

**Federal Agency Name:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Water, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Program

**Announcement Type:** Request for Applications (RFA)

**Funding Opportunity Number:** EPA-OW-OGWDW-23-01

**Assistance Listing Number:** 66.448

**Dates:** The closing date and time for receipt of application submissions is **November 6, 2023, 11:59 PM, Eastern Time, in order to be considered for funding.** Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov ([Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)) no later than **11:59 PM, Eastern Time, November 6, 2023, in order to be considered for funding.** Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency contact identified in Section VII by **11:59PM, Eastern Time, October 16, 2023.** Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at: <https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/drinking-water-system-infrastructure-resilience-and-sustainability>. Please note that answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) are also available on this [website](#). EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

**Note to Applicants:** Following EPA's evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. If you name sub-awardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s) including individual consultants in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at <http://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>. EPA awards funds to one eligible applicant as the recipient even if other eligible applicants are named as partners, co-applicants, or members of a coalition or consortium. The award recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds and adherence to the competition requirements.

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## **Section I. Funding Opportunity Description**

### **A. Overview**

Investing in infrastructure projects that increase the resiliency of drinking water systems to natural hazards, including extreme weather events, enhances the ability of a community water system to prepare for and withstand the effects of climate change. This grant funding will increase the sustainability of many drinking water systems throughout the country, ensuring that clean water is accessible to all.

The nation has made significant progress in addressing environmental and public health needs over the past fifty years, but more remains to be done. At the same time, the cost of facilities, programs, services, and activities needed to meet environmental challenges continues to grow. Many communities with significant drinking water system technical, managerial, and financial capacity needs have not been able to access federal funding and financing programs to address these concerns. EPA recognizes that existing environmental gains cannot be preserved, nor further progress achieved, unless tribes, state and local governments, utilities, and non-governmental organizations have the resources to develop and sustain water infrastructure and to pay for the growing costs of protecting the environment and public health.

As EPA looks to support continued environmental progress, we are mindful that many communities have never been able to access safe and reliable infrastructure, and many communities are already dealing with the impacts of climate change. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing stressors that impact public health, degrade the quality of our waterways, and destabilize the critical water infrastructure we rely upon. Disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable to these impacts. Vulnerable populations include low-income communities and communities of color, children, elderly, Indigenous people, and tribes.

Through this Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability grant program as established under the America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA), P.L. 115-270 (Oct. 23, 2018), which amended Section 1459A of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)(42 U.S.C. 300j-19a), EPA seeks to support small communities, at the drinking water system level, with this funding to overcome challenges caused by operational, environmental, and financial resource issues they face. The Agency also seeks to maximize the impact of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Public Law 117-58, also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), signed in November 2021. BIL is a historic opportunity to upgrade environmental infrastructure, particularly in underserved and disadvantaged communities, including tribes, across our nation. BIL provides the largest federal investment in water in the history of our nation. It includes over \$50 billion in water infrastructure investments, most of which will be available through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) programs. BIL also includes more than \$5 billion for Superfund and brownfields clean-up work and \$5 billion for decarbonizing our nation's school buses. Drinking water systems in disadvantaged, underserved, and small communities will need support to identify and employ sustainable, enduring infrastructure and operational solutions. EPA, in partnership with the states and other key stakeholders, is committed to offering support to help

more drinking water systems in disadvantaged and/or small communities identify needs, plan for capital improvements, and apply for available funding.

With this funding opportunity, EPA will carry out its mission of protecting human health and the environment by ensuring that grantees will provide resources to reach the drinking water systems in communities who need them most. Through this work, disadvantaged, underserved, and small communities will have an additional opportunity to access the resources necessary to withstand the effects of climate change.

The Agency's priorities include maximizing funds to provide significant benefit to drinking water systems in communities of need, tackling the climate crisis, and advancing environmental justice and equity. EPA believes this funding plays a significant role to ensure continued access to resources to support infrastructure improvements that protect public health, safeguard the environment, and mitigate environmental justice concerns at the public water system level.

## **B. Program Goals and Objectives**

EPA is soliciting applications from eligible entities for projects in underserved communities that are disadvantaged or serve a population of less than 10,000 individuals to increase drinking water system resilience to natural hazards as described in Assistance Listing 66.448. For the purposes of this grant program, the term "resilience," as defined in (SDWA section 1433(h) and incorporated by reference in SDWA section 1459A, means the ability of a community water system or an asset of a community water system, for example the equipment, buildings, land, people, and other components needed to deliver safe and clean water, to adapt to or withstand the effects of a natural hazard without interruption to the corresponding function, or if the function is interrupted, to rapidly return to a normal operating condition. For the purposes of this grant program, the term "natural hazard" means a natural event, such as an earthquake, tornado, flood, hurricane, wildfire, drought, freezing or hydrologic change that threatens the functioning of a community water system, as defined in Section 1433(h) of the SDWA and incorporated by reference in section 1459A. When considering these natural disaster threats, a public water system may take into account risks associated with climate change to ensure that resilience-building activities address future conditions such as increasing or decreasing temperatures, changes in precipitation, and, where applicable, sea-level rise. The goal of the first National Priority Area is to increase drinking water system resilience by implementing smaller-scale resilience projects informed by drinking water system plans. The goal of the second National Priority Area is to improve drinking water system resilience through large-scale infrastructure improvements and/or optimization of mitigation measures at a drinking water system.

