

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Water, Office of Wastewater Management

Funding Opportunity Title: Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant Program

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-R-OW-OWM-23-02

Assistance Listing Number: 66.445 and 66.616

Dates: Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov ([Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)) no later than **11:59 PM ET November 17th, 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 before **October 17th, 2023**. Written responses will be posted on EPA’s website at: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/innovative-water-infrastructure-workforce-development-program>.

Note to Applicants: Following EPA’s evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. If you name subrecipients 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>.

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SECTION I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

The nation has made significant progress in addressing environmental and public health needs over the past fifty years, but more remains to be done. To further the goal of ensuring a strong pipeline of skilled and diverse workers in the water utilities sector, Congress, under the American Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, authorized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop a grant program under Section 1459E of the Safe Drinking Water Act, to accelerate career pipelines in the water utilities sector and provide access to water utility workforce opportunities. In addition, under Clean Air Act Section 138(b)(2), which was created

by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Congress authorized EPA to award grants for workforce development activities that help reduce green-house gas emissions and other air pollutants that benefit disadvantaged communities as defined by the EPA Administrator and we are soliciting projects for this under project area 6 in Section I.C. below. EPA’s current priorities include working to provide infrastructure investments and technical assistance in disadvantaged or historically underserved communities, advance environmental justice and equity, address climate change, and responsibly support and implement the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), commonly referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and IRA. 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 Fund (SRF) programs. IRA provides funds for various activities including for environmental and climate justice activities such as the workforce development activities described above. For the purposes of this RFA, environmental justice is defined as the ***fair treatment*** and ***meaningful involvement*** of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. ***Fair treatment*** means that no one group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal environmental programs, and policies.

As utilities make critical investments in infrastructure, drinking water and wastewater utilities should also invest in the development of a strong local workforce to strengthen communities and ensure a strong pipeline of skilled and diverse workers for today and tomorrow. In addition to the drinking water and wastewater utility workforce, the workforce that designs, installs, repairs, and maintains decentralized water systems (*i.e.*, private wells and septic systems) are of critical importance in communities and homes that are not served by a drinking water and/or wastewater utility. Drinking water and wastewater utilities, as well as the decentralized water systems provide a unique opportunity for access to stable, rewarding, and high-quality careers. EPA is also working to improve the environmental and public health conditions of underserved communities through the advancement of environmental justice in the water workforce sector. For the purposes of this RFA, the term ‘underserved communities’ refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been denied a full opportunity to participate equitably in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. For example, characteristics of underserved communities may include those with high rates of unemployment or low incomes, or those that suffer from adverse and disproportionate environmental and public health impacts. “Equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including those who belong to underserved communities. As EPA prioritizes actions to address the climate crisis, it recognizes that the sector must cultivate a workforce trained in the installation and maintenance of green infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and other water-sector climate solutions critical to building community and water system resilience to future climate conditions.

B. Goals and Objectives

Through this grant program, EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants as described in Section III.A to assist in the development and utilization of innovative activities relating to workforce development and career opportunities in the water utility sector, which may include:

- (A) expanding the use and availability of activities and resources that relate to the recruitment, including the promotion of diversity within that recruitment, of individuals to careers in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector, including stormwater;
- (B) expanding the availability of training opportunities for (i) individuals entering the water and wastewater utility sector; and (ii) individuals seeking to advance careers within the water and wastewater utility sector;
- (C) expanding the use and availability of activities and strategies, including the development of innovative activities and strategies, that relate to the maintenance and retention of a sustainable workforce in the water and wastewater utility sector; and
- (D) expanding the availability of workforce development and training that enables drinking water and wastewater utility workers to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other air pollutants to benefit disadvantaged communities.

Applicants interested in applying should review Section I.C., Project Areas, of this Request for Applications (RFA). Applications must address only one of the Project Areas identified in Section I.C.

C. Project Areas

EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants in six Project Areas, as described below. While EPA intends to make awards in all Project Areas, EPA reserves the right to make more than one award in a Project Area and/or make no awards in a Project Area. Under this competition, only one application can be submitted per applicant. Each application submitted under this announcement must address one, and only one, of the Project Areas described below. The cover page of each application package must clearly indicate the Project Area addressed in the application.

Project Area 1: Targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades.

Under Project Area 1, EPA is soliciting applications to expand public awareness about job opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector, and address the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities. This may be achieved by developing and implementing, for example, but not limited to, targeted¹ internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs for priority water utility trades through:

- (1) On-the-job training, including registered apprenticeships;
- (2) Skills development;
- (3) Test preparation, including developing test materials for skilled trade apprenticeships;
- (4) Advance training in the water utility sector relating to construction, utility operations treatment and distribution, green infrastructure, customer service, maintenance, and engineering; or
- (5) Other supportive services and participant support costs (e.g., apprenticeship stipend and training materials, reasonable costs for transportation, childcare subsidies) to facilitate post-secondary success.

¹ 42 U.S.C. 300j-19e: [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:42%20section:300j-19e%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:42%20section:300j-19e%20edition:prelim))

Targeted internships, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs will result in training and developing the next generation of water professionals and will help address the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities.

Applicants should provide information on how they intend to expand awareness to individuals from rural, small, and/or underserved communities. The application should describe the applicant's proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competencies, particularly if the project will include work with tribes and/or underserved communities. For the purposes of this announcement, the term "cultural competence" means effectively demonstrating the skills and experience to operate in the different cultural contexts found in the identified geographic area and means having the capacity to function effectively as an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by the recipients targeted to receive training. Cultural competence includes demonstrating linguistic competence that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Applicants should describe their proposed plan to share (or make available to geographically diverse areas) the Project Area, the results of the Project Area, and the lessons learned. For the purposes of this Project Area, "results" mean: (1) developing and providing targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, or post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades; and (2) an evaluation of how these programs have helped expand public awareness about the job opportunities in the water sector and addressed the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, "geographically diverse" means in different areas of the country.

