

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Applications Due: **Friday, September 19, 2025**



Gulf of America Division

Innovative Solutions for Improving Water Quality and Strengthening Local Economies in the Gulf of America Watershed

Funding Opportunity Number: **EPA-R4-GAD-2025-WQ**



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1. Basic Information

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Gulf of America Division

Innovative Solutions for Improving Water Quality and Strengthening Local Economies in the Gulf of America Watershed

<https://www.epa.gov/gulfofamerica/innovative-solutions-improving-water-quality-and-strengthening-local-economies-gulf>

A. Executive Summary:

The Gulf of America Division (“GAD”), located in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Region 4, is part of the EPA Great Water Body program that collaborates to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of America consistent with the economic well-being of the region. EPA’s actions are designed to support improved water quality; to enhance, restore and/or protect natural habitats; and to improve the region’s ability to withstand storm events. This notice announces the availability of funds and solicits applications to improve water quality and/or Gulf habitat through nutrient reduction and/or mitigation of harmful algal blooms (“HABs”), including *Sargassum* Inundation Events, via demonstration projects that are enhanced by innovative technology. Applications must align with the Administration’s [“Powering the Great American Comeback”](#) initiative and align with [EPA statutory authorities](#). Activities must take place in the Gulf of America watershed within the contiguous United States. This opportunity is targeted to organizations described in [Section 2.A](#). that are committed to preventing, reducing, or eliminating nutrient pollution and/or HABs while remaining good stewards of tax dollars.

B. Key Information:

Opportunity Number:
EPA-R4-GAD-2025-WQ

Assistance Listing:
66.475

Announcement Type:
Initial

Funding Available:
\$6,000,000

Number of Awards:
6-12

C. Key Dates:

September 5, 2025

Last day GAD will respond to questions submitted to GAD-NOFO@epa.gov. A recorded presentation to aid in application development and a Q&A and common errors document are posted at <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofamerica/innovative-solutions-improving-water-quality-and-strengthening-local-economies-gulf>. Questions not included in the Q&A or presentation, may be submitted to GAD-NOFO@epa.gov. The Q&A will be updated weekly if new questions are received. EPA cannot guarantee a response to questions received after September 5, 2025.

September 19, 2025 11:59 pm ET Application Submission Deadline

December 2025 Anticipated Notification of Selection

D. Funding Details:

It is anticipated that up to **12 award(s)** will be made under this announcement. Awards are expected to be **from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000**, depending on Agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. Awards funded under this opportunity are expected to have a **3-to-5-year** project period.

E. Agency Contact Information:

Further information, if needed, may be obtained from the EPA contact(s) indicated below.

Technical Contact: **Matt Beiser; GAD-NOFO@epa.gov**

Eligibility Contact: **Matt Beiser; GAD-NOFO@epa.gov**

Electronic Submissions Contact: **Matt Beiser; GAD-NOFO@epa.gov**

F. Other Funding Considerations:

It is anticipated that 2 to 4 awards may be made per focus area (habitat enhancement/ restoration, water quality, and harmful algal blooms). On the summary information page, **the applicant must declare the primary focus area the project should be evaluated under** and indicate any secondary focus areas. The actual award amounts and number of projects awarded may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons, including: the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, and funding availability. Additionally, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number of awards and/or the number of awards under each priority or change the ratio of assistance agreements it awards among the focus areas.

2. Eligibility

A. Eligible Applicants

Only these types of organizations may apply:

- [Indian Tribe](#).
- [State & Local Governments](#).
- [Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\)](#).
- [Nonprofit organizations](#).

International organizations are not eligible to apply. Qualified non-federal entities eligible to apply include non-federal governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, and institutions. This includes state agencies; any agency or instrumentality of local government; interstate agencies; federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations; colleges and universities; non-profit organizations; and other public or non-profit private agencies, institutions, and organizations. "Non-profit organization" means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization which: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. Non-profit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible

applicants. For-profit organizations, federal agencies, and individuals are **not eligible applicants**. “For-profit organization” generally means an organization or entity organized for the purpose of earning a profit. The term includes but is not limited to: (1) An “S corporation” incorporated under subchapter S of the Internal Revenue Code; (2) A corporation incorporated under another authority; (3) A partnership; (4) A limited liability company or partnership; and (5) A sole proprietorship.