Consistent with Section 1459A(d) of the SDWA, projects must occur in one or more underserved communities. For the purposes of this grant program and RFA, an underserved community is defined by Section 1459A(a) of the SDWA as one that does not have access to household drinking water or wastewater services or is served by a public water system that violates or exceeds a requirement of a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR), including a maximum contaminant level, a treatment technique, or action level. The NPDWRs are legally enforceable primary standards and treatment techniques that apply to public water systems. Information on the NPDWRs is available at <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/national-primary-drinking-water-regulations>.

In addition, consistent with Section 1459A(c) of the SDWA, projects must also occur in disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals. Each state establishes affordability criteria under Section 1452(d)(3) of the SDWA, and a disadvantaged community is defined in that section of SDWA as “the service area of a public water system that meets affordability criteria established after public review and comment by the State in which the public water system is located.” More information about a state’s affordability criteria can be found in a state’s most current final Intended Use Plan or by contacting the state Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program; state contact information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/dwsrf/state-dwsrf-website-and-contacts>.

Communities across the country face the challenge of aging or inadequate drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. Many marginalized, underserved, or Tribal communities lack crucial access to clean and safe water and are challenged with vulnerable drinking water infrastructures. The COVID-19 pandemic, cyber-attacks, and climate change have compounded these challenges and heightened the urgency to reinvest in water infrastructure (i.e., gray and green infrastructure, or natural systems such as wetlands). EPA’s current priorities include protecting public health, ensuring and advancing environmental justice and equity, and revitalizing communities while implementing the SDWA. Additionally, with the passing of the BIL in November of 2021, EPA prioritized the objectives of the 2021 IIJA, which include supporting disadvantaged and underserved communities and advancing climate resilience.

EPA is committed to investing in water infrastructure improvements to address these challenges so that all communities have access to clean and safe drinking water. Applications that support environmental justice goals can include projects that benefit an underserved, small and disadvantaged community(ies) and support the Justice40 Initiative. With respect to this RFA, the benefits as described under Justice40 include actions that support or aid improvements to communities experiencing disproportionate drinking water access and affordability environmental stressors. More information on the Justice40 initiative is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2021/07/20/the-path-to-achieving-justice40/>.

The total estimated amount of federal funding potentially available under this announcement is approximately \$19,000,000 depending on the quality of applications received and other applicable considerations. It is anticipated that a total of twelve to twenty-five assistance agreements, each with a project period of up to four years, will be awarded under this announcement. For this funding cycle, EPA is applying an adjustment waiver to all grant applicants of the statutory 10 percent cost share to increase access to this funding opportunity to eligible groups. (See III.B of this announcement for information on the waiver of the minimum non-federal 10 percent cost-share/match requirement.)

EPA expects that successful applicants will demonstrate in the application an ability and readiness to proceed expeditiously upon award. Eligible activities for funding include planning, design, construction, implementation, operation, or maintenance of a program or project that increases drinking water system resilience to natural hazards, as discussed in further detail below. All applications must include programs or projects that increase the resilience to natural hazards of public water systems in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals. The two National Priority Areas

support the EPA's Strategic Plan, available at <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>. The activities to be funded under this announcement support the Agency's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan, Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure.

As discussed in Section I.F, the statutory authority for the awards expected to be made under this announcement is Section 1459A(l) of the SDWA.

### **C. National Priority Areas**

Each application submitted under this announcement must address one, and only one, of the National Priority Areas described below. Applicants may submit more than one application package under this announcement as long as each one is separately submitted and addresses only **one** National Priority Area. The cover page of each application package must clearly indicate the National Priority Area addressed in the application. If an applicant submits an application addressing more than one National Priority Area, it will be rejected.

Regardless of which National Priority Area is being applied to, applications submitted under this announcement must address at least one of the activities described below. The cover page of the application package must clearly indicate the activities being proposed for funding in the application.

As prescribed by the statutory requirements, funding must be used for the planning, design, construction, implementation, operation, or maintenance of a program or project that increases resilience of public water systems to natural hazards through:

- Conservation of water or the enhancement of water use efficiency (e.g., conducting water audits, installing water metering, and water reuse).
- Modification or relocation of existing drinking water system infrastructure significantly impaired by natural hazards, or infrastructure that is at risk of being significantly impaired by natural hazards, including risks to drinking water infrastructure from flooding (e.g., elevation of electrical panels at a lift station to prevent flooding damage, physical hardening, elevation of treatment plants, and reinforcement of water towers to prevent tornado damage).
- Design or construction of desalination facilities to serve existing communities.
- Enhancement of water supply through watershed management and source water protection (e.g., developing and implementing watershed plans, conducting source water assessments, and public education).
- Enhancement of energy efficiency or the use and generation of renewable energy in the conveyance or treatment of drinking water (e.g., energy use monitoring and energy audits, technology upgrades, and the installation of solar, wind, or geothermal systems to generate power).
- Measures to increase the resilience of the drinking water system to natural hazards, including planning for analytical considerations and climate change (e.g., infrastructure improvements,

larger capacity water storage tanks, relocation or deepening of wells, updating climate change risk and resilience assessments, and improving emergency response plans based on the findings of a risk and resilience assessment pursuant to Section 1433 of SDWA, as amended by the [America's Water Infrastructure Act](#), conducting exercises to assess resilience and refinement of plans, and conducting or participating in training to take advantage of available tools and resources to enhance resilience).