Applicants should also include innovative approaches to address the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, "innovative" means new ideas and methods that are original and creative in approach. The applicant should demonstrate how these innovative approaches have the potential to effectively reach the intended audience. As an example, this could mean a proposed approach to share the project activity, results, and lessons learned at workforce specialty conference(s) that include water utilities that are geographically diverse, of varying sizes, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations. Applicants may also propose innovative approaches that have proved to be successful in other sectors and may have a high degree of transferability to the water sector.

EPA is particularly interested in results produced through this grant program that are scalable and have potential to be utilized by the broader water sector, including water utilities.

Project Area 2: Education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students.

Under Project Area 2, EPA is soliciting applications to expand student awareness about the job opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector and to address the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities by developing education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students and provide training opportunities for secondary and higher education students that:

- (1) Inform students about the value of water and water infrastructure and the role of drinking water and wastewater utilities in their communities;

- (2) Increase student awareness of career opportunities in the water sector, and increase student exposure to water utility careers through various work-based learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom;
- (3) Connect students to career pathways related to water utilities;
- (4) Provide hands-on contextualized learning opportunities;
- (5) Offer dual enrollment credit for post-secondary education and training programs;
- (6) Create a direct connection to water utility and industry employers; and/or
- (7) Build integrated learning laboratories in secondary educational institutions.

For the purposes of this announcement, “secondary education” means education beyond the elementary grades and “higher education” means education beyond the secondary level (e.g., community colleges, vocational schools and/or university level).

For the purposes of this announcement, “contextualized learning” means relating subject matter content to meaningful situations that are relevant to students.

Applicants should clearly describe if they plan to reach K-12 students or students in community or technical colleges/universities. Applicants should describe their proposed approach to share (or make available) the Project Area, the results of the Project Area, and the lessons learned to geographically diverse areas. For the purposes of this Project Area, “results” mean (1) developing and providing education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students; and (2) an evaluation of how these education programs can help expand student awareness about the job opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector and/or can help address the workforce needs of water and wastewater utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, “geographically diverse” means in different areas of the country.

Applicants should provide information on how they intend to expand awareness to individuals from rural, small, and/or underserved communities. The application should describe the applicant’s proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competencies, particularly if the project will include work with tribes and/or underserved communities. For the purposes of this announcement, the term “cultural competence” means effectively demonstrating the skills and experience to operate in the different cultural contexts found in the identified geographic area and means having the capacity to function effectively as an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by the recipients targeted to receive training. Cultural competence includes demonstrating linguistic competence that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Applicants should include their proposed plan to incorporate innovative approaches that will address the workforce needs of water and wastewater utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, “innovative” means new ideas and methods that are original and creative in approach. The applicant should demonstrate how these innovative approaches show the potential to effectively reach the intended audience. As an example, this could mean a proposed approach to share the project area, results, and lessons learned at conferences for educational institutions such as community colleges as well as workforce specialty conference(s) that includes water utilities that are geographically diverse, of varying sizes, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations. There may be other applicable and creative examples to share the information with water utilities that are geographically diverse, vary in size, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations.

EPA is particularly interested in results produced through this grant program that are scalable and have potential to be utilized by the broader water sector, including water utilities.

Project Area 3: Regional industry and workforce development collaborations to address water utility employment needs and coordinate candidate development, particularly in areas of high unemployment or for water utilities with a high proportion of retirement eligible employees.

Under Project Area 3, EPA is soliciting applications to expand public awareness about job opportunities in the water sector and address the workforce needs of utilities by establishing regional industry and workforce development collaborations that will address drinking water and wastewater utility recruitment and retention issues. Applications should describe water utility employment needs and provide information on if and how candidate development will occur in areas with high unemployment or for water utilities with high proportion of retirement eligible employees in the water utility community. States are beginning to encounter critical staffing shortages in areas of high unemployment and where water utilities have a high proportion of retirement eligible employees or forceable workforce vacancies. Under this activity, applications should demonstrate a proposed approach to further the goal of building a stronger and more effective water utility workforce through collaboration opportunities with school systems, technical colleges, universities, labor organizations, community-based organizations, and other utilities.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to share (or make available) the Project Area, the results of the Project Area, and the lessons learned to geographically diverse areas. For the purposes of this project area, “results” mean (1) developing and implementing collaborative initiatives with school systems, technical colleges, universities labor organizations, community-based organizations, and/or other utilities; and (2) an evaluation of how these initiatives addressed (will address) the recruitment and retention needs of water and wastewater utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, “geographically diverse,” means in different areas of the country.

Applicants should provide information on how they intend to expand awareness to individuals from rural, small, and/or underserved communities. The application should describe the applicant’s proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competencies, particularly if the project will include work with tribes and/or underserved communities. For the purposes of this announcement, the term “cultural competence” means effectively demonstrating the skills and experience to operate in the different cultural contexts found in the identified geographic area and means having the capacity to function effectively as an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by the recipients targeted to receive training. Cultural competence includes demonstrating linguistic competence that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Applicants should include their proposed plan to incorporate innovative approaches that will address the workforce needs of water and wastewater utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, “innovative” means new ideas and methods that are original and creative in approach. The applicant should demonstrate how these innovative approaches show the potential to effectively reach the intended audience. As an example, this could mean a proposed approach

to share the project area, results, and lessons learned at workforce specialty conference(s) that includes water utilities that are geographically diverse, of varying sizes, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations. There may be other applicable and creative examples to share the information with water utilities that are geographically diverse, vary in size, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations.