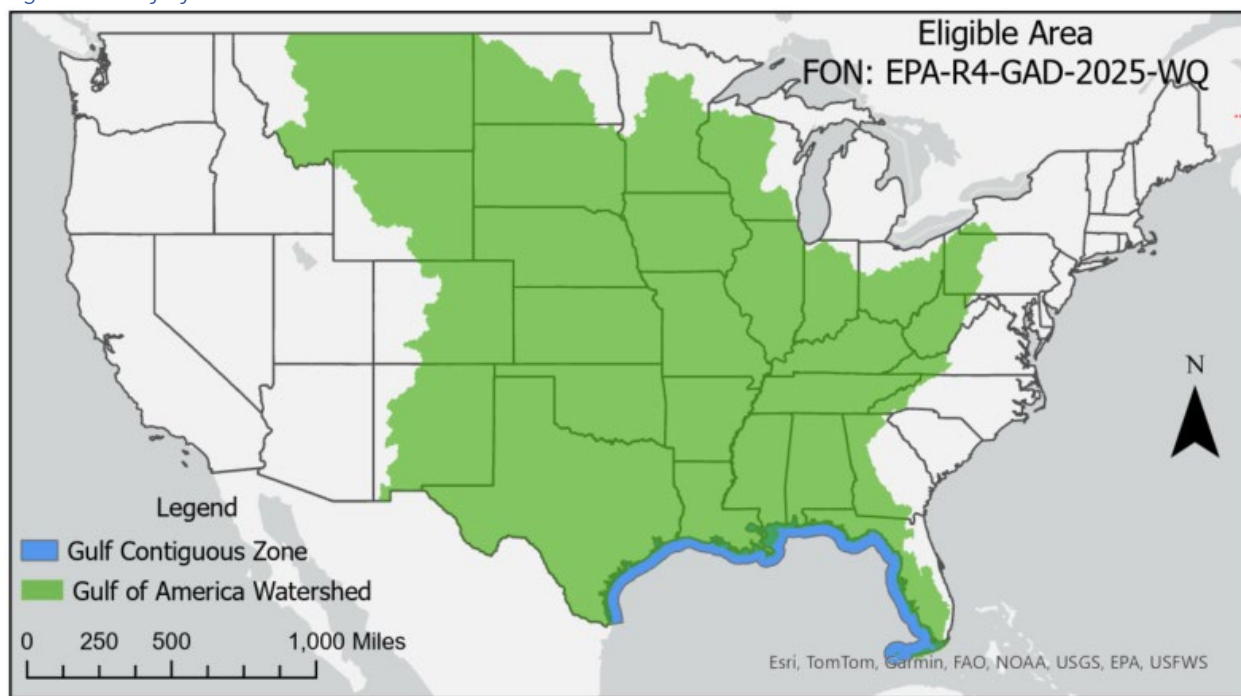
(1) Other Eligibility Requirements

Applications must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered eligible:

- A. **Location:** Application activities must take place in the Gulf of America Watershed within the contiguous United States. Activities proposed in the Gulf of America must be limited to the United States contiguous zone. The application will be rejected if activities are proposed outside of the eligible area (see map in Figure 1, pg. 4 and hydrologic unit code tables in [Section 9](#)).
- B. **Content:** Applications must substantially comply with the requirements in [Sections 3.A\(1\), 3.A\(2\), and 4.A](#) of this announcement or risk being ruled ineligible.
- C. **Project Focus Area:** Applications must list the primary focus area (i.e., water quality, habitat restoration, and harmful algal blooms) that the project should be evaluated under on the summary information page, according to [Section 1.F](#).
- D. **Environmental Results:** Applications must include anticipated environmental results (Outputs and Outcomes) as required in [Section 3A\(3\)](#).
- E. **Funding:** Applications requesting more than \$1,000,000 will be rejected.
- F. **Budget:** Applications must include detailed budget information in addition to the mandatory SF-424A form (see [Section 4.A](#)). A detailed budget narrative is mandatory and must be included in the 12-page workplan. Use of the GAD budget table is highly recommended and is not counted against the page limit. The budget information in the application must include all proposed budget subcategories and how requested funds support each of the tasks proposed in the workplan. There must be sufficient detail for EPA to determine the amount of funds going to each individual task.
- G. **Duplication:** Applicants may only submit 1 application under this opportunity. Applicants that submit more than 1 application will be contacted to determine which application to evaluate. The remaining application(s) will be deemed ineligible.