To obtain necessary support for the anticipated resiliency projects in a community, public education and outreach about the effects of natural hazards and climate change on the access to and availability of safe drinking water is critical, especially in communities historically in need. It is also important for the grantee to inform the community members about drinking water resiliency projects prior to the start of the project and provide updates as the project proceeds. All applications should describe the proposed approach to provide public education and conduct outreach, and include the costs required to fulfill these activities.

### **National Priority Area 1: Small-Scale Investments to Help Drinking Water Systems Implement Resilience Measures**

Under this National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications for small-scale resiliency-related projects that enable drinking water systems to implement measures to improve resiliency. EPA anticipates awarding approximately ten to twenty assistance agreements under this National Priority Area, ranging from approximately \$285,000 to no more than \$570,000. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards under this priority area will be approximately \$5,700,000 in federal funds, with project periods of one to four years, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

### **National Priority Area 2: Large-Scale Infrastructure Improvements to Enhance Drinking Water System Resilience**

Under this National Priority Area, EPA is soliciting applications for large-scale resiliency-related infrastructure improvements and/or optimization of mitigation measures at a drinking water system. EPA anticipates awarding approximately two to five assistance agreements under this National Priority Area ranging from approximately \$2,660,000 to no more than \$6,650,000. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards under this priority area will be approximately \$13,300,000 in federal funds, with project periods of one to four years, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

### **Examples of Eligible Activities for both National Priority Areas**

Examples of eligible activities under various types of natural hazards include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **Multiple Threats**

- Training and exercising an emergency response plan;
- Training operators and maintenance/repair staff to prevent contamination;
- Developing or updating continuity of operations plans;

- Measures to address power outages (e.g., defining power needs for key assets, purchasing a backup power generator, and securing generators against hazard activity);
- Measures to reinforce incoming power supply and plan or establish alternate or on-site power supply;
- Design or construction of a desalination facility;
- Development of water conservation plans, tools, and resources; and
- Source water protection planning.

#### Flooding

- Physical hardening (e.g., waterproofing electrical components, dry floodproofing/sealing of structures to prevent floodwater penetration, installing wind resistant features);
- Installation of flap valves on low-lying overflow pipes to protect finished water;
- Securing or elevating chemical/air tanks to prevent floating and content release;
- Elevating, relocating or floodproofing instrumentation, electrical controls, pumps; and
- Moving assets to higher ground and developing alternative ways to access facilities.

#### Earthquake

- Performing an engineering risk analysis and cost estimates pursuant to established standards for evaluating existing structures;
- Retrofitting occupied utility buildings to prevent collapse;
- Seismically retrofitting water tanks (e.g., anchoring to foundations);
- Retrofitting pipelines to critical facilities;
- Replacing inflexible joints with flexible or ball joints on storage tanks and pumps;
- Installing buttress walls on water basins;
- Installing automatic shutoff valves on tanks; and
- Designing upper casing on wells to resist loads or locating outside of a seismic zone.

#### Drought

- Implementing a leak detection and repair program to reduce lost water;
- Interconnecting with other water systems and water reuse;
- Adding raw water storage and aquifer recharge;
- Developing a conservation program with public outreach; and
- Coordinating water usage with neighboring irrigation districts and communities.

#### Wildfire

- Instituting high fire danger procedures such as smoking bans and fire bans;
- Removing fuel sources (brush/trees) to create a buffer zone around utility infrastructure;
- Installing fire-resilient building materials;
- Modifying treatment processes for physical and chemical changes in source water caused by wildfires (e.g., sediment, disinfection byproduct precursors, harmful algal blooms);
- Installing backflow valves on service connections, fireproof concrete meter boxes, and brass meters to prevent contamination of distribution pipes; and
- Installing water lines at greater depths and upgrading to hardened materials.



## Tornado

- Designing new facilities, control rooms and offices to withstand high winds;
- Reinforcing water tower legs and welds;
- Removing sources of potential flying debris and bolting down chemical tanks; and
- Securing and anchoring any trailers or temporary structures.

## Climate Change

- Preparation of climate risk assessments, climate projection mapping;
- Implementation of inclement weather or water system disruption communications alert system; and
- Developing a climate adaptation, mitigation, or resiliency plan.

EPA's [Hazard Mitigation Guide for Natural Disasters for Water and Wastewater Utilities](#) is a useful resource for identifying a range of practical examples of mitigation projects to address the impacts of earthquakes, tornados, floods, drought, wildfires and power outages. In addition, EPA's [Adaptation Actions for Water Utilities](#) is a useful resource for identifying adaptation strategies to address anticipated current and future climate threats.

All eligible applicants must describe in their application the approach for increasing drinking water system resilience to natural hazards in an underserved community and community that is a disadvantaged community or a community with a population of less than 10,000 individuals.

Applicants must also include in their application the following:

- Description of the natural hazard risk(s) to be addressed by the proposed program or project.
- Documentation prepared by a Federal, State, regional, or local government agency of the natural hazard risk to the area where the proposed program or project is to be located (e.g., evidence of a disaster declaration, local government hazard mitigation planning document, Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, FEMA flood map, or USGS earthquake hazard map).
- Description, including date(s), of any recent natural hazard events, if applicable, that have affected the water system. Applicants that have not experienced a recent natural hazard event must indicate that in the application and may describe their assessment of potential future risks of natural hazard events.
- Description of how the proposed program or project would improve the performance of the public water system under the anticipated natural hazards.
- Explanation of how the proposed program or project is expected to enhance the resilience of the system to the anticipated natural hazards.