EPA is particularly interested in results produced through this grant program that are scalable and have potential to be utilized by the broader water sector, including water utilities.

Project Area 4: Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs that ensure incumbent drinking water and wastewater utility workers are prepared for higher level supervisory or management-level positions.

Under Project Area 4, EPA is soliciting applications to expand public awareness about senior, supervisory, and leadership job opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector, and address the workforce needs of water utilities through leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs that prepare incumbent drinking water and wastewater utility workers for supervisory or management-level positions. This is intended to support retention and advancement of water utility workforce employees through skills development opportunities, including opportunities to support communities potentially under-represented in water sector leadership roles.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach to share (and make available) the project area, results, and lessons learned in geographically diverse areas. For the purposes of this project area, “results” mean (1) establishing leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs that prepares incumbent water and wastewater utility workers for supervisory or management-level positions; and (2) an evaluation of how these programs supported the retention of water utility workforce employees. For the purposes of this announcement, “geographically diverse,” means in different areas of the country.

Applicants should provide information on how they intend to expand awareness to individuals from rural, small, and/or underserved communities. The application should describe the applicant’s proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competencies, particularly if the project will include work with tribes and/or underserved communities. For the purposes of this announcement, the term “cultural competence” means effectively demonstrating the skills and experience to operate in the different cultural contexts found in the identified geographic area and means having the capacity to function effectively as an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by the recipients targeted to receive training. Cultural competence includes demonstrating linguistic competence that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Applicants should include their proposed plan to incorporate innovative approaches that will address the workforce needs of water utilities. For the purposes of this announcement, “innovative” means new ideas and methods that are original and creative in approach. The applicant should demonstrate how these innovative approaches show the potential to effectively reach the intended audience. As an example, this could mean plans to share the project area, results, and lessons learned at workforce specialty conference(s) that includes water utilities that are geographically diverse, of varying sizes, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations.

There may be other applicable and creative examples to share the information with water utilities that are geographically diverse, vary in size, and serve urban, suburban and rural populations.

EPA is particularly interested in results produced through this grant program that are scalable and have potential to be utilized by the broader water sector, including water utilities.

Project Area 5: Education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, designed for decentralized water workers (i.e., private well and/or septic system service professionals) to support public health outcomes for communities that rely on private wells for drinking water or decentralized systems for adequate treatment and disposal of wastewater.

Under Project Area 5, EPA is soliciting applications to expand public awareness about job opportunities in the decentralized drinking water (i.e., private wells) and/ or wastewater (i.e., septic systems) sectors, and address the workforce needs of the decentralized water workforce (such as inspectors, O&M providers, designers, installers, etc.) through supporting public health outcomes of communities that rely on these systems. This may be achieved by developing and implementing, for example, but not limited to, education and training programs at higher education institutions, or internship/apprenticeship programs that prioritize decentralized water skilled trades through:

- (1) New training program(s) at higher education institutions (i.e., community colleges);
- (2) Growth of existing training program(s) at higher education institutions;
- (3) On-the-job training, including registered apprenticeships;
- (4) Skills development;
- (5) Test preparation for state level licensing requirements;
- (6) Advanced training in the decentralized water sector relating to site evaluation, design, installation, inspection/monitoring, and operations/maintenance of systems; or,
- (7) Other supportive services and participant support costs (e.g., apprenticeship stipend and training materials, reasonable costs for transportation, childcare subsidies) to facilitate growth potential of decentralized water workers.

For the purposes of this announcement, “higher education” means education at the technical college, community college, or university level. For the purposes of this announcement, “Private well” is defined as a well owned by a homeowner or group of homeowners that supplies drinking water to fewer than 25 people and contains fewer than 15 service connections. “Decentralized wastewater systems” are defined as: septic or onsite or clustered systems used to collect, treat, and disperse or reclaim wastewater from a small community, tribe, or service area that are publicly or privately-owned and/or serve tribal communities (except for systems owned by U.S. federal entities). For further details regarding decentralized wastewater systems refer to the EPA “Overview of Clean Water State Revolving Fund Eligibilities” decentralized chapter at: <https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf/overview-clean-water-state-revolving-fund-eligibilities>.

Education and training programs, as well as providing the opportunities for on-the-job learning through apprenticeship and internship programs, will result in training and developing the next generation of decentralized water professionals and will help support the public health needs of communities relying on decentralized wastewater systems for clean water and adequate sanitation of wastewater.

Applicants should describe their proposed plan to share (or make available to geographically diverse areas) the Project Area, the results of the Project Area, and the lessons learned. For the purposes of this Project Area, “results” mean: (1) developing and providing education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, for skilled decentralized water sector trades; and (2) an evaluation of how these programs have helped expand public awareness about the job opportunities in the decentralized water sector and addressed the workforce needs of the decentralized drinking water and wastewater industry. For the purposes of this announcement, “geographically diverse,” means in different areas of the country.

