects (e.g., installation of sewer lines)
- Construction activities that are not a part of a demonstration project. This includes, but is not limited to, preliminary planning to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of a facility; engineering, architectural, legal, fiscal, and economic investigations and studies; surveys, designs, plans, working drawings, specifications, procedures, and other actions necessary to the construction of a facility; the erection, acquisition, alteration, remodeling, improvement, or extension of a facility; and the inspection and supervision of the construction of a facility.

IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

Applicants must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.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

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through grants.gov, go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then go to the "Get Registered" link on the page. **If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a DUNS number and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more.** 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 submission deadline. Registration on Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and DUNS number assignment is FREE. Please see [RAIN-2021-G01](#) for information about EPA's implementation of the upcoming Government-wide transition from DUNS to Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

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

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and click on "Applicants" on the top of the page and then "Apply for Grants" from the dropdown menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. Please note: To apply through Grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit [Adobe Reader Compatibility Information on Grants.gov](#)

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-GM-Farmer-2021, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement

(CFDA 66.475), in the appropriate field and click the Search button.

Please Note: All applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) using the "Workspace" feature. Information on the Workspace feature can be found at the [Grants.gov Workspace Overview Page](#).

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than February 4th, 2022 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.

Please submit *all* of the application materials described below using the Grants.gov application package accessed using the instructions above.

Application Materials: Please see Section IV.D.

Applications submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be time and date stamped electronically. Please email Rachel Houge at gmp-rfp@epa.gov to confirm receipt of your application within 30 days of the application deadline. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

IV.C. Technical Issues with Submission

1. Once the application package has been completed, the "Submit" button should be enabled. If the "Submit" button is not active, please call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726. 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. Applicants should save the completed application package with two different file names before providing it to the AOR to avoid having to re-create the package should submission problems be experienced or a revised application needs to be submitted.
2. Submitting the application. The application package must be transferred to Grants.gov by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the "submit" button of the application package. Your Internet browser will launch and a sign-in page will appear. Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to Grants.gov. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation. The Grants.gov support desk operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except Federal Holidays.

A successful transfer will end with an on-screen acknowledgement. For documentation purposes, print or screen capture this acknowledgement. If a submission problem occurs, reboot the computer turning the power off may be necessary and re-attempt the submission.

Note: Grants.gov issues a "case number" upon a request for assistance.

3. Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application are experienced, and following the above instructions do not resolve the problem so that the application is submitted to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to gmp-rfp@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Rachel Houge at 228-304-7441. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. **Failure of an applicant to**

submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.

If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. 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. Be sure to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Rachel Houge at 228-304-7441.

4. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, and you have already attempted to resolve the issue by contacting Grants.gov, send an email message to gmp-rfp@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the Grants.gov case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.
5. Grants.gov rejection of the application package: If a notification is received from Grants.gov stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal and it is too late to reapply, promptly send an email to gmp-rfp@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by Grants.gov and attach the entire application in PDF format.

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

IV.D. Content of Application Submission

Each application will be evaluated using the criteria referenced in [Section V.A.](#) of this announcement. The application must be submitted by the date and time specified in [Section IV.D.](#) below, and the application package must include all of the following materials:

1. **Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance:** Complete the form. There are no attachments. Please be sure to include the fax number and email address in Blocks 8.f. and 21 of the Standard Form SF 424. The contact person you provide in Block 8.f. should be different than the Authorized Representative listed in Block 21. Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711.
2. **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs:** Complete the form. There are no attachments. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22. If indirect costs are requested, a copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement must be submitted as part of the application package. (See instructions for document 10 below.)