All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V. EPA anticipates awarding approximately twelve to twenty-five assistance agreements under this announcement, ranging from approximately \$285,000 to no more \$570,000 in federal funds for National Priority



Area 1 and, from approximately \$2,660,000 to no more than \$6,650,000 in federal funds for National Priority Area 2. It is anticipated that the total amount of all awards will be approximately \$19,000,000, with project periods of one to four years, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

#### **D. Expeditious Project Readiness to Proceed**

Applications for projects described above must demonstrate the applicant's ability and readiness to proceed expeditiously upon receiving an award. Applicants should describe past and current practices being implemented to increase the resilience to natural hazards of public water systems (such as public education and outreach on source water protection, existing or updated emergency response plans, or plans for the modification of existing drinking water system infrastructure). Applicants should include a description of the completed project planning and design phases if relevant. For applications with construction activities, applications must demonstrate that all required permits and approvals from the appropriate authority have been obtained. Applicants are required to provide any land, easements, rights-of-way, and relocations necessary to carry out the project or activity.

Supporting documentation demonstrating this readiness to proceed, such as easements and any legal agreements to complete the project, may be submitted as referenced in Section IV of the solicitation. These documents are not subject to the 15-page limitation under the Project Narrative. Please note the "Expeditious Project Readiness to Proceed" evaluation criteria in Section V.

#### **E. EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Environmental Results**

Applicants must demonstrate in their application how their project and proposed activities link to the Strategic Plan Goal and Objective identified below. This announcement is consistent with EPA's priority to increase drinking water system resilience to natural hazards.

The projects to be funded under this solicitation support EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this solicitation will support Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure, of the Strategic Plan. (available at: <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>)

EPA also requires that grant applicants 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>). All proposed projects must address the Strategic Plan Goal 5, Objective 5.1 and 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 overall protection of human health and the environment by ensuring safe drinking water. Outputs and outcomes should directly address the goal of increasing resilience to natural hazards of drinking water systems in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of fewer than 10,000 individuals.

## **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 funding period. Examples of anticipated environmental outputs from the grants expected to be awarded under this announcement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Improved resiliency planning and preparedness of a drinking water system in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals, as measured by the development of an emergency response plan.
- An increased number of customers in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals with information about drinking water conservation measures, achieved through outreach and public education.
- Increased water use efficiency in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals, as evidenced by the number of leaks detected and repaired.
- An increase of benefits including improving public health and environmental protection while creating jobs, collaborating with community partners, and setting the stage for long-term drinking water improvement.

## **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. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature. Outcomes should be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within an assistance agreement funding period. Outcomes may be short-term (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (changes in condition of the natural resource). Examples of anticipated outcomes from grants expected to be awarded under this announcement, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Number of underserved communities (included as disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals) that improve reliability and resiliency of drinking water sources.
- Decrease in average water usage rates indicating enhanced sustainability and effective use of water resources due to implementation of water reuse measures.
- Percentage decrease in operation and maintenance costs of a public water system in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals due to more energy-efficient water production.
- Number of customers with increased access to drinking water services; acreage of expanded flood control and water supply infrastructure; and quantity of improved water strategies that impact affected community(ies), especially during water-and climate-related events.

As part of the Project Narrative, an applicant will be required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to the Agency's Strategic Plan and to the goal of enabling drinking water systems in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population

of less than 10,000 individuals to increase their drinking water system resilience to natural hazards. In addition, applicants will have to describe their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes. Additional information regarding EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements> (see EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements).

#### **F. Statutory Authority**

The statutory authority for the awards expected to be made under this announcement is Section 1459A(l) of the SDWA, as amended, which authorizes EPA to provide grants to assist underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals to increase their drinking water system resilience to natural hazards.

#### **G. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation**

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

### **Section II. Award Information**

#### **A. Amount of Funding**

The total amount of federal funding potentially available under this announcement is approximately \$19,000,000 of combined funding from fiscal years 2020 to 2023, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. It is anticipated that approximately ten to twenty assistance agreements will be awarded in National Priority Area 1 and two to five assistance agreements will be awarded in National Priority Areas 2, as described in Section I.C of this announcement. It is anticipated that awards made under National Priority Area 1 will total approximately \$5,700,000 in federal funds; awards made under National Priority Area 2 will total approximately \$13,300,000 in federal funds. Assistance agreements funded under this announcement will have one- to four-year project periods. See Section I for more information on award ranges for each National Priority Area.

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.

EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than anticipated. The anticipated award amounts and the relative allocations for the two priorities are approximations that are subject to change based on a number of considerations including, but not limited to, the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, and funding

availability. EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards under each priority, or change the ratio of assistance agreements it awards among the priorities. In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

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

## **B. Type of Funding**

Successful applicant(s) will be issued a grant or 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 recipient's performance of the project. EPA will negotiate the precise terms and conditions of "substantial involvement" as part of the award process. Federal involvement may include close monitoring of the recipient's performance, collaboration during the performance of the scope of work in accordance with 2 CFR §200.317 and 2 CFR §200.318, as appropriate, review of proposed procurements, reviewing qualifications of key personnel, and/or review and comment on the content of printed or electronic publications prepared. EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.

