

FY 2024 EPA Annual Performance Report (APR)

Evidence and Evaluation Summaries

FY 2024 Evaluation and Evidence-Building Activities – Supplemental Funds

In FY 2022 the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) expanded EPA’s historic role as a regulatory and scientific agency to be a large-scale funder of critical infrastructure and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) enables EPA to take aggressive action in tackling the climate crisis. In FY 2024 and continuing in FY 2025, EPA developed evaluation and evidence-building plans for BIL and IRA programs with the following goals in mind: executing programs efficiently and effectively; promoting transparency and building trust; maintaining accountability to taxpayers; and advancing equity priorities. The summaries below capture progress made on this work during FY 2024. EPA will share ongoing results and information in subsequent Annual Performance Reports found on [EPA’s Planning, Budget, and Results website](#), and will post related evaluation reports on [EPA’s Evaluation website](#). Plans for upcoming evaluations and significant evidence-building activities will be included in future Annual Evaluation Plans.

Program	Superfund Remedial Community Involvement Program		
Lead Office	Office of Land and Emergency Management		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 2: Environmental Justice. Objective 2.2: Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA's Programs, Policies, and Activities.		
Start Date	September 2022	Completion Date	September 2026

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent do specific aspects of Superfund Community Workshops (e.g., providing access to the information and resources communities need to understand the Superfund process, and any potential risks to human health and the environment) strengthen early and meaningful participation in the Superfund process?

Activities completed in FY 2024: After each Superfund Community Workshop, EPA invites attendees (community members) to provide qualitative feedback via online and paper surveys that have received approval under the Agency's Generic Qualitative Feedback ICR. EPA may take notes during the workshops to capture participants real-time feedback regarding the workshops and conducts debriefs with regional site teams after each workshop. EPA has reviewed the information collected between FY 2022 and FY 2023, and data has been collected for FY 2024.

Interim findings: Analysis of data collected between FY 2022 and 2024 is ongoing.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Results will help EPA understand the extent to which workshops contributed to community participation in the Superfund process. Information collected will inform the design of future workshops and other community involvement activities. More specifically, findings will inform EPA's efforts to (1) understand community priorities and concerns, including environmental justice concerns; (2) tailor community involvement activities to meet the needs of the community; and (3) provide resources to facilitate meaningful and informed community participation in the Superfund process.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Clean School Bus Program		
Lead Office	Office of Air and Radiation		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 4: Ensure Clean and Healthy Air for All Communities. Objective 4.1: Improve Air Quality and Reduce Localized Pollution and Health Impacts.		
Start Date	October 2023	Completion Date	September 2024

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent did the prioritization criteria in the 2022 Clean School Bus Rebates Program allow EPA to identify and fund low-income, rural, and Tribal school districts?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA has gathered information regarding the extent to which outreach efforts informed applicants and relevant entities (who support applicants) about the program’s prioritization efforts. EPA also analyzed applicant pool data on the number of applicants who met the statutory prioritization criteria (low-income, rural, and/or Tribal). Review of the collected information will be completed in FY2025. EPA will also collect award information to answer this question in FY2025 and conduct an analysis to determine the extent to which the criteria correctly identified prioritized school districts.

Interim findings: Applicants that met statutory prioritization criteria made up more than 50% of the 2022 CSB Rebate applicant pool. Additional data collection and analysis will be completed in FY 2025.

Use of findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA monitor prioritization efforts to check that they align with EPA strategic objectives. EPA will make adjustments to the prioritization criteria and process to ensure greater alignment as needed.