- EPA Form 5700-54, EPA Key Contacts Form:** Complete the form. A minimum of two contacts should be identified. Please be sure the contacts on this form are consistent with the other forms. The Authorized Representative on this form must be the signatory on the other forms. If additional pages are needed, attach these additional pages to the electronic application package by using the “Other Attachments Form” in the “Optional Documents” box. (See Application Preparation and Submission Instructions below for more details.)
- EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report:** Complete the form.
- Project Narrative:** Includes **the Summary Information Page; Workplan; Detailed Budget Narrative; and Maps, Charts and Figures.** Prepare as described in the [project narrative format](#) section of the announcement below. Applications that are not prepared in substantial compliance with the information below will not be considered for funding. This is the only file that should be submitted using the Project Narrative Attachment form.
- Other Attachments Form – Budget Table.** A fill-able template for the budget table is available for download with the RFA on www.grants.gov and by following the Farmer-to-Farmer 2021 RFA Announcement link at <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico>. Prepare as described in the [budget table](#) section below. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the budget table template. This file should be submitted using the “Other Attachments Form” form in Grants.gov.
- Other Attachments Form - Resumes or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigators and critical staff.** Use the “Other Attachments Form” to attach a copy of the resume or curriculum vitae of principal investigators and critical staff for the proposed project. Such documentation should outline the education, work history, and knowledge/expertise of the individual that relate to managing the proposed project. ***Please consolidate all resumes into one file and include the word “resume” in the filename.***
- Other Attachments Form – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.** Use if indirect costs are included in the project budget. Use the “Other Attachments Form” to attach a copy of your organization’s Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable. (See Application Preparation and Submission Instructions below for more details). You must submit a copy of your organization’s Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as part of the application package if your proposed budget includes indirect costs. ***Please include the words “cost agreement” in the filename.***
- Other Attachments Form – Support Letters.** Use the “Other Attachments Form” to attach any relevant letters from collaborators, partners or communities in support of the project. Specifically indicate how the supporting organization will assist in the project or what that organization supports, as applicable. ***Please consolidate all letters into one file and include the word “Letters of support” or “LOS” in the file name.***

Documents 1 through 5 listed under Application Materials above should appear in the “Mandatory Documents” box on the Grants.gov Grant Application Package page.

For documents 1 through 4, click on the appropriate form and then click “Open Form” below the box. The fields that must be completed will be highlighted in yellow. Optional fields and completed fields will be displayed in white. If you enter an invalid response or incomplete information in a field, you will receive an error message. When you have finished filling out each form, click “Save.” When you return to the electronic Grant Application

Package page, click on the form you just completed, and then click on the box that says, "Move Form to Submission List." This action will move the document over to the box that says, "Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission."

For document 5, you will need to attach electronic files. Prepare your narrative proposal as described and save the documents to your computer as a PDF file. When you are ready to attach your proposal to the application package, click on "Project Narrative Attachment Form," and open the form. Click "Add Mandatory Project Narrative File," and then attach your proposal (previously saved to your computer) using the browse window that appears. You may then click "View Mandatory Project Narrative File" to view it. Enter a brief descriptive title of your project in the space beside "Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename;" the filename should be no more than 40 characters long. If there are other attachments to submit to accompany your proposal, you may click "Add Optional Project Narrative File" and proceed as before. When you have finished attaching the necessary documents, click "Close Form." When you return to the "Grant Application Package" page, select the "Project Narrative Attachment Form" and click "Move Form to Submission List." The form should now appear in the box that says, "Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission."

Other Attachments: Documents 6 through 9 are submitted using the Other Attachments form. You **must** submit document 6 – Budget Table and document 7 - Resumes or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigators and critical staff. You are required to submit document 8 – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement – if you have included any indirect costs in your proposed budget. If applicable, submit document 9 – Support Letters – to demonstrate collaboration and support. To attach documents 6 -9, use the "Other Attachments Form". After attaching the documents, please remember to highlight the "Other Attachments Form" and click "Move Form to Submission List" Please submit each document from 6 through 9 as a separate file.

Project Narrative

Project Narrative (including the **Summary Information Page; Workplan including Detailed Budget Narrative**) must be no more than **twelve** 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 should be included at the end of the document and will not be counted against the **twelve**-page limit for the Project Narrative. **Maps, charts, pictures, and other figures that are submitted as a separate attachment will not be reviewed.**

Each Project Narrative must be formatted for 8½" x 11" paper and should use no smaller than an 11- point Calibri font with 1" margins. 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.