## **Section III. Eligibility Information**

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

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Based on Section 1459A of the SDWA, eligible applicants under this competition include the following:

(1)

- a public water system;
- a water system located in an area governed by an Indian Tribe;<sup>1</sup> or
- a State, on behalf of an underserved community;<sup>2</sup>

**and**

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Indian Tribe" as defined in Section 1401(14) means any Indian tribe having a Federally recognized governing body carrying out substantial governmental duties and powers over any area. For the purposes of this grant the term includes any Native village (as defined in section 3(c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1602(c))).

<sup>2</sup> The term "State" as defined in Section 1401(13)(A) of the SDWA, includes, in addition to the several States, only the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

(2) serves a community—

(A) that is underserved; **and**

(B) that, under affordability criteria established by the State under SDWA section 1452(d)(3), is determined by the State to be a disadvantaged community; or

(C) with a population of less than 10,000 individuals.

Consistent with Section 1459A(d) of the SDWA, EPA is limiting eligibility under this grant program to projects that benefit underserved communities. For the purposes of this grant program and RFA, an underserved community is defined by Section 1459A(a) of SDWA as one that does not have access to household drinking water or wastewater services or is served by a public water system that violates or exceeds a requirement of a NPDWR, including a maximum contaminant level, a treatment technique, or action level. The NPDWRs are legally enforceable primary standards and treatment techniques that apply to public water systems. Information on the NPDWRs are available at <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/national-primary-drinking-water-regulations>.

In addition, consistent with Section 1459A(c) of the SDWA, projects must also serve disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals. Each state establishes affordability criteria under Section 1452(d)(3) of the SDWA, and a disadvantaged community is defined as “the service area of a public water system that meets affordability criteria established after public review and comment by the State in which the public water system is located.” More information about a state’s affordability criteria can be found in a state’s most current final Intended Use Plan or by contacting the state Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program; state contact information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/dwsrf/state-dwsrf-website-and-contacts>.

For applicants that do not have established affordability criteria under Section 1452(d)(3) of SDWA, such as territories, to be eligible for this RFA, projects must serve underserved communities, per SDWA section 1459A(a), that are communities of less than 10,000 individuals that lack the capacity to incur debt sufficient to finance a project or activity, per SDWA section 1459A(c)(2)(B).

To be eligible applicants for this RFA, public water systems serving tribes must have projects that serve communities that meet the definition of “underserved” in SDWA section 1459A(a) and meet the definition of “small” in SDWA section 1459A(c)(2)(B) (i.e., have a population of less than 10,000 individuals and lack the capacity to incur debt sufficient to finance the project). Public water systems serving tribes do not have to serve communities that meet the criteria for disadvantaged communities in Section 1459A(c)(2)(A) to be eligible applicants for this RFA.

## **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

A non-federal cost share or match is not required. EPA is applying an adjustment waiver to all grant applicants of the statutory cost share for this RFA to increase access to this funding opportunity to eligible groups. EPA intends to exercise its discretion, as allowed for in the statute creating this grant program, to waive cost share for this RFA for all applicants. Future RFAs may require a cost share.

### **C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria**

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Sections III.A., B., and C. to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. An applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III.A of this announcement at the time of application submission.
2. Applications must address one, and only one, of the two National Priority Areas listed in Section I.C. Eligible applicants may submit more than one application under this competition as long as each one is separately submitted and addresses only one National Priority Area. Applications that address more than one National Priority Area in a single application will not be reviewed.
3. Applications for awards under National Priority Area 1 cannot exceed \$5,700,000 in federal funds; and applications for awards under National Priority Area 2 cannot exceed \$13,300,000 in federal funds. Applications exceeding the amount for the National Priority Area it addresses will be rejected.
4. Applications must address at least one program or project for increasing drinking water system resilience to natural hazards as described in Section I.C. Funding must be used for the planning, design, construction, implementation, operation, or maintenance of a program or project that increases resilience of drinking water systems to natural hazards.
5. Applications must include a description of the natural hazard risk(s) to be addressed by the proposed program or project.
6. Applications must include documentation prepared by a Federal, State, regional, or local government agency of the natural hazard risk to the area where the proposed program or project is to be located (e.g., evidence of a disaster declaration, local government planning document, flood map, or earthquake hazard map).
7. Applications must include a description, including date(s), of any recent natural hazard events, if applicable, that have affected the water system. Applicants that have not experienced a recent natural hazard event must indicate that in the application.
8. Applications must include a description of how the proposed program or project would improve the performance of the public water system under the anticipated natural hazards.
9. Applications must include a description of how the proposed program or project is expected to enhance the resilience of the system to the anticipated natural hazards.
10. Applications must demonstrate that proposed projects will occur in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals as required under section SDWA Section 1459(a). Section 1459A(a) of the SDWA defines an underserved community as one that does not have

access to household drinking water or wastewater services, or is served by a public water system that violates or exceeds a requirement of a NPDWR, including a maximum contaminant level, a treatment technique, or action level. Each state establishes affordability criteria under section 1452(d)(3) of the SDWA, and a disadvantaged community is defined as “the service area of a public water system that meets affordability criteria established after public review and comment by the State in which the public water system is located.” The affordability criteria must be met for the community for which the project will be performed. Applicants must include their state’s affordability criteria and how the proposed project meets the affordability criteria. Applicants can obtain more information about their state’s affordability criteria in their state’s most current final Intended Use Plan or contacting their state Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program for more information.