Dissemination of findings: EPA currently anticipates that the data used to answer the question and/or a summary of the overall finding may be made available through the Program website and/or the annual Report to Congress, in line with [EPA’s Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) Grant Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure.		
Start Date	April 2024	Completion Date	September 2029

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent is the Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) grant funding being used to serve small or disadvantaged communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: During FY 2024, EPA has been developing the infrastructure reporting (State Revolving Fund – Water Infrastructure Investment Tracking System (SRF WIITS)) data base for the EC-SDC program, which is anticipated to be ready in early FY 2025. EPA has been manually collecting reports from states who were awarded FY 2022/2023 funds and is compiling the information that is needed to address the question, including: the total amount of EC-SDC funds distributed, and number of assistance agreements made, from each state grant; the total amount of EC-SDC funds distributed, and number of assistance agreements made, from each state grant that benefits small or disadvantaged communities; each state’s definition of small or disadvantaged communities; and each state’s use of EC-SDC resources (e.g., set-asides, admin funds, etc.) to reach out to and assist small or disadvantaged communities.

Interim findings: Examination of semi-annual reporting data from 10 states who were awarded FY 2022/2023 funds showed that 70 percent of EC-SDC funds were being used to serve both small or disadvantaged communities, 20 percent were being used to serve only disadvantaged communities, and 10 percent to serve only small communities. Eighty percent of EC-SDC funds were being used to address PFAS. Twenty percent used to address Manganese. Additional data is being collected and analyzed from states.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA determine the extent to which the EC-SDC Program is complying with BIL requirements. If requirements are not being met, EPA will open dialogue with state grantees to identify barriers to compliance and will then develop implementation guidance for grantees.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA’s Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	State Revolving Funds (SRF): Clean Water and Drinking Water		
Lead Office	Office of Water		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	May 2023	Completion Date	September 2029

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent is State Revolving Funds (SRF) assistance made available by the BIL being used to serve disadvantaged/underserved communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA has reviewed reports from states who were awarded FY 2024 funds, to collect FY 2024 information needed to address the question: total amount of funds distributed, and number of loans signed, for all the SRF funding pots; total amount of funds distributed, and number of loans signed, for all the SRF funding pots that serve disadvantaged communities; each state's definition of disadvantaged communities; and each state's use of SRF resources (e.g., set-asides, admin funds, etc.) to reach out to and assist disadvantaged communities.

Interim findings: Analysis is ongoing to determine the extent to which the SRF programs are complying with BIL requirements.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA determine the extent to which the SRF Programs are complying with BIL requirements. If requirements are not being met, EPA will open dialogue with state grantees to identify barriers to compliance and will then develop implementation guidance for grantees.

Dissemination of findings: EPA's [SRF Public Portal](#) includes data on assistance agreements provided through SRF programs.

Program	National Estuary Program (NEP)		
Lead Office	Office of Water		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	October 2024	Completion Date	December 2028

Questions being addressed:

1. To what extent the influx of additional funds via BIL increased acres of habitat protected/restored, and dollars leveraged toward water quality improvements and watershed protection by local National Estuary Programs (NEPs)?
2. To what extent the influx of additional funds via BIL increased investment in underserved/overburdened communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: The local NEPs will report data on BIL funded habitat, leveraging, and investments and benefits to disadvantaged communities through the National Estuary Program Online Reporting Tool (NEPORT), after the NEP Information Collection Request is approved by the Office of Management and Budget.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA determine the extent to which (1) the overall environmental goals of the BIL funding have been met, and (2) the Justice40 Initiative's target as written in the FY 2022-2026 NEP BIL Funding Implementation Memo has been met.

Dissemination of findings: The impact of BIL funds on habitat protected/restored, dollars leveraged and investments and benefits to disadvantaged communities is expected to be included in the public NEP Accomplishments Reports which will be posted annually on the [NEP Program Reports](#) website. Inclusion of BIL data in the annual Accomplishments Reports depends on when data can be collected from local NEPs, pending approval of the NEP Information Collection Request.

Program	Gulf Hypoxia Program (GHP)		
Lead Office	Office of Water		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	June 2022	Completion Date	December 2030

Questions being addressed:

1. To what extent does the GHP advance the Within Basin Action Plan goal of implementing nutrient and sediment reduction actions?
2. To what extent the GHP advance the Quality of Life Action Plan goal of improving communities across the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin (MARB) through cooperative and/or incentive-based approaches?