Do not include confidential business information in your application.

Project Narrative Format:

Project Narrative (12-page limit including the summary information page)

SUMMARY INFORMATION PAGE (SHOULD NOT EXCEED ONE PAGE)

- **Project Title.** Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience.
- **Applicant Information.** Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, e-mail address and DUNS number. *Do not include private information.*
- **Type of Organization.** Specify, consistent with your SF 424, one of the following eligible entities:

- Local Government (as defined in 2C.F.R. 200.64)
- State Agency (includes Interstate)
- Indian Tribe
- College and University (includes private and state institutions)
- Not for Profit/Non-profit
- Other
- **Proposed Funding Request.** The total dollar amount requested from EPA- If the dollar amount requested from EPA exceeds \$3,000,000 your application will be rejected.
- **Project Duration.** Provide beginning and ending dates. See “Anticipated Start and End Dates” in [Sec. II.B.](#)
- **Brief Project Description.** Summarize the proposed project in 100 words or less in a clear and succinct manner in PLAIN LANGUAGE. Include environmental KEY TERMS that could be used as search terms (e.g., water quality, toxins, mercury). Do not use acronyms. If the application is 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.
- **Environmental Results.** Please describe major environmental results anticipated from this project.
- **Place of Performance.** Identify the geographic focus of your subaward competition, including the appropriate level HUC(s) known for the focus of the project (2- to 16-digit). Ensure the boundary is within the Gulf of Mexico watershed and in **ONE** of the following geographic areas or your application will be rejected.
 - a. Missouri - Arkansas – White - Red Region (HUCs 10 and 11)
 - b. Ohio-Tennessee Region (HUCs 05 and 06)
 - c. Non-Mississippi Reiver Drainage (HUCs 12, 13 and a portion of 03)
 - d. Mississippi River Region (HUCs 07 and 08)

* For more details on location, please see [Appendix B.](#)
- **Project period.** Provide anticipated project start date and anticipated project completion date.

PROJECT WORKPLAN (should not exceed 11 pages, excess pages will not be reviewed) Each work plan should be organized in the order and with the headings and information requested below or you risk the possibility of information being left out by you as the applicant, or overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored.

Project Approach. Describe your approach for serving as an organization to manage the Farmer-to-Farmer Grants Program (see Section I.B). The competitive subaward process proposed in the project approach must fund subawardee projects entirely located within the Gulf of Mexico Watershed and focus on directly collaborating with underserved farmers. The project approach should demonstrate the applicant’s ability to:

- i. Prepare, issue, and manage a federally funded subaward competitive solicitation, establish criteria and panels for evaluation, and select subawards that address priorities as described in Section I.B;
- ii. Seek subaward projects in the Gulf of Mexico watershed that meet Farmer to Farmer objectives focused on underserved farmers AND are consistent with state nutrient reduction strategies and/or other regional resource management documents. *Include a sentence briefly stating how your project supports EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds*
- iii. Manage and monitor subawards for successful completion of projects, and ensure subawardees comply with quality assurance, financial, and reporting requirements;

NOTE: Subawardees MUST directly collaborate with farmers from underserved communities or underserved producers. Each of these is defined in the following links. For a definition of underserved communities, please

see the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). For a definition of underserved producers, please see the USDA definition found [here](#).

Environmental Results. The following items should be included in this section.

- Describe anticipated outputs and outcomes (qualitative and quantitative) for the recipient organization and where practicable for the subawards.
- Describe how you will qualitatively and quantitatively measure and track the environmental results from subaward projects and report those results (outputs and outcomes) to EPA.