11. Applications must **substantially comply** with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.E.2 with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.E.2 establishes a 15-page, single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
12. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) as stated in Section IV of this solicitation (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. Grants.gov requires an active SAM.gov registration in order to initiate the application submission process. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this solicitation to ensure that their application is timely submitted. Please note that applicants experiencing technical issues with submitting through Grants.gov should follow the instructions provided in Section IV, which include both the requirement to contact Grants.gov and email a full application to EPA prior to the deadline.
13. Applications submitted outside of Grants.gov will be deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was due to EPA mishandling or technical problems associated with Grants.gov or [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov). 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 submission outside of Grants.gov.
14. 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.

#### **Section IV. Grants.gov Submission Instructions**

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



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

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

## **B. Submission Instructions**

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

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov](#) (1) to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

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

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

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

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

### **2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions**

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

[Roles](#) and [Learning Workspace – User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

Please note that this process can take a month or more for new registrants. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through Grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the application submission deadline.

Contact [Grants.gov](#) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) to resolve technical issues with Grants.gov. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. The Grants.gov Support Center is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays.

### 3. Application Submission Process

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

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

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

### 4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](#) no later than **November 6, 2023, by 11:59 PM ET**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

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

## **C. Technical Issues with Submission**

If applicants experience technical issues during the submission of an application that they are unable to resolve, follow these procedures **before** the application deadline date:

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center **before** the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3. Send an email with <EPA-OW-OGWDW-23-01> in the subject line to [ResiliencyGrant@EPA.gov](mailto:ResiliencyGrant@EPA.gov) **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:
  - a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
  - b. Description of the issue
  - c. The entire application package in PDF format.

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

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

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

#### **D. Application Materials**

**The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:**

##### **Mandatory Documents:**

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
4. EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report
5. Project Narrative Attachment Form: Use this to submit your Project Narrative, prepared as described in Section IV.E.2.
6. Documentation prepared by a Federal, State, regional, or local government agency of the natural hazard risk to the area where the proposed program or project is to be located (Project Narrative Attachment Form) - not included in the 15-page Project Narrative page limitation

##### **Optional Documents:**

7. Other Attachments Form – Biographical Sketches
8. Other Attachments Form – Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable
9. Other Attachments Form – Supporting documentation demonstrating readiness to proceed, such as permits, easements, rights-of-way, and relocations necessary to carry out the project or activity.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact **Claudette Ojo**, at **ResiliencyGrant@epa.gov**. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

## **E. Content of Application Package Submission**

Applicants should read the following section very carefully. A complete application package must include the following documents described below.

### **1. Application Materials**

- a. **Standard Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance.** Complete the form.
- b. **SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs. Complete the form.**  
The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of the SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (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. In Section B, Budget Categories column (1) should be filled out for federal funds, column (2) should be filled out for non-federal cost- share/match if any, and column (5) should be filled out for total project cost (combined federal funds and any non-federal cost-share/match).
- c. **EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54.** Complete the form. Attach additional forms as needed.
- d. **EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.** Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- e. **Project Narrative.** See Section IV.E.2 (Project Narrative) for details on specific information that must be included. Applicants should refer to Section I.B of the announcement which provides a project description and example eligible activities.
- f. **Biographical Sketches.** Submit a biographical sketch of each major project manager, support staff member, or other major project participant (see Section IV.D).
- g. **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (if indirect costs are included in your proposed project budget). Complete this form if indirect costs are included in the proposed project budget. You must submit a copy of your organization's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as part of the application package if your proposed project budget includes indirect costs.
- h. **Supporting documentation demonstrating readiness to proceed** Submit documentation, as applicable, pertaining to the scope of planning efforts, including any permits, land, easements, rights-of-way, and relocations necessary to carry out the project or activity.
- i. **Documentation of the known natural hazard** Submit documentation prepared by a Federal, State, regional, or local government agency of the natural hazard risk to the area where the proposed program or project is to be located.

## 2. Project Narrative

**NOTE: The Project Narrative must include sections a-c below. The Project Narrative (covering sections a-c below) is limited to no more than fifteen (15) typewritten, single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the cover page and executive summary.** Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative. **Additional pages beyond the 15-page limit will not be considered.**

The following documents do not count towards the 15-page Project Narrative limitation. These include, as mentioned in Section IV.E.1, parts f. through i (*f. Biographical Sketches, g. Negotiated Indirect Rate Cost Agreement, h. Supporting documentation demonstrating readiness to proceed, and i. Supporting documentation of the known natural hazard*).

The application's Project Narrative must be typewritten and must include the information listed below. If a particular item is not applicable, clearly state this in the Project Narrative.

### a. Cover Page (included in the page limit)

1. Project title;
2. National Priority Area from Section I.B addressed in the application (**applicants must address only one National Priority Area per application package**);
3. Short 2-3 sentence description of the proposed program or project with identification of the natural hazard risk to be addressed
4. Eligible program or project from Section I.B addressed in the application;
5. Name of applicant;
6. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number); and
7. Total project cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested).

**b. Executive Summary:** Provide a brief summary of the proposed project (should not exceed one page). This should include a brief description of the proposed project and the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.