Activities completed in FY 2024: The information needed to address these questions will be provided by State and Tribal grantees as part of their annual progress reports, including: estimated nutrient and sediment load reductions; conservation practices and systems implemented; drainage area treated by each conservation practice (acres); conservation practices and systems implemented via incentives; stakeholders involved in conservation practice implementation; stakeholders impacted by conservation practice, including disadvantaged communities; and estimated climate co-benefits. The first round of reporting from states was completed in Q3 FY 2024.

Interim findings: Examination of data from the first round of reporting is ongoing and will be completed in FY 2025.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings for both questions will provide EPA with insights on progress toward the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan goals and help determine the extent to which workplan implementation has been successful. Furthermore, results from Question 2 will help EPA assess the extent to which the program facilitates equity efforts and empowers stakeholders across sectors.

Dissemination of findings: The major findings will be made public on the [Hypoxia Task Force Studies and Reports](#) website and through the Hypoxia Task Force via public meetings and engagement with HTF members.

Program	Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 1		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	October 2024	Completion Date	September 2029

Questions being addressed:

1. To what extent has EPA increased programmatic support for disadvantaged communities with IJA funds to meet the Lake Champlain Basin Program's (LCBP's) goals as laid out in Opportunities for Action: the Lake Champlain Management Plan?
2. How many upstream miles in the Lake Champlain basin have been opened or enhanced for aquatic organism passage using BIL funds?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA will use information reported by grantees on programmatic metrics in their progress reports (project locations) and final reports (project outcomes). The first grantee reports for BIL-funded projects are expected to be submitted in Q1 FY 2025. EPA will consult the Program's environmental justice GIS mapping to identify disadvantaged communities.

Interim findings: LCBP has determined that \$4,662,690 of BIL funding for projects subawarded by November 20, 2024 is benefitting disadvantaged communities according to program-specific definitions and methods. For BIL-funded projects completed and closed as of September 30, 2024, LCBP has reported that 27.17 upstream miles in the Lake Champlain basin have been opened or enhanced for aquatic organism passage. Many BIL-funded projects are ongoing and these interim findings will be updated as LCBP collects new information.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: The findings from Question 1 will help EPA identify benefits to disadvantaged communities, which will enable the Lake Champlain Steering Committee to identify future years' priorities and plan program goals that will secure outputs and outcomes that are most beneficial and responsive to the Basin's needs. The findings from Question 2 will help EPA assess the outcomes of BIL-funded projects that contribute to the program goals of habitat restoration and species protection in the Basin.

Dissemination of findings: LCBP will publish metrics publicly on the [program website](#), as part of its Annual Report of Activities. Metrics in these reports will reflect activities supported by EPA and non-EPA funding.

Program	Southeast New England Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 1		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	<p>Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.</p> <p>Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice. Objective 2.2: Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA's Programs, Policies, and Activities.</p> <p>Goal 1: Tackle the Climate Crisis. Objective 1.2: Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts.</p>		
Start Date	October 2025	Completion Date	September 2028

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent has the Southeast New England Program (SNEP) increased programmatic support (funding and projects) with BIL funds to benefit disadvantaged communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: During FY 2024, EPA completed work on an enhanced project database that tracks program expenditures and project results. EPA will use this database to collect and analyze information that addresses the question, drawing on grantee progress reports, the EPA Next Generation Grant System (NGGS), and a SNEP dashboard that tracks program expenditures and project results. Key metrics include the: amount of funding reaching or benefiting SNEP disadvantaged communities; as identified in the SNEP Equity Strategy; percent of overall funding, reaching or benefiting SNEP disadvantaged communities; and number of grants awarded to, or that directly benefit, SNEP disadvantaged communities.

Interim findings: Data from the first round of reporting will be submitted and examined in FY 2025.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will enable EPA to track progress toward the Justice40 Initiative target. If the target is not met, EPA can try to increase the amount of support for disadvantaged communities by increasing the number of applications from these communities (e.g., via outreach and engagement, or targeted funding opportunities).

Dissemination of findings: EPA expects to make findings available to the public on the [SNEP website](#).