Milestone Schedule. Provide a milestone schedule that covers each year of the total project period requested (up to five years for the cooperative agreement) and provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks. The milestone schedule should show timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks including, but not limited to, major annual outreach activities, release of the subaward competition, and the approximate time of award of the subawards. Include an approach to ensure that 1) subaward projects are completed in sufficient time to allow the cooperative agreement recipient to aggregate results, lessons learned and ensure subawardees have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs and 2) awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow acceptance of the award by the successful applicant. This must include a detailed table.

Transferability of Results and Dissemination to Public. Describe your plan to transfer results to similar projects and disseminate to public, including:

- Gather and share information and lessons learned from the project(s) to include an annual webinar/meeting to share results from the proposed subaward projects among 1) subawardees 2) farmer to farmer and 3) with EPA;
- Transfer the documentation/information/data/results/recommendations to partners and stakeholders (at the applicable watershed scale) in a timely manner;
- Guarantee the effective communication of the EPA funded program's contributions, achievements, and funding sources in the local communities that receive funding under the grant

Technical Support. Describe how your organization will provide technical support to subawardees. Technical support should include a description of how your organization will ensure QAPPs submitted by subawardees meet EPA requirements but could also include other forms of technical expertise, facility and/or specialized equipment usage.

Programmatic Capability.

- **Organizational Experience.** Provide a description of the applicant's organization and experience related to the proposed project, and the organization's infrastructure as it relates to its ability to support subawardees and successfully implement the proposed project and demonstrate that the applicant has the skill and experience in working with and supporting multiple management agencies, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholder collaborative efforts (including in underserved communities)
- **Staff expertise/qualifications.** Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their expertise/qualifications and knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them to successfully achieve the goals of the project. Annotated resumes of applicant's key staff are also encouraged and are not included in the page limit.

Past Performance.

Submit a list of federally or non-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 3 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and:

- describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements,
- describe 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

Note: In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may 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 you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, 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.

Detailed Budget Narrative. Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each workplan component/task. This section provides an opportunity for narrative description of costs not easily understandable in the budget table or that require additional information. Common examples where this is necessary are: 1) description of the roles and responsibilities of personnel, 2) description of what supplies will be used for, 3) description of why the purchase of equipment is preferable to rental of equipment 4) providing contract details such as whether it will be sole source or competed and why that choice was made; and 5) description of activities of a Subawardee, etc. All subaward funding should be located under the “other” cost category. Applicants can refer to this guidance on budget development <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02>.

**Describe each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine cost-effectiveness, reasonableness and allowability of costs. Cost-effectiveness will consider the organizational overhead (indirect costs), direct costs and ability to control costs versus anticipated results of services and should show that the majority of the funding will go towards subawardees/conservation practices.*

Quality Assurance (not counted in page limit): If you or a Subawardee plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how you will comply with the Quality Assurance requirements (see [Section VIII.A, QUALITY ASSURANCE](#), of this announcement for additional information).

BUDGET TABLE

A budget table must be provided that identifies major costs associated with the application in an easily understandable format. Where possible, the budget table should link expenses to tasks and deliverables from the project description. Budget resources necessary for completing a QMP or QAPP, if applicable, sharing project information broadly, and reporting progress, should be included. ***Utilizing the suggested budget table template is strongly encouraged or you risk the possibility of information being left out by you as the applicant, or overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored.***

The fill-able template is available for download with the RFA on <https://www.grants.gov> and by following the Farmer-to-Farmer 2021 RFA announcement link at <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico>.

**Describe each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine cost-effectiveness, reasonableness and allowability of costs. Cost-effectiveness will consider the organizational overhead (indirect costs), direct costs and ability to control costs versus anticipated results of services and should show that the majority of the funding will go*

towards subawardees/conservation practices.

Other Attachments: The additional attachments (Other Attachment Forms 6-9) are not part of the Narrative Proposal and are not included in the 12-page limit.

Notification: All applicants will be contacted following selections to tell them whether or not they have been selected.