**c. Workplan:** The workplan must address the following elements:

#### 1. Project Description:

Describe your approach for increasing drinking water system resilience to natural hazards in an underserved community and community that is a disadvantaged community or a community with a population of less than 10,000 individuals, through one or more of the eligible programs or projects described in this announcement (see Sections I.B and I.C). Provide details of how the community served meets the underserved criteria and is also disadvantaged or has a population of less than 10,000 individuals. Describe the program or project to be planned, designed, constructed, implemented, operated, or maintained and the natural hazard risk to be addressed, and if there have been any recent natural hazard events that have affected the system. Explain how the project supports improving performance of the drinking water system and increasing resilience of drinking water systems to anticipated

natural hazards. Describe the approach to provide public education and conduct outreach. Describe how the proposed project supports environmental justice goals, benefits underserved, small and disadvantaged community(ies), and supports the Justice40 Initiative.

2. **Expeditious Project Readiness to Proceed:**

Demonstrate that the project will be ready to proceed expeditiously upon award of funding. Describe past and current practices being implemented to increase the resilience to natural hazards of public water systems. Describe the completed project planning and design phases if relevant. As appropriate, demonstrate that any land, easements, rights-of-way, and relocations necessary to carry out the project or activity have been obtained.

**Submission of supporting documentation demonstrating this readiness to proceed may be included as optional attachments and are not subject to the Project Narrative page limitation.**

3. **Environmental Results and Measuring Progress:**

- a. Stated Objective/Link to EPA's Strategic Plan - List the objective of the project and the linkage to EPA's Strategic Plan Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure (see Section I.D of this announcement).
- b. Results of Activities (Outputs) - Describe the anticipated products/results which are expected to be achieved from accomplishment of the project and describe an approach for tracking and reporting your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.D of this announcement).
- c. Projected Environmental Improvement (Outcomes) - List the anticipated environmental improvements that will be accomplished as a result of the project. These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment or public health which are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s) (examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.D of this announcement).

4. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period (one to four years). The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks and an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.

5. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF-424A such as "other" and "contractual." Please see [EPA's Budget Development Guidance](#) which includes a sample budget.

- a. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs and total cost. All subgrant funding should be located in the "other" cost category. Total costs must include both federal and any non-federal funds; indicate what portion of the cost will be paid by

EPA and what portion of the cost will be paid with non-federal funds, if any. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the allowability of costs for each project component/task, as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs.

**6. Programmatic Capability/Experience:**

- a. Organizational Experience - Provide a brief description of your organization and experience related to the proposed project, and your organization's infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
- b. Staff Expertise/Qualifications - Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their experience/expertise/qualifications, cultural competency, knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project, including demonstrated knowledge of state and local regulations and policies relevant to the program or project. Include an estimate of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (based on 2080 hours per year/FTE). A biographical sketch must be submitted for each major project manager, support staff member or other major project participant. Biographical sketches are not counted in the page limit. Full resumes may be included as an appendix to the application narrative and are not counted in the page limit.

- 7. Past Performance:** Briefly describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements if previously awarded) and:
- a. Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
  - b. Describe your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports.
  - c. Describe how you documented and/or reported on whether you were making progress towards achieving the expected results (i.e., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If you were not making progress, please indicate whether, and how, you documented why not.

**Note:** In evaluating an applicant's past performance, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and/or from current and prior federal agency 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 information, please indicate this in the application, and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V. **Failure to provide any programmatic past performance or reporting information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, may result in a zero score for these factors** (see also Section V).

- 8. Documentation of the known natural hazard (not included in the 15-page Project Narrative page limitation):** Submit documentation prepared by a Federal, State, regional, or local government agency of the natural hazard risk to the area where the proposed



program or project is to be located. Examples of documentation include, but are not limited to, **evidence of a disaster declaration, local government hazard mitigation planning document, FEMA flood map, Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, or USGS earthquake hazard map.** This documentation is to be submitted separately using a Project Narrative Attachment form. The documentation is not subject to the Project Narrative page limitations specified for the application.

**9. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (not included in the Project Narrative work plan page limit):**

Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) (not included in the page limit)– If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.A. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) of this announcement for additional information.)

**Note:** The applicant should also provide in the Project Narrative any additional information, to the extent not already addressed above, that addresses the selection criteria in Section V.

**d. Submission Dates and Times**

Applications submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) must be **received by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time, November 6, 2023.** Late applications will not be considered for funding.

**Section V. Application Review Information**

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

**A. Evaluation Criteria**

All eligible applications, based on the Section III threshold eligibility review, will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and weights below (100 total point scale). Points will be awarded based on how well and thoroughly each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the application package.