Applicants should provide information on how they intend to expand awareness to individuals from rural, small, and/or underserved communities. The application should describe the applicant’s proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competencies, particularly if the project will include work with tribes and/or underserved communities. For the purposes of this announcement, the term “cultural competence” means effectively demonstrating the skills and experience to operate in the different cultural contexts found in the identified geographic area and means having the capacity to function effectively as an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by the recipients targeted to receive training. Cultural competence includes demonstrating linguistic competence that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Applicants should include innovative approaches to address the decentralized water workforce, as well as utilize tools already available to them, such as EPA’s new guide, [Building a Decentralized Wastewater Training Program](#). For the purposes of this announcement, “innovative” means new ideas and methods that are original and creative in approach. The applicant should demonstrate how these innovative approaches have the potential to effectively reach the intended audience. As an example, this could mean a proposed approach to share the project activity, results, and lessons learned at workforce specialty conference(s) that include decentralized water workers and that are geographically diverse, of varying sizes, and serve suburban and rural populations. There may be other applicable and creative examples to share the information with the decentralized water industry that are geographically diverse, vary in size, and serve suburban and rural populations.

EPA is particularly interested in results produced through this grant program that are scalable and have potential to be utilized by the broader water sector, including water utilities.

Project Area 6: Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, workforce development and/or cross training programs that enable drinking water and wastewater utility workers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions² and other air pollutants to benefit disadvantaged communities.

The awards under this Project Area will be funded by Clean Air Act Section 138(b)(2)(A). Under this Project Area, EPA is soliciting applications to address the workforce needs of water utilities through leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, workforce development, and/or cross-training

² Greenhouse gas is defined in Clean Air Act Section 138(d) means the air pollutants carbon dioxide, hydrofluorocarbons, methane, nitrous oxide, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride.

programs that enable drinking water and wastewater utility workers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants in ways that benefit disadvantaged communities as defined below. As water and wastewater facilities integrate improved energy management and technologies into their daily operations and long-term planning, workforce development and training programs are needed to improve the knowledge in implementing such practices. This is intended to support climate change mitigation and the retention and recruitment of water utility workforce employees through skills development opportunities. Applications submitted for this Project Area must demonstrate how they will benefit disadvantaged communities, which for purposes of Project Area 6 applications are defined as:

- Any census tract that is included as disadvantaged in [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#);
- Any census block group that is at or above the 90th percentile for any of EJSscreen's [Supplemental Indexes](#) when compared to the nation or state; and/or
- Any geographic area within Tribal lands as included in EJSscreen: Alaska Native Allotments, [Alaska Native Villages](#), [American Indian Reservations](#), [American Indian Off-reservation Trust Lands](#), and [Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas](#).

For this Project Area, applicants should describe their proposed approach for (1) establishing leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, workforce development, and/or cross-training programs that prepare water and wastewater utility workers to assess, prevent, and remediate greenhouse gases and other air pollutants; (2) evaluating how these programs reduced greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants; and (3) evaluating how these programs supported the retention and/or recruitment of water utility workforce employees. In addition, while the awards under this Project Area must benefit disadvantaged communities as described above, applicants should also explain how their project is transferable and could be replicated to benefit other communities in different areas of the country, as well as how the outcomes of the project can be sustainable beyond the 3-year duration of the grant award.

Applicants should include their proposed plan to incorporate innovative approaches that reduce greenhouse gas as defined in footnote 2 below, and other air pollutants, as well as reduce indirect emissions from utility energy consumption. As an example, this could mean plans to train employees in:

- (1) Conducting energy audits and developing and implementing emissions reduction plans for water utilities;
- (2) Building an understanding of the water-energy nexus and implementing strategies to reduce and offset energy and fuel consumption at water utilities;
- (3) Enhancing biogas production to offset energy consumption at water utilities;
- (4) Resource recovery (e.g., water, nutrients) at water utilities to reduce emissions associated with resource production (e.g., recovering phosphorus from treatment plants compared to mining phosphorus);
- (5) Biological treatment optimization at water utilities to reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions;
- (6) Lagoon water treatment management to reduce methane emissions;
- (7) Green infrastructure installation, operations, and maintenance to support reduced energy consumption by reducing rainwater flows into sewer systems.

Applicants may also propose other plan and projects for this priority that meet the objectives and requirements stated above.

EPA is particularly interested in results produced through this grant program that are scalable and have potential to be utilized by the broader water sector, including water utilities.

D. Project Partnerships

In Section 1459E of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as amended (42 U.S.C. Section 300j-19e), Congress urges increased collaboration among federal, state, and local governments, and institutions of higher education, apprentice programs, high schools, and other community-based organizations to align workforce training programs and community resources with water and wastewater utilities to accelerate career pipelines and provide access to workforce opportunities.

Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects solicited under this announcement. In their applications, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project as further described below and in Section III with respect to Priority 6 projects that have unique partnership eligibility requirements. Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components and/or tasks. If you choose not to partner, applications will be evaluated based on how the applicant demonstrates how it will successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.B without the use of partners. If the applicant chooses to identify any partner entities who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants), please pay careful attention to the information to the Contracts and Subawards provision found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses> before doing so as EPA will not consider their qualifications unless the applicant selects them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions. Partnerships between organizations can greatly benefit from one another's experience and expertise.

E. Transfer of Results

The application should include a description of the applicant's proposed approach for active transfer of project results (as defined under each Project Area), methods and/or effective strategies to water utilities, states, tribes, and/or other interested stakeholders so that others may better build their water workforces. This should include a detailed explanation of how the proposed results will or could be scaled to the broader water sector, along with the proposed approaches that will or could be utilized to support such wider adoption by the water sector.

Examples of ways to transfer results include:

- i. Sharing the results with relevant organizations through a website;
- ii. Sharing the results with relevant drinking water and/or wastewater utilities and other relevant stakeholders;
- iii. Conducting webinars or other outreach efforts, addressing workforce needs, to drinking water and wastewater utilities; and/or
- iv. Sharing the results at conference(s) that include water utilities.

F. EPA's Strategic Plan Linkage 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 provide for clean and safe water systems.