Program	Long Island Sound Study		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 1 & Region 2		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	October 2023	Completion Date	September 2027

Questions being addressed:

1. To what extent are planned primary outputs funded by BIL accomplished in the expected timeframe and form?
2. To what extent do Long Island Sound Study (LISS)-BIL funded project outputs lead to short term outcomes that support progress towards meeting ecosystem targets?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA collected the first round of information about project outputs (including timeframes and forms) and short-term outcomes from at the end of FY 2023 from award recipients' semi-annual progress reports, NEPORT data system, and the LISS Interactive Projects Table on the LISS website. Examination of this information was initiated in FY 2024 but will continue as funded agreements continue to produce scheduled outputs.

Interim findings:

- Question 1: Most primary outputs are on track to be completed in the expected timeframe and form. These include identifying subawardees for wastewater treatment improvements environmental justice projects, planning for riparian buffer extent, habitat connectivity, fish passage and tidal wetland restoration and land protection. Analysis of this information is still ongoing.
- Question 2: Short-term outcomes will continue to be assessed in FY 2025 and beyond by examining reductions in pollution discharges and habitat improvements.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings for Question 1 will enable EPA to track the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation and could inform changes to project structures and LISS team workflows to optimize the ability to accomplish project outputs in the timeframe and forms expected. Ongoing review of this collected information has enabled EPA to identify instances in which grantees have experienced delays and to thus work with grantees to problem-solve. Findings for Question 2 will help EPA assess the extent to which the program is meeting its ecosystem targets for the purpose of successfully implementing the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Chesapeake Bay Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 3		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	October 2023	Completion Date	December 2028

Question being addressed:

1. What combined percentage of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) FY 2022-2026 BIL-funded Most Effective Basins (MEB) grants, Small Watershed Grants (SWG), and Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) grants), is being invested in disadvantaged communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA has tracked the funds awarded in FY 2022 and FY 2023 across the three programs. Project location data from grantees who were awarded funds in FY 2022 and FY 2023 is being collected using an online data submittal system known as FieldDoc.

Interim findings: The examination of the FY 2022/FY 2023 data will be completed in FY 2025.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will enable EPA to track where grants are invested and will inform program's reflections on how it might improve the progress towards achieving the program's commitment to equity and Justice40 Initiative requirements. This information can also serve as a surrogate to measure achievement of the program's short-term outcome to increase awareness of new funding opportunities in underserved communities.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Gulf of Mexico Division		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 4		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	June 2025	Completion Date	December 2027

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent has Gulf of Mexico BIL funding led to an increase in projects that demonstrate effective nutrient reduction practices/tools?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA will rely primarily on data submitted in required assistance agreement progress reports and numbers attained through staff led efforts. The first round of information will be collected in FY 2026, including outputs and progress in attaining habitat targets.

Interim findings: Data from the first round of reporting will be submitted and examined in FY 2026.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will enable EPA to assess its approach to funding nutrient management/reduction practices/tools in the Gulf of Mexico region. If projects using particular tools/practices do not report effective nutrient management or reduction, EPA may consider funding research to systematically investigate the viability of such tools/practices in responding to changing climates throughout the Gulf of Mexico region. If projects using particular tools/practices do report effective nutrient management or reduction, EPA will consider expanding funding to replicate these approaches in areas with high nutrient levels and resource gaps.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	South Florida Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 4		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	October 2023	Completion Date	September 2025

Questions being addressed:

1. Who are the South Florida stakeholders, in particular from underserved communities?
2. To what extent is the program addressing the environmental concerns and issues defined by the stakeholders, and particularly those identified by underserved communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA built a list of key stakeholders by networking at a series of public and professional meetings and compiling information from submitted proposals to the grants Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). EPA obtained preliminary information about environmental concerns and issues from citizens (stakeholder meetings, site visits), subject matter experts (professional meetings), and scientific reports.