Information provided to EPA: Before applying for an award, applicants should be aware that under Public Law No. 105-277, data produced under an award, and any information provided to EPA, is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Communications: See: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses> for general provisions regarding communications with applicants. EPA will hold a webinar on January 6, 2022 to provide additional guidance in developing your application. A Q&A and common errors document can be found by following the Gulf of Mexico Historically Underserved Farmer to Farmer Grants Program link here: <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico>. Any questions you have after reading the Q&A and the common errors document should be submitted to gmp-rfp@epa.gov. EPA will respond to questions received through January 28, 2022 but cannot guarantee that it will respond to questions received thereafter.

Submission Date and Times: The closing date and time for submission of applications is **February 4, 2022, 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time (ET)**. Applications submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

IV.E. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated Into RFA

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to confidential business information, contracts and subawards under grants, and proposal assistance and communications, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Application Review: Applications meeting the threshold eligibility criteria in Sec. III.D will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth below. Applicants should explicitly address these criteria as part of their application package submittal and should follow the Project Narrative Format [here](#). If not, you risk the possibility of information being left out by you as the applicant or overlooked or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored. Each application will be rated under a points system, with a total of 110 points possible.

Applicants will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they address the criteria; the failure to provide applicable information in the application may affect the score assigned for a criterion.

V.A. Evaluation Criteria

Project Approach (30 points)	Applications will be evaluated based on the completeness and strength to which the project narrative demonstrates the applicant's ability to:
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	<p>A. Prepare, issue, and manage a federally funded subaward competitive solicitation and program, establish criteria and panels for evaluation, and select subaward projects that address environmental issues in the Gulf of Mexico watershed (10 points)</p> <p>B. Demonstrate their intent to seek subaward projects in the Gulf of Mexico watershed that meet Farmer to Farmer objectives focused on underserved farmers AND are consistent with state nutrient reduction strategies and/or other regional resource management documents. This must include a brief description of how the project supports <i>EPA Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds</i> (10 points)</p> <p>C. Manage and monitor subawards for timely and successful completion of projects and ensure subawardees comply with quality assurance, financial and reporting requirements (10 points)</p> <p>NOTE: Subawardees MUST directly collaborate with farmers from underserved communities or underserved producers. Each of these is defined in the following links. For a definition of underserved communities, please see the Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. For a definition of underserved producers, please see the USDA definition found here.</p> <p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section</p>
<p>Environmental Results (20 points)</p>	<p>Applicants will be evaluated based on the completeness and strength to which the application demonstrates:</p> <p>1) anticipated environmental results (outputs and outcomes) for the recipient organization and where practicable for the subawards (10 points) and</p> <p>2) a sound plan for qualitatively and quantitatively measuring and tracking the environmental results from subaward projects and report outputs and outcomes to EPA (10 points)</p> <p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.</p>
<p>Milestone Schedule (10 points)</p>	<p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate a clearly articulated milestone schedule for project tasks including, but not limited to, major annual outreach activities, release of the subaward competitive solicitation, and the approximate time of award of the subawards, and a clearly articulated approach to ensure that 1) subaward projects are completed in sufficient time to allow the cooperative agreement recipient to aggregate results, lessons learned and ensure subawardees have been reimbursed for eligible incurred costs and 2) awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. This must include a detailed table.</p> <p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.</p>
<p>Transferability of Results and Dissemination to Public (10 points)</p>	<p>The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the project workplan includes a plan to communicate the results of the project. This includes evaluating the applicants plan for information sharing (Farmer to Farmer, among subawardees and with EPA), data collection and assessment and providing information to partners and stakeholders.</p>