The activities to be funded under this announcement support EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, (available at: <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>). Awards made under this announcement for Project Areas 1 – 5 will support progress toward Goal 5 – Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities, Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure: Clean and safe water is a vital resource that is essential to the protection of human health. Without clean water, communities and economies cannot thrive. EPA is committed to ensuring clean and safe water for all, especially for disadvantaged or historically underserved communities, and tribal communities. Awards made under this announcement for Project Area 6 will support progress toward Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights, Objective 2.1: Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels.

EPA's current priorities include working to advance environmental justice and equity, address climate change, support and renew the water utility workforce, and responsibly support and implement the BIL. These priorities include helping ensure that communities that have struggled to access public funding receive the help they need.

EPA aims to maximize the potential for BIL funds to significantly benefit small, rural, or tribal communities, and to advance careers in these areas within the water and wastewater utility sector. Rendering this support will allow communities to better protect both public health and the environment.

EPA also requires that 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>. Applications must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs. To the maximum extent practicable, the application should include well-defined outcomes that demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall protection of human health and the environment by preventing water pollution. The outputs and outcomes should directly address the goals of providing training and technical assistance.

Outputs and outcomes are defined as follows:

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 the project period.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 1, *Targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of participants in existing or new internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades. An increased number of internships, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, or post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades, including programs addressing

emerging water workforce needs such as climate adaptation and green/nature-based infrastructure.

- An increased number of available recruitment strategies, materials, and partnerships to inform potential applicants of internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 2, *Education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Establishment of new partnerships with community and technical colleges to provide classroom, online, and/or on the job training experiences for elementary, secondary, or higher education students.
- Development, distribution, and use of age-appropriate educational materials for elementary, secondary, or higher education students to raise awareness about opportunities in the drinking water or wastewater utilities sector.
- Development of an innovative program or strategy in a secondary educational institution to recruit diverse populations to the water utility sector workforce.
- Development of new learning laboratories in secondary educational institutions for student awareness about drinking water and wastewater job skills.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 3, *Regional industry, and workforce development collaborations to address water utility employment needs and coordinate candidate development, particularly in areas of high unemployment or for water utilities with a high proportion of retirement eligible employees*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Development of a new regional collaboration program or expansion of an existing collaboration program amongst organizations to address regional water workforce needs in areas of high unemployment or for water utilities facing potentially high retirement rates.
- Establishment of new partnerships with community organizations, educational institutions, labor organizations, utilities, or other organizations to address the workforce needs of water utilities.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under the announcement for Project Area 4, *Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs that ensure incumbent drinking water and wastewater utility workers are prepared for higher level supervisory or management-level positions*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of drinking water or wastewater utility workers receiving leadership training and mentoring.
- An increased number of utility programs to train incumbent workers for management positions.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 5, *Education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, designed for decentralized water workers (i.e., private well and/or septic system service professionals) to support public health outcomes for communities that rely*

on private wells for drinking water or decentralized systems for adequate treatment and disposal of wastewater, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of participants in existing or new education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs designed for skilled decentralized water trades.
- An increased number of existing or new education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs designed for skilled decentralized water trades.
- An increased number of available recruitment strategies, materials, and partnerships to inform potential applicants of education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs designed for skilled decentralized water trades.
- Establishment of new partnerships with community and technical colleges to provide classroom, online, and/or on the job training experiences for higher education students.
- Development, distribution, and use of age-appropriate educational materials to raise higher education student awareness about opportunities in the decentralized water sector.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 6 may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Development of a collaboration program amongst organizations to train the water utility sector workforce in new tools and technologies that can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants.
- Establishment of new partnerships with community organizations, educational institutions, labor organizations, utilities, or other organizations to address the water workforce needs in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants from water and wastewater treatment.
- An increased number of drinking water or wastewater utility workers receiving training and mentoring in climate change mitigation and the water-energy nexus.
- An increased number of programs to train a water workforce that can identify and implement measures to mitigate climate change.

Outcomes: Environmental outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to the 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 the assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 1, *Targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades,* include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increased number of individuals that have completed internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs and been placed in water and wastewater utility jobs.
- An increased number of individuals that have completed internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs and received industry credentials that qualify them for utility jobs.
- An increased number of individuals from underserved communities that have been placed in wastewater utility jobs and/or received industry credentials that qualify them for utility jobs.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 2, *Education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased student awareness about career opportunities in the water and wastewater sector as documented by program assessments on knowledge acquisition.
- Integration of educational program into school's science, technology, engineering, and math activities and programs.
- Increased student involvement in programs that offer dual enrollment.
- An increased number of students entering the utility workforce or entering post-secondary training or education programs that support the water and wastewater utility workforce.
- Increased awareness, program availability, and student involvement that supports individuals in underserved communities.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 3, *Regional industry and workforce development collaborations to address water utility employment needs and coordinate candidate development, particularly in areas of high unemployment or for water utilities with a high proportion of retirement eligible employees*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Enhanced sustainable regional collaborations that support the long-term water utility workforce needs.
- Increased number of individuals in high areas of unemployment being recruited into the water sector.
- Prompt ability to backfill for retiring employees to sustain the workforce.
- Increase in the collective skillset of water utility employees that would meet specific requirements in career advancement.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 4, *Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs that ensure that incumbent drinking water and wastewater utility workers are prepared for higher level supervisory or management-level positions*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An increase in the number of internal promotions.
- An increase in candidate development opportunities that formally qualify incumbents to be considered for management and supervisory positions.
- An increase in awareness and providing leadership development opportunities to individuals in underserved communities.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 5, *Education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, designed for decentralized water workers (i.e., private well and/or septic system service professionals) to support public health outcomes for communities that rely on private wells for drinking water or decentralized systems for adequate treatment and disposal of wastewater*, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased number of individuals that have completed decentralized water education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, and been placed in decentralized water jobs.