Interim findings: EPA has started to identify key stakeholders and their environmental concerns and issues, such as the condition of Florida’s Coral Reef, Harmful Algal Blooms, and surface and groundwater pollution. Collection and analysis of this information will be completed in FY 2025.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will enable EPA to allocate appropriate proportions of grant funding to areas of concern, and direct and focus grant funding activities to meet the highest-priority environmental goals.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA’s Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#). The program website is located on [EPA’s South Florida website](#) and includes a new tool for reviewing all issued grants since 2018.

Program	Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 5		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	April 2024	Completion Date	March 2028

Question being addressed:

1. What percentage of the GLRI FY 2022-2026 BIL-funded sediment remediation and habitat restoration projects are benefiting disadvantaged communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: Financial data and project reporting data for projects funded in FY 2022 and in FY 2023 has been collected to identify the percentage of GLRI BIL and total cubic yards of sediment remediated in Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC) that benefited disadvantaged communities. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis was used to identify projects that occur in disadvantaged communities, using the EPA’s environmental justice mapping and screening tool.

Interim findings: Examination of financial and project data showed that 93 percent of GLRI BIL funds used on projects in FY 2022 benefited disadvantaged communities (total funds for projects in FY 2022 was \$115,102,626). For GLRI BIL funds used on projects in FY 2023, 89 percent of funds benefited disadvantaged communities. One hundred percent of the sediments remediated in CY 2022 and CY 2023 benefited disadvantaged communities (792,800 and 82,000 cubic yards respectively).

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA track GLRI’s progress towards meeting requirements of the Justice40 Initiative.

Dissemination of findings: Findings will be shared in the annual GLRI Report to Congress and on <https://www.glri.us/>.

Program	Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 6		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	January 2024	Completion Date	December 2029

Questions being addressed:

1. What stakeholders have participated in the program in the previous five fiscal years (starting in FY 2022)?
2. What program project categories have been funded the most in the previous five fiscal years (starting in FY 2022)?

Activities completed in FY 2024: The FY 2022 – 2024 BIL funds have been awarded to the Lake Pontchartrain pass-through entity, and projects to be funded under FY 2022 (sub-awards) have selected. Currently, the pass-through entity and the Program Office are in the process of preparing the FY 2023 and 2024 BIL Request for Proposals, which will be announced on the second quarter of 2025. Data has been collected and examined for both questions for the FY 2022 funds. The list of stakeholder groups was developed based on information collected from EPA, grant recipients, grant applicants, and internet searches. The list of funded project activities has been generated from grant recipient workplans.

Summary and Use of Findings and Conclusions:

1. EPA set up a list 54 Management Conference members and over 130 stakeholder organizations (i.e., those who attended prior in-person meetings, webinars, have submitted projects for funding, or have expressed interest in the program). Current stakeholders include over 25 local government organizations, over 15 state agencies, over 15 local businesses, 20 environmental organizations, and over 10 educational institutions. Management Conference members, are organizations that have applied to be active partners of PRP. There are 55 active Management Conference members, consisting of local governments at the Parish level, state and federal agencies, and educational institutions. Management Conference members vote on program changes, review and assist in selecting projects for funding, and perform other duties as described in CWA Section 320 and outlined in Clean Water Act Section 121 (33 U.S.C. 1273). EPA is using these findings to track outreach and engagement efforts going forward, in order to ensure that a more diverse and broadly representative set of stakeholders participate in the program.
2. EPA is tracking the project categories that will be funded by BIL over the next five years. The Lake Pontchartrain pass-through entity has awarded sub-awards for the selected projects that will be funded with FY 2022 BIL funds. EPA is using the findings from the two questions above, to track the extent to which each of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) priorities are being met via funded projects.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA’s Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 9		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	January 2024	Completion Date	December 2029

Questions being addressed:

1. What percentage of pre-BIL funds did the program previously invest in underserved/overburdened communities?
2. What percentage of BIL funding is being invested in underserved/overburdened communities?
3. What outcomes have been documented in underserved communities as a result of SFBWQIF BIL grants?