	<p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.</p>
Technical Support (5 Points)	<p>The extent and quality of the approach to provide technical support to subawardees, including ensuring QAPPs submitted by subawardees meet EPA requirements. This may also include technical expertise, facility and/or specialized equipment usage.</p> <p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.</p>
Programmatic Capability (15 points)	<p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant’s ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <p>A. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to support subawardees and successfully implement the project and demonstrate that the applicant has the skill and experience in working with and supporting multiple management agencies, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholder collaborative efforts (including in underserved communities) (10 points)</p> <p>B. Staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. (5 points)</p> <p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.</p>
Past Performance (5 points)	<p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their organization’s ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their past performance in successfully:</p> <p>(i) completing and managing the assistance agreements and</p> <p>(ii) meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. If such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported why not.</p> <p>Note: This section of the application should list up to three federally or non-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 3 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements)</p> <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under items i and ii of this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may 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). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors. <i>If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.</i></p> <p>Applicants should refer here for information to include in this section.</p>
Budget (15 points)	<p>Applications will be evaluated based on the reasonableness, necessity, allowability (of costs) and cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget. Cost-effectiveness will</p>

	<p><i>consider the organizational overhead (indirect costs), direct costs and ability to control costs versus anticipated results of services and should show that the majority of the funding will go towards subawardees/conservation practices.</i> This section will be evaluated by reviewing two items: 1) budget table and 2) budget narrative (located within the project narrative workplan). The budget table should be easy to understand and link the expenses to the tasks and deliverables from the project workplan. The budget narrative should be used to provide a description of costs not easily understandable in the budget table.</p> <p><i>Utilizing the suggested budget table template is strongly encouraged or you risk the possibility of information being left out by you as the applicant, or overlooked, or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored.</i></p> <p>Applicants should refer here and here for information to include in Budget.</p>
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V.B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold eligibility criteria listed in [III.D](#). Only those applications which meet all of the threshold eligibility criteria will be considered using the evaluation criteria listed above. Eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria above by review panels composed of federal agency staff. There may be separate review panels based on geographic location, areas of focus and/or funding level requested. Review panels will rank the applications based on the criteria above and develop preliminary funding recommendations for presentation to the selection official(s). Information pertaining to proposed recommendations may be shared with appropriate governmental departments or agencies before selections are made in order to determine whether potential selections (a) are expected to be funded by another funding source or (b) could be affected by permitting or regulatory issues.

V.C. Other Factors

Final funding decisions for each funding opportunity will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decisions, the selection official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider the following factors: any duplicate funding issues; the amount of the organization’s unliquidated obligations on previous GMD grants; program priorities; funding availability; appropriate balances of geographic and jurisdictional distribution of projects; and organizational diversity in terms of applicant type selected to receive awards (e.g., local government, state agency, Indian Tribe, college and university, other not for profit entity) in order to help ensure a broad representation of entity types receiving awards to promote program effectiveness.

Any final selections made out of rank order must be documented and justified based on the factors listed above. Once selections have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA approving and awarding official.

V.D. Additional Provisions for Applications Incorporated by Reference

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation including the clause on Reporting and Use of Information Concerning Recipient Integrity and Performance can be found on the [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#) page. These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

VI. A. Award Notices and Status

Following evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status, as follows:

1. EPA anticipates notification to *unsuccessful* applicants will be made via email to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application.
2. EPA anticipates that notification to successful applicants will be made via email within 60 days of the closing date of this RFA. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Region 4 Grants Management Division. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., work plan), which must be approved by EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. 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 Requirement

The successful applicants will be required to adhere to federal grants requirements, particularly those found in applicable Cost Principles (2 C.F.R. § 200 Subpart E), Administrative Requirements (2 C.F.R. § 200 and 1500), and Audit Requirements (A-133). This includes government-wide requirements pertaining to accounting standards, lobbying, minority or woman business enterprise, publication, meetings, construction, and disposition of property. Additional EPA regulations are codified in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations. A listing and description of general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/policy-regulations-and-guidance-epa-grants>.

VI.C. Reporting Requirements

Applicants selected for funding shall provide progress reports addressing financial and work progress. Special conditions requiring quarterly progress reporting and a detailed final technical report, will be added to awards. Applicants should budget time and resources for these activities.