- Increased number of individuals that have completed decentralized water education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, and been placed in decentralized water jobs.
- Increased number of individuals from underserved communities who are aware about the career opportunities in the decentralized water sector.
- Integration of educational program into school's science, technology, engineering, and math activities and programs.
- Increased number of students from underserved communities entering the utility workforce or entering post-secondary training or education programs that support the decentralized water workforce.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 6, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Enhanced sustainable regional collaborations that support long-term water utility workforce needs and long-term greenhouse gas and other air pollution emission reduction goals.
- Increased number of individuals being recruited into the water sector to address climate change.
- Increase in the collective skillset of water utility employees to mitigate climate change.
- An increase in candidate development opportunities that formally qualify water utility workers to be considered for positions related to climate change and the water-energy nexus.

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 to provide clean and safe water and increase workforce development opportunities for drinking water and wastewater utilities and increase public awareness of these workforce opportunities. 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/sites/production/files/2015-03/documents/epa_order_5700_7a1.pdf (see EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements).

G. Minority Serving Institutions:

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, including minority serving institutions (MSIs), to apply under this opportunity.

For purposes of this RFA, 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.](#)

H. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for the awards expected to be made under Project Areas 1-5 of this RFA is Section 1459E of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as amended, (42 U.S.C. Section 300j-19e). SDWA 1459E authorizes EPA to award grants to assist in the development and use of innovative activities relating to workforce development and career opportunities in the water utility sector, and to expand public awareness about water utilities and connect individuals to careers in the water utility sector.

The statutory authority for the awards under Project Area 6 of this announcement is Section 138(b)(1) and (2)(A) of the Clean Air Act, (CAA). CAA 138(b)(1) and (2)(A) authorized EPA to award grants for workforce development activities that help reduce green-house gas emissions and other air pollutants that benefit disadvantaged communities as defined by the EPA Administrator.

SECTION II – AWARD INFORMATION

A. Amount of Funding

The total amount of federal funding potentially available under this announcement is approximately \$20.8 million, with an estimated \$10.8 available for Project Areas 1-5 and an estimated \$10 million available for Project Area 6, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. EPA anticipates awarding ten to twenty cooperative agreements under Project Areas 1-5 and one to two awards under Project Area 6. Cooperative agreements funded under this announcement will have a project period of up to three years, depending on the amount requested and overall size and scope of the projects(s).

<u>Project Area</u>	<u>#of Awards Anticipated</u>	<u>Funding Range</u>	<u>Anticipated Available Funding</u>
<u>Project Area 1: Targeted³ internships, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, & post-secondary bridge programs</u>	1-4	<u>\$1,500,000-\$6,800,000</u>	<u>\$6.8 million</u>

³ 42 U.S.C. 300j-19e: [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:42%20section:300j-19e%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:42%20section:300j-19e%20edition:prelim))

<u>Project Area 2: Education programas designed for elementary, secondary & higher education students</u>	1-4	<u>\$250,000 - \$1,000,000</u>	<u>\$1 million</u>
<u>Project Area 3: Regional industry and workforce development collaborations</u>	1-4	<u>\$250,000 - \$1,000,000</u>	<u>\$1 million</u>
<u>Project Area 4: Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs</u>	1-4	<u>\$250,000 - \$1,000,000</u>	<u>\$1 million</u>
<u>Project Area 5: Education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, designed for decentralized water workers</u>	1-4	<u>\$250,000 - \$1,000,000</u>	<u>\$1 million</u>
<u>Project Area 6: Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, workforce development and/or cross training programs that enable drinking water and wastewater utility workers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants to benefit disadvantaged communities</u>	1-2	<u>\$5,000,000- \$10,000,000</u>	<u>\$10 million</u>

The actual award amounts and number of projects awarded under each of the Project Areas described in Section I may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards under each Project Area or change the ratio of assistance agreements it awards among the Project Areas.

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.

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

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

- close monitoring of the successful applicant’s performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, review of proposed procurement;
- approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); and
- review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

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

Consistent with Assistance Listing 66.445, eligible applicants for Project Areas 1-5 under this RFA are nonprofit professional or service organizations, nonprofit labor organizations, nonprofit community colleges, institutions of higher education, other nonprofit training, and educational institutions⁴, or public works departments and agencies. 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 a 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. For-profit organizations and individuals are not eligible to apply. EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.

Consistent with Assistance Listing 66.616, eligible applicants for Project Area 6 are a: 1) community-based nonprofit organizations (CBO); 2) a partnership of CBOs; or 3) a partnership between a CBO and Federally recognized Indian Tribe, local government or institution of higher education.

For purposes of Project Area 6 applications, CBOs are defined as a state or tribal designated nonprofit organization or an organization exempt from Federal taxes under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, which:

⁴ 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.

“is a public or private nonprofit organization that supports and/or represents a community and/or certain populations within a community through engagement, education, and other related services provided to individual community residents and community stakeholders. A “community” can be characterized by a particular geographic area and/or by the common environmental justice challenges facing members of a broader national community, such as farmworkers, children with high levels of lead, asthmatics, subsistence fishers, tribal members, indigenous peoples, residents of areas adjacent to industrial facilities, low-income families, or similar groups.”