Activities completed in FY 2024: To address the question about percentage of pre-BIL funding invested in underserved/overburdened communities, the program has collected information about project funding and locations (including notations to identify underserved/overburdened communities) for awards made between FY 2016 and FY 2021. The program will take a similar approach to address the question about percentage of BIL funding invested in underserved/overburdened communities from FY 2022 onwards. To address the question about documented outcomes, the program will collect information from grantees' progress reports and from communities who live in the project locations, starting in FY 2025.

Interim findings: Data has been collected and analyzed for Question 1. Between FY 2016 and FY 2021, 5 percent of pre-BIL funds were invested in underserved/overburdened communities. For Question 2, 99 percent of FY 2022 and 100 percent of FY 2023 funding was invested in underserved/overburdened communities.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings for Questions 1 and 2 will enable EPA to track progress toward the goal of investing 100 percent of BIL funds in underserved/overburdened communities. Data for awards made to date indicate that the goal has been met for FY 2022 and FY 2023. Findings for Question 3 will help EPA assess the extent to which program outcomes have been achieved.

Dissemination of findings: EPA will consider how best to share the results consistent with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#). The percentage of BIL funding going to underserved communities will be displayed visually on the [program website](#).

Program	Columbia River Basin Restoration Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 10		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.		
Start Date	October 2024	Completion Date	September 2027

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent has the influx of additional funds via BIL increased investment in tribal and underserved/overburdened communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: The first set of BIL-funded projects started in FY 2024. Project locations will be identified for projects funded by BIL investments (ongoing) and non-BIL funds (baseline), in order to make comparisons over time between the two groups.

Interim findings: Analysis of FY 2024 funding data will be conducted in Q3 FY 2025.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: The answer will help determine the extent to which the grant competition is being delivered as envisioned (and to adapt those approaches as needed) to increase IJA investment and benefits in tribal and underserved/overburdened communities in the Columbia River Basin.

Dissemination of findings: EPA will consider how best to share the results consistent with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Northwest Forest Geographic Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 10		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	<p>Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.</p> <p>Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights. Objective 2.2: Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA's Programs, Policies, and Activities.</p>		
Start Date	October 2024	Completion Date	September 2027

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent are disadvantaged communities receiving adequate technical assistance to complete prerequisite work for State Revolving Fund (SRF) funding?

Activities completed in FY 2024: Funding to the Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs) to conduct Technical Assistance (TA) was awarded in FY 2023 and during FY 2024, the following subawards were made to local TA providers to support specific communities identified as being disadvantaged and having source water at risk:

- Sustainable Northwest has entered into sub-agreements to support Newport and South Bend.
- EFC@RCAC is currently working with SNW in completing an additional sub-agreement for Depoe Bay, with McKenzie River joining the efforts in 2025.
- North Coast Land Conservancy has entered into a sub-agreement to assist Neskowin.

The EFCs and State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program are tracking technical assistance needed by communities and matching TA providers based on those needs. EPA will also be tracking whether communities submit applications for SRF funding. Information is shared with EPA each quarter, or as needed, starting in 2023. Analysis of the collected information is ongoing.

Interim findings: Communities have unique TA needs and aligning TA providers to meet those needs took some time, as well as working with those providers to set up sub-awards. With the agreements in place, and others in the works, EPA expects TA delivery to ramp up in FY 2025.

Use of findings and conclusions: The answer will help determine the extent to which targeted technical assistance is being delivered as envisioned by EPA and State Agencies to close community capacity gaps and assist communities with submitting complete SRF applications.

Dissemination of findings: EPA will consider how best to share the results consistent with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Puget Sound Recovery Program		
Lead Office	Office of Water & Region 10		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	<p>Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.</p> <p>Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights. Objective 2.2: Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA's Programs, Policies, and Activities.</p>		
Start Date	January 2024	Completion Date	December 2027

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent do our program activities facilitate meaningful engagement with overburdened, underserved, and tribal communities?

Activities completed in FY 2024: During FY 2024, EPA began work on defining overburdened and underserved communities in the Puget Sound watershed (based on Agency guidance, local knowledge), identifying overburdened and underserved communities (using GIS analysis), and developing a useful definition of meaningful engagement based on Agency guidance, local knowledge, and literature reviews.