VI.D. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated Into RFA

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to DUNS, SAM, copyrights, disputes, and administrative capability, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants must review them when preparing proposals for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these

provisions electronically at the website above, please communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

VII: AGENCY CONTACT

For administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact Rachel Houge via email at gmp-rfp@epa.gov. All questions must be received in writing via email with the reference line referring to this RFA (Re: RFA EPA-GM-Farmer-2021). Please review the Q&A, and the helpful hints for developing an application, posted at www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico before submitting questions. Q&A will be updated weekly if new questions are received. EPA will respond to questions received through January 28, 2022 but cannot guarantee that it will respond to questions received thereafter.

VIII: OTHER INFORMATION

VIII.A. Quality Assurance

Assistance agreements that involve environmental information and that are expected to exceed \$200,000 (in federal funding) at solicitation issuance or award shall develop a written Quality Assurance (QA) system commensurate with the degree of confidence needed for environmentally related data operations as defined in 2 CFR 1500.12. Environmental information is defined as data and information that describe environmental processes or conditions which support EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment. Environmental information includes but is not limited to data from direct measurements or analytical testing results; data produced from environmental modeling; and data compiled from other sources such as databases or literature.

Prior to collecting environmental information, the recipient must develop and implement QA procedures, specifications, and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives through a Quality Management Plan (QMP), a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and/or another agreed upon QA document such as a combined QMP/QAPP. A QMP is an organization-specific document that describes the quality control, policies, qualifications, and procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating work and may apply to multiple projects. A QAPP is a project-specific planning document that describes comprehensive details about the QA requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure the project objectives are met and are of sufficient and known quality. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R2: EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans, and the QAPP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R-5: EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans. EPA can assist successful applicants in determining which QA document(s) is required for the proposed project. The recipient shall ensure that subawards involving environmental information issued under this agreement include appropriate quality requirements for the work. The recipient shall ensure those sub-award recipients develop and implement QA planning document[s] in accordance with EPA Quality policy and terms and conditions of the award. The QMP and/or QAPP must be approved by EPA at least 30 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process.

Organizations may be granted an exception or modification to the QMP requirement if they meet certain criteria, which may include but is not limited to one-time, short-term, and special projects or projects of limited scope; and/or organizations generating, collecting, compiling, and/or using environmental data for public education purposes.

EPA Requirements for QMPs and QAPPs can be found here: <http://www2.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial>.

See Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS for Agency Contact information for referral to an EPA QA staff.