In addition, for purposes of Project Area 6 applications, a “partnership” is: a formal relationship between two or more CBOs, or between a CBO and a Federally recognized Indian tribe, a local government, or an institution of higher education, that is memorialized in writing and is legally binding under applicable law. The partnership agreement must specify which member of the partnership will enter into the assistance agreement with EPA for the purposes of 1) accountability for the proper expenditure of Federal funds; 2) performance of the assistance agreement; 3) liability for claims for recovery of unallowable costs incurred under the agreement; and 4) must specify the respective roles in performing the proposed scope of work for the assistance agreement. At least one CBO in the partnership must receive EPA funding either as a direct recipient or as a subrecipient. As a policy matter, the partnership agreement must also, at a minimum, specify other roles and responsibilities of each partner, including how the priority environmental and public health issues of the disadvantaged communities proposed to be served by the award are identified, as well as the role of community leaders in the decision-making processes and implementation of the proposed projects for funding.⁵

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No cost share or match is required under this announcement.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the time of application submission will result in the elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications that meet all these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration because 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. Applicants must address **one, and only one of the six Project Areas** listed in Section I.B. Applications that address more than one Project Area will not be reviewed.
3. Under this RFA, **only one application can be submitted per applicant**. If an applicant submits more than one application, EPA will contact them before the review process begins to determine which application(s) will be withdrawn. If the applicant is not able to

⁵ These statutory partnership eligibility requirements are different from and in addition to the partnership concepts discussed in Section I.D of the RFA.

communicate a decision within 48 hours of being contacted by EPA, EPA will accept the application received by Grants.gov most recently. Additional information regarding the one application per applicant requirement may be found in the FAQ document available at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/innovative-water-infrastructure-workforce-development-program>.

4. Applications submitted for **Project Area 6** must demonstrate how they will benefit disadvantaged communities as described in Section I.C. under Project Area 6.
5. Applications for awards in each Project Area cannot request more than the maximum amount listed in Section II.A in federal funds. Applications exceeding the maximum or below the minimum amount will be rejected.
6. 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. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.D.2 with respect to the Project Narrative, pages more than the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.D.2 establishes a 15-page, single-spaced Project Narrative page limit.
7. In addition, initial applications must be submitted through 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 solicitation. 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.
8. 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. 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.
9. If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, including but not limited to ones that EPA determines cannot be funded under the statutory/regulatory authorities for the grant, 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. Applicants who have any questions about whether their project can be funded under the statutory/regulatory authorities for the grant should clarify the issue with the point of contact identified in Section VII prior to submitting their application.

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

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 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. **Please note that you must choose the application package associated with the project you are applying for. For Projects 1-5, choose the package labeled with Assistance Listing 66.445. For Project 6, choose the package labeled with Assistance Listing 66.616.**

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.

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 17th, 2023** 11:59 PM ET. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped

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

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-R-OW-OWM-23-02 in the subject line to << WaterWorkforceRFA@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.>

Optional Documents:

6. Other Attachments Form
 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable

- Biographical Sketches

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. **Signed Standard Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance.** Complete the form and have it signed. There are no attachments.
- b. **SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.** 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 total amount of indirect cost 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 any non-federal cost- share/match, 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 Attachment Form.** See Section IV.E.2 (Project Narrative) for details on specific information that must be included. When developing the Project Narrative, applicants should refer to Section I.B, I.C., and I.D of the announcement for the project description.
- f. **Other Attachments Form**
 - **Biographical Sketches.** Submit a biographical sketch of each major project manager, support staff member, or other major project participant for the proposed project.
 - **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (if applicable)
The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is not included in the fifteen (15) page single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. See [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information about indirect cost rates.

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.** Supporting materials, which are limited to no more than the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate agreement, if applicable, and Biographical Sketches documentation, as described below, are not included within the page limit.

The application's Project Narrative 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. Project Area from Section I.B addressed in the application;
3. Name of applicant;
4. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number); and
5. Total project cost (specify the amount of federal funds requested, any non-federal cost-share/match, and the total project cost).

B. Executive Summary: Provide a 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 Area:** Describe the proposed approach for addressing one of the six Project Areas described in Section I.C of this announcement. Describe the proposed approach to share (or make available) the project activities, the results of the project activities, and the lessons learned to geographically diverse areas as appropriate. Describe the proposed innovative approaches that will address the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities. Applications for Project Area 6 must demonstrate how the project benefits disadvantaged communities as defined in Section I.C under Project Area 6.
2. **Project Partnerships:** Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects under this announcement. In their applications, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project. Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components/tasks. If you choose not to partner, applications will be evaluated based on how the applicant demonstrates how it will successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.C without partners. Please note that for applications for Project Area 6, projects can be submitted by partnerships of certain entities as described in Section III. For those eligibility purposes, there are unique partnership requirements as described in Section III. The project partnerships described above in this paragraph are distinct from those partnership eligibility requirements. For

example, if there will be a partnership of CBOs competing for an award, they must meet the partnership eligibility requirements identified in Section III for Project Area 6 awards. In addition to that they should be addressing the roles and responsibilities of other partners, in addition to those who comprise the CBO partnership applying for the grant, who will be involved in the project.

3. **Transfer of Results**

The application should include a description of the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (as defined under each Project Area in Section I.C, methods and/or effective strategies to water utilities, states, tribes, and/or other interested stakeholders, so that the other entities may better build their drinking water and wastewater workforce. Reference Section I.D. of this announcement for additional information. This should include a detailed explanation of how the proposed results will or could be scaled to the broader water sector, along with the proposed approaches that will or could be utilized to support such wider adoption by the water sector.

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

- a. Stated Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan - List the objective of the project and the linkage to FY 2022 – FY 2026 EPA Strategic Plan. For applications submitted in response to Project Area 1 – 5, 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). For applications submitted in response to Project Area 6, Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights, Objective 2.1: Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels.
- 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 because 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).

5. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period (up to three 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.

6. **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.”
 - a. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs. All subgrant funding should be in the “other” cost category. 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.

7. **Programmatic Capability/Experience:**
 - a. Organizational Experience - Provide a brief description of your organization, and for Project Area 6 the organizations comprising the partnership if a partnership is applying for the award, experience related to the proposed project, and organizational infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
 - b. Staff Expertise/Qualifications - Provide a list of key staff who will be working on the project and briefly describe their experience/expertise/qualifications, cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to serve communities in the geographic areas to be served, and knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project.

8. **Past Performance:** Describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) that your organization (and for Project Area 6 the organizations comprising the partnership if a partnership is applying for the award,) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements). If you had any EPA agreements in the last three years, those are preferred to be included.

Please provide the following information.

- 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.).

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 ET November 17th, 2023**. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

SECTION V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Selection Criteria

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

All applications will under-go an eligibility review using the Section III.C threshold eligibility criteria. Eligible applicants will then be evaluated using 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.

(25 points)	<p>1) Project Areas</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing the Project Area in Section I.C of the RFA that the application focuses on. In conducting this evaluation, the following factors will be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The extent and quality of the overall approach to addressing the Project Area described in the application and the proposed community outreach strategies and cultural competencies, particularly if the project will involve and benefit tribes, underserved communities, and for purposes of project area 6 disadvantaged communities. In addition, applications for Project Area 6 will be evaluated based on how well the applicant demonstrates how the project will benefit disadvantaged communities as defined in Section I.C. (10 points) ii. The extent to which the applicant includes innovative approaches in addressing the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities. For Project Area 6 applications, this includes evaluating the extent to which the project will help reduce GHG emissions and air pollution. (8 points) iii. The extent to which the applicant describes the proposed approach to share (or make available) the project activities, the results of the project activities, and the lessons learned to geographically diverse areas. (7 points)
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(10 points)	<p>2) Project Partnerships Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project, including whether they have provided a clear description of the roles, or planned roles, of each partner in the project’s component/ tasks, and how these partnerships will contribute to the success of the project. If the applicant does not intend to have partners, then the applicant will be evaluated based on how they demonstrate they will be able to successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.D without the use of partners. (See Section I.D. of this announcement) (See also discussion above about Project Area 6 partnerships) (10 points)</p>
(10 points)	<p>3) Transfer of Results Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate the applicant’s plan for active transfer of project results, methods, and/or effective strategies to other water utilities, as well as states, tribes, and/or other interested stakeholders to assist them with building their drinking water and wastewater utility workforce (see Section I.E. of this announcement). This should include a detailed explanation of how the proposed results will or could be scaled to the broader water sector along with the proposed approaches that will or could be utilized to support such wider adoption by the water sector. (10 points)</p>
(10 points)	<p>4) Environmental Results and Measuring Progress Applications will be evaluated based on each of these sub-criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to EPA’s Strategic Plan described in Section I.F of this announcement. (5 points) 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.F of this announcement). (5 points)
(15 points)	<p>5) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget 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"> i. 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. For Project Areas 6 applications, this includes evaluating the feasibility of the project being completed within 3 years. (7.5 points) ii. The reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task, and the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget, and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. The cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs will be evaluated. (7.5 points)

<p>(20 points)</p>	<p>6) Programmatic Capability/Experience 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"> i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and the organizational infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project (10 points) ii. Staff expertise/qualifications, cultural competency including appropriate language fluency to support disadvantaged or historically underserved communities in the geographic area to be served, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. (10 points)
<p>(10 points)</p>	<p>7) Past Performance Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) 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) iii. Extent and quality to which the applicant adequately documented and/or reported on their progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outcomes and outputs) 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) <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 for the factor (i.e., 2 points for item (i), 1 point for item (ii), and 2 points 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>

B. Review and Selection Process

All timely submitted applications will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III.C of the RFA. 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 by Project Area based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. Ranking lists will be developed based on the panel evaluations for each Project Area. The ranking lists will be provided to the Selection Official, who makes the final funding decisions. For Project Area 6 selections, the Selection Official will consult with Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights management on the Project Area 6 rankings and proposals, and also may obtain input from OEJECR on how proposals meet OEJECR priorities so that the Selection Official can consider that information in making final selections. In making the final funding decisions, the Selection Official will consider the application score/ranking on each ranking list and may also consider other factors such as geographical distribution of funds, program priorities, funding availability, whether an applicant is a new applicant, and diversity of projects between and among Project Areas. As noted above, while EPA anticipates awarding ten to twenty cooperative agreements under Project Areas 1-5 and one to two awards under Priority Area 6, it reserves the right not to do so and to reconsider the number of awards. While EPA intends to make awards in as many Project Area areas as possible, the Agency reserves the right to make more than one award in a Project Area and the right to make no awards in a Project Area.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

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

A. Award Notices

Following EPA's evaluation of the applications, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified regarding their status. The notification will be made to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance or the project contact listed in the application. The 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 Agreements Management Division.

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., workplan), which must be approved by EPA, before the assistance agreement can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of an assistance agreement can take up to 90 days or longer.

EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final assistance agreement amount and work plan narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy including the [EPA Order 5700.5A1 Policy for Competition of Assistance Agreements](#). An approvable final work plan 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.

B. 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.

C. 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 quarterly 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.

D. 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.

E. 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 work plan.

Section VII. Agency Contact

A. 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 **October 17th, 2023**. Written responses will be posted on EPA’s website at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/innovative-water-infrastructure-workforce-development-program>.

Agency Contact: Hana Abate
WaterWorkforceRFA@epa.gov