Interim findings: EPA has developed preliminary definitions of overburdened and underserved communities and has used these definitions develop GIS analyses identifying these communities in the Puget Sound watershed. Efforts to define meaningful engagement are ongoing. Data collection from grantees documenting meaningful engagement has begun, with preliminary results expected during FY2025.

Expected use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA accurately identify relevant underserved/overburdened communities in the Puget Sound watershed and develop a robust understanding of what meaningful engagement is and how to measure it. Information regarding meaningful engagement outcomes will help EPA assess the effectiveness of program activities.

Dissemination of findings: EPA will consider how best to share the results consistent with EPA's [Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Brownfields Program		
Lead Office	Office of Land and Emergency Management		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 6: Safeguard and Revitalize Communities Objective 6.1: Clean Up and Restore Land for Productive Uses and Healthy Communities		
Start Date	October 2022	Completion Date	March 2026

Questions being addressed:

1. How can EPA track the activities our technical assistance (TA) contractors and grantees perform?
2. How can EPA track the outputs that our communities receive via TA?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA is assessing its ability to track the types of TA requested by regions or communities by reviewing Technical Assistance Request Forms and doing a comparative analysis based on the list of TA services provided by contractors and grantees. EPA is also implementing surveys (OMB Control Number: 2030-0051) to obtain qualitative feedback from TA recipients regarding the outputs they receive. EPA has reviewed the information collected between FY 2022 (Quarter 2) and FY 2023 (Quarter 4).

Interim findings: Examination of information collected between FY 2022 (Quarter 2) and FY 2023 (Quarter 4) shows that thus far technical assistance reporting in the Accomplishment Reporting in Assessment, Cleanup, and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES) has been an effective method for capturing activities done by technical assistance contractors and grantees. The TA contractors have reported on 70 projects and the TA grant providers have reported on assisting over 1,000 communities. TA providers have reported on a diverse range of activities in these projects that reflect the individual needs of these communities. Further analysis is ongoing to assess the extent to which the list of TA services provided by contractors and grantees matches up with the TA Request forms. The TA surveys are being implemented in Q1 of FY25 and data analysis will be conducted over the next year.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA determine the extent to which the ACRES technical assistance reporting modules are collecting the most informative data and what changes may be required in the future.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#).

Program	Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant Program		
Lead Office	Office of Land and Emergency Management		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 6: Safeguard and Revitalize Communities. Objective 6.2: Reduce Waste and Prevent Environmental Contamination.		
Start Date	September 2023	Completion Date	December 2029

Question being addressed:

1. What factors promote or inhibit a grantees' ability to maintain a successful recycling program currently or beyond the funding ends? (Note: A "successful recycling program" is one that continues to meet the SWIFR program goals even after the grant project is complete.)

Activities completed in FY 2024: During FY 2024, EPA began efforts to create a preliminary framework of factors that promote or inhibit grantees' ability to maintain a successful SWIFR recycling program through consultations with Agency Subject Experts and program staff, literature review, and analysis of other similar programs. This work will be completed in FY 2025 and will inform plans to collect quantitative and qualitative information to address this question.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA understand the extent to which particular factors contributed to project and program success. This information will inform the design and implementation of future projects.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#). Because the collected information is collected from businesses and other entities, EPA must consider how to manage confidential and private information. Thus, the exact format, timing, and extent of the public release may depend on factors such as (1) the need to protect any sensitive or proprietary information from grantees; (2) privacy considerations related to individual interviewees or specific communities; and (3) the completion of any necessary internal review processes.