<b>Point Values</b>	<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>
<b>(35 points)</b>	<p><b>1) National Priority Area</b></p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for increasing drinking water system resilience to natural hazards through effectively addressing the National Priority Area in Section I.C of this announcement. In conducting this evaluation, the following factors will be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The extent and quality of the overall approach to addressing drinking water system resilience to natural hazards. (13 points)</li> <li>ii. Description of the underserved community that is also a disadvantaged community or a community with a population of less than 10,000 individuals to benefit from the proposed program or project. (5 points)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Description of the natural hazard risk(s) to be addressed by the proposed program or project, including any recent natural hazard events, if applicable, that have affected the water system. (5 points)</li> <li>iv. Description of how the proposed program or project would improve the performance of the drinking water system under the anticipated natural hazard(s). (4 points)</li> <li>v. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates plans to provide public education and conduct outreach. (4 points)</li> <li>vi. The degree to which the proposed project supports environmental justice goals to the extent the project benefits underserved, small and disadvantaged community(ies), and supports the Justice40 Initiative. (4 points)</li> </ul>
<b>(15 points)</b>	<p><b>2) Expeditious Project Readiness to Proceed</b></p> <p>Under this criterion applicants will be evaluated based on their ability, plan, and approach to proceeding expeditiously to implement the project upon award (see Section I.D of this announcement) taking into account the following factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The extent and quality to which the application describes past and current practices being implemented to increase the resilience to natural hazards of public water systems. (5 points)</li> <li>ii. The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates completion of planning and design, and securement of necessary approvals to proceed expeditiously. (10 points)</li> </ul>
<b>(10 points)</b>	<p><b>3) Environmental Results and Measuring Progress</b></p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on each of these sub-criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to EPA’s Strategic Plan described in Section I.E of this announcement. (5 points)</li> <li>ii. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section I.E of this announcement). (5 points)</li> </ul>
<b>(15 points)</b>	<p><b>4) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget</b></p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (8 points)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. The reasonableness and transparency of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy of the information provided in a detailed budget breakdown and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. Total costs include both federal and any voluntary non-federal cost-share/match components. The cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs (both federal and any voluntary non-federal cost-share/match) will also be evaluated. (7 points)</li> </ul>
<b>(15 points)</b>	<p><b>5) Programmatic Capability/Experience</b></p> <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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their organizational infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project. (8 points)</li> <li>ii. Staff expertise/qualifications, cultural competency, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. (7 points)</li> </ul>
<b>(10 points)</b>	<p><b>6) Past Performance</b></p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements). (4 points)</li> <li>ii. History of meeting reporting requirements under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements. (2 points)</li> <li>iii. The extent and quality to which the applicant adequately documented and/or reported on their progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outputs and outcomes) under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements), and if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately documented and/or reported why not. (4 points)</li> </ul>

	<p>Note: In evaluating applicants under (i), (ii), and (iii) above, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including Agency files and/or prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the application and they will receive a neutral score (half of the points) for the factor (i.e., 2 points for item (i), 1 point for item (ii), and 2 point for item (iii)).</p> <p>Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, may result in a zero score for the factor (i.e., 0 points for item (i), 0 points for item (ii), and 0 points for item (iii)).</p>
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## **B. Review and Selection Process**

All applications received via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the submission deadline will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

A panel(s) comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. Two separate ranking lists, one per National Priority Area, will be developed based on the panel evaluations. The ranking list for each National Priority Area will be provided to the Selection Official(s) who make(s) the final funding decisions. In making the final funding decisions for each National Priority Area, the Selection Official(s) will consider the application score/ranking and may also take into account geographic distribution. As noted above, while EPA intends to make awards in each National Priority Area it reserves the right not to do so and to redistribute the number of awards per area.

## **Section VI. Award Administration Information**

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

### **A. Award Notifications**

EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made via electronic or postal mail. 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 Grants and Interagency Management Division (GIAMD). Applicants are cautioned that only An Award Official 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 Award Official, 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.

### **B. Required Components of Final Workplan**

EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final award amount and workplan narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy including the Assistance Agreement Competition Policy, EPA Order 5700.5A1. An approvable final workplan narrative is required to include:

1. Components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component;
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment;
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule; and
5. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by regulations at 2 CFR 200 and 1500, as applicable. A description of the Agency's substantial involvement in the grant or cooperative agreement will be included in the final assistance agreement.

### **D. Reporting**

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved.

Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted either quarterly or biannually and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 120 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the work plan consistent with 2 CFR 200 and 1500 as appropriate.

### **E. Disputes**

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at [Grant Competition Dispute Resolution Procedures](#). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement. Note, the FR notice references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding the regulatory changes, the procedures for competition-related disputes remains unchanged from the procedures described at 70 FR 3629, 3630, as indicated in 2 CFR Part 1500, Subpart E.

## **Section VII. Agency Contact**

**Note to Applicants:** In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications,

provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement. Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified in Section VII of this announcement as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be resolved prior to submitting an application. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination.

Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified below by **11:59 PM Eastern Time, October 16, 2023** and written responses will be posted on EPA's website at <https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/drinking-water-system-infrastructure-resilience-and-sustainability>. Please note that answers to FAQs are available on this [website](#). EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

**Agency Contact:** Claudette Ojo

**E-mail:** [ResiliencyGrant@epa.gov](mailto:ResiliencyGrant@epa.gov)

## **Section VIII. Other Information**

### **A. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)**

Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) requirements may apply to these grants (see 2 CFR 1500.12). QA/QC requirements apply to the collection of environmental data. Environmental data are any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology. Environmental data include information collected directly from measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature. Successful applicants should allow enough time and resources for this process. EPA can assist successful applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the successful applicant may work with EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. The Agency's Enterprise Quality Management Division (EQMD) webpage contains information, including documents to assist in the development and implementation of a suitable Quality System, and is located at <https://www.epa.gov/quality>. For further information, see Section VII, Agency Contact for Agency Contact information for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff.

Successful applicants must ensure all water quality data generated in accordance with an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan, either directly or by subaward, are transmitted into the Agency's Water Quality Exchange (WQX) data system (formerly known as STORET) annually or by project completion. More information about WQX and WQXweb, including tutorials, can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-wqx>.

**B. Data Sharing**

All recipients of these assistance agreements may be required to share any data generated through this funding agreement as a defined deliverable in the final workplan.