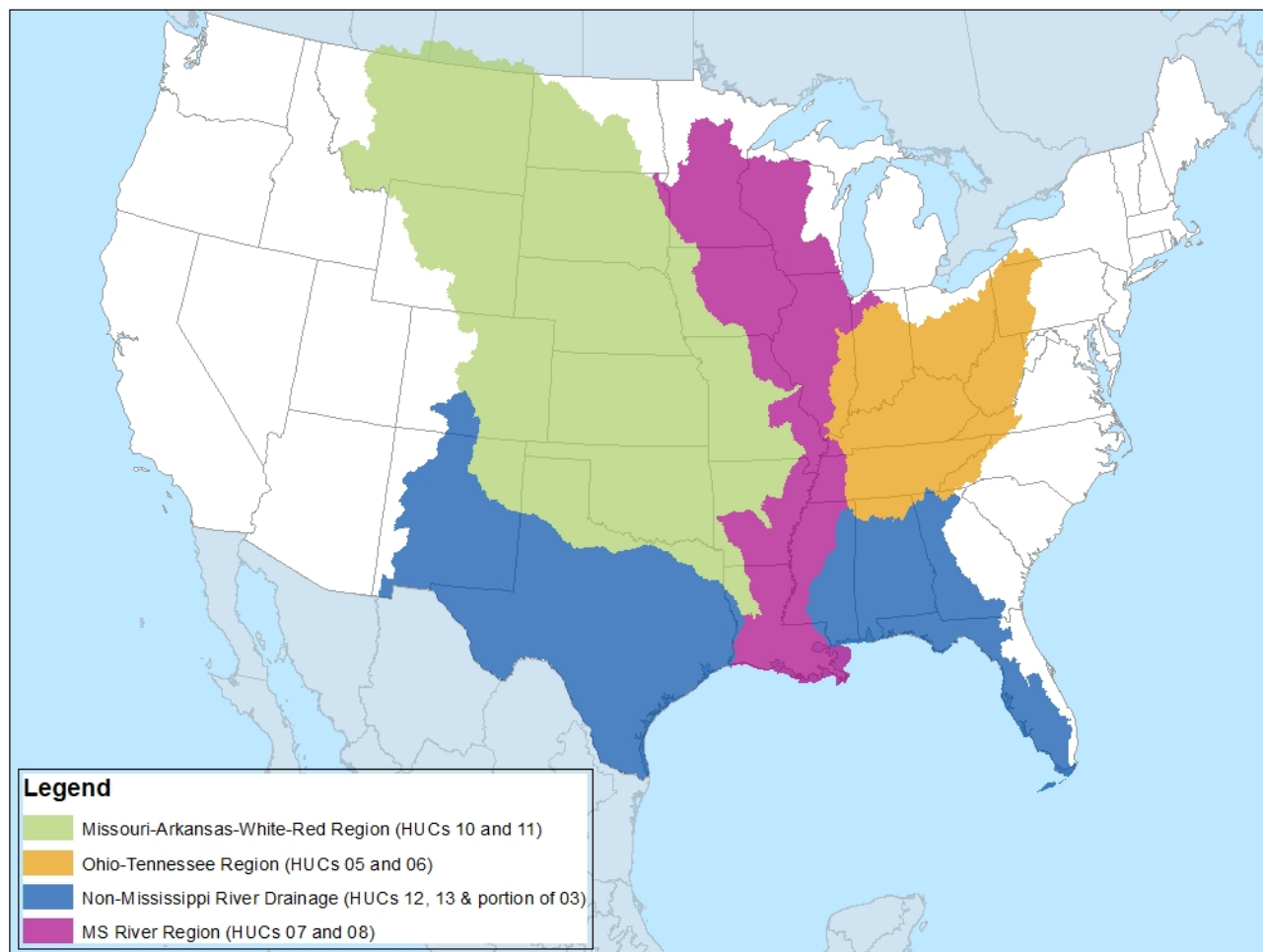
VIII.B. Water Quality Exchange

If WQ data are generated, either directly or by subaward, the successful applicant must ensure all WQ data are transmitted into the Agency's Data Warehouse annually or by project completion using the Water Quality Exchange (WQX) in accordance with an EPA approved QAPP. WQ data that are appropriate include physical, chemical, and biological sample results for water, sediment and fish tissue. The data include toxicity data, microbiological data, and the metrics and indices generated from biological and habitat data. WQX is an online tool for EPA data partners to upload and share data with EPA and the public. WQ data collected using continuous monitors, either by the recipient or by subaward, are not required to be transmitted into the EPA Data Warehouse. More information about WQX including tutorials, can be found at www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-wqx.

Appendix A. Helpful Links

- A. For assistance in filling out forms, please see the Common Errors document found on [EPA's Gulf of Mexico Division website](#). Follow the Healthy and Resilient Gulf of Mexico 2021 RFA Announcement for the document and other RFA information.
- B. For EPA Grants Award Process Webinars and other grants information, please follow this [link](#).
- C. For EPA guidance on budget development, please follow this [link](#).

Appendix B. Geographic Location Map and Assigned Two Digit HUCs



HUC2	Name
03*	South Atlantic-Gulf Region*
05	Ohio Region
06	Tennessee Region
07	Upper Mississippi Region
08	Lower Mississippi Region
10**	Missouri Region**
11	Arkansas-White-Red Region
12	Texas Region
13**	Rio Grande Region**

*portions that flow to the Gulf of Mexico

**portions within the United States