Program	Recycling and Education (REO) Program		
Lead Office	Office of Land and Emergency Management		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 6: Safeguard and Revitalize Communities Objective 6.2: Reduce Waste and Prevent Environmental Contamination		
Start Date	September 2023	Completion Date	December 2029

Question being addressed:

1. To what extent does education and outreach affect the recycling behavior of the public?

Activities completed in FY 2024: During FY 2024, EPA began efforts to develop background material on the effectiveness of outreach materials in changing recycling behavior, with planned methods including consultations with community leaders, Agency Subject Experts and program staff, literature reviews, and analysis of other similar programs. This work will be completed in FY 2025 and will inform plans to collect quantitative and qualitative information to address this question.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA determine the extent to which different education and outreach strategies are successful in changing recycling behavior, which in turn will inform the design and implementation of future programs.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#). Because the collected information is collected from businesses and other entities, EPA must consider how to manage confidential and private information. Thus, the exact format, timing, and extent of the public release may depend on factors such as (1) protecting sensitive or proprietary information from grantees; (2) considering privacy needs of individual interviewees or specific communities; and (3) completing any necessary internal review processes.

Program	Battery Collection Best Practices and Labeling Initiatives		
Lead Office	Office of Land and Emergency Management		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 6: Safeguard and Revitalize Communities Objective 6.2: Reduce Waste and Prevent Environmental Contamination		
Start Date	September 2023	Completion Date	September 2026

Questions being addressed:

1. To what extent do target consumers encounter our product labeling, education materials, and ad campaigns about battery collection and recycling?
2. To what extent do target consumers change their behavior when they encounter our product labeling, education materials, and ad campaigns about battery collection and recycling?

Activities completed in FY 2024: During FY 2024, EPA began efforts to develop a deeper understanding of (1) who the target consumers are for product labels, education materials, and ad campaigns about battery collection and recycling, and (2) the effectiveness of different messages in changing recycling behavior. Planned methods to collect this information include consultations with community leaders, Agency Subject Experts and program staff, literature reviews, and analysis of other similar programs. This work will be completed in FY 2025 and will inform plans to collect quantitative and qualitative information to address this question.

Use of interim findings and conclusions: Findings will help EPA determine the extent to which different product labeling, education materials, and campaign methods are likely to affect behavioral change in consumers. The conclusions will help inform decisions regarding which materials and methods should receive investments, in order to create an increase in battery collection and recycling and reduce instances of improper battery disposal.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA's Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#). Because the collected information is collected from businesses and other entities, EPA must consider how to manage confidential and private information. Thus, the exact format, timing, and extent of the public release may depend on factors such as (1) protecting sensitive or proprietary information from grantees; (2) considering privacy needs of individual interviewees or specific communities; and (3) completing any necessary internal review processes.

Program	Pollution Prevention Program		
Lead Office	Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention		
Link to EPA Strategic Plan	Goal 7: Ensure Safety of Chemicals for People and the Environment. Objective 7.2: Promote Pollution Prevention.		
Start Date	October 2022	Completion Date	September 2024

Questions being addressed:

1. What are the needs of users who search for resources on the Pollution Prevention (P2) program website?
2. How do users engage with the search tool on the P2 program website?

Activities completed in FY 2024: EPA’s Pollution Prevention (P2) Program works to promote replicable approaches to source reduction by collecting and disseminating educational, promotional, and technical resources for technical assistance providers, businesses, and any other entity interested in learning about P2 resources or the implementation of P2 practices. The program has created an [online central searchable database of P2 resources](#), but EPA needs more feedback from stakeholders and users on which resources are informative and user-friendly. During FY2024, the program conducted user tests to better understand the needs of its users regarding their search for resources, and how the search tool could be potentially modified. The program designed a user testing protocol, conducted four user tests with EPA and grantee users, and collected google analytics active user data for the calendar year of 2023.

Interim findings: The draft study provided several insights into how potential users search for P2 information online. For example, participants struggled to find relevant information to the P2 program using the website and search tool. Participants provided several recommendations for improving the P2 resources search tool. Further analysis will be completed in FY2025.

Use of conclusions: Based on the interim results, the P2 Program will identify opportunities to improve the search tool, for example:

- making changes to website design to better direct interested traffic towards resources;
- improving resource content based on customer use;
- improving user interface; and
- exploring additional promotional opportunities.

Dissemination of findings: EPA anticipates making project findings available to the public on its website in line with [EPA’s Policy on Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities](#)