Please see [Section 6](#) for additional information on threshold criteria and review scoring.

Figure 1: Gulf of America Watershed



(2) Ineligible activities:

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

- Projects that do not comply with Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order; or specified as a required mitigation measure under a state, local, or federal permit for a specific project; however, grant funding may be used to enhance or expand such projects beyond minimum requirements for compliance.
- Work involving only routine maintenance of storm water infrastructure and other facilities.
- Projects which fall under the existing planning responsibilities of an individual state or local government (e.g., development of TMDLs or MS4 permits).
- Solely “gray infrastructure” projects (e.g., installation of sewer lines).
- Projects whose sole purpose is to improve federal lands. Any improvements to Federal land must be incidental to the overall purpose of the project and review by EPA legal personnel is required before the activity on Federal land commences.
- **Construction activities that are not a part of a demonstration project.** This includes, but is not limited to: preliminary planning to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of a facility; the engineering, architectural, legal, fiscal, and economic investigations and studies; surveys, designs, plans, working drawings, specifications, procedures, and other actions necessary to the construction of a facility; the erection, acquisition, alteration, remodeling, improvement, or extension of a facility; and the inspection and supervision of the construction of a facility.

B. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing is not a requirement to be eligible to apply to this funding opportunity. Please note only Federal funds should be listed on the SF-424, SF-424A, budget table, and budget narrative.

3. Program Description

A. Purpose, Priorities, and Activities

(1) Purpose and Priorities of the Funding Opportunity

The GAD is a Great Water Body program of EPA founded to facilitate collaborative actions to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of America in ways consistent with the economic well-being of the region. GAD's top priorities are to improve water quality; to enhance, restore and/or protect habitats; and to improve the region's ability to withstand storm events. The purposes of this funding opportunity are to generate applications that align with the Administration's "Powering the Great American Comeback" initiative; to support GAD's priority for water quality and habitat improvement; and, to align with GAD's statutory authority (see [Section 3.C](#)) for demonstration projects that prevent, reduce, or eliminate nutrient pollution and/or harmful algal blooms ("HABs"). These funding purposes are concurrent with GAD's objective to remain good stewards of tax-payer dollars while ensuring that every penny spent is going towards advancing this mission.

Nutrients are delivered to the Gulf of America from sources across the entire watershed and contribute to the development of hypoxic conditions, or low dissolved oxygen, in waters. Large hypoxic areas of water, often called "dead zones," result in fish kills, decreased aquatic life generally, and challenges for commercial and recreational fishermen. In addition to the problems associated with low dissolved oxygen, excess nutrients can contribute to the formation and persistence of HABs in estuarine and marine systems. HABs disrupt local wildlife and may produce toxins harmful to humans. *Sargassum* is a type of floating brown algae that provides critical habitat, food resources, protection, and breeding grounds for hundreds of marine species. While *Sargassum* is an important resource that supports open ocean ecosystems, when rafts of *Sargassum* are carried to shore (called [Sargassum inundation events](#) or SIEs) they are considered a type of HAB that can harm human health, the environment, and coastal economies.

(2) Activities of the Funding Opportunity

This funding opportunity seeks applications that improve water quality through nutrient reduction demonstration projects that are enhanced by innovative technology. All applicants should identify how their nutrient reduction project and use of innovative technology could lead to cost savings and economic benefits in the future.

Applications **must propose a nutrient reduction and/or estuarine or marine HAB mitigation demonstration project** in one or more of the following three focus areas **within the Gulf of America watershed within the contiguous United States**. Activities proposed in the Gulf of America must be limited to the United States contiguous zone (see Figure 1, pg. 4 and [Section 9](#)):

- Habitat: Enhance and/or restore habitat(s) to reduce nutrient pollution within the Gulf of America watershed.

- Water Quality: Capture, store, reuse, and/or infiltrate water to reduce nutrient loads and improve water quality; demonstrate sustainable solutions to align with broader watershed protection or restoration strategies.
- Harmful Algal Blooms (“HABs”): Prevent and reduce the impact of **marine and estuarine** HABs, including SIEs, on Gulf of America coastal areas (e.g., bays, estuaries, beaches, islands/keys, oyster reefs, nearshore waters). Projects should focus on innovative solutions.

Applications **should also propose the development or expansion of innovative technologies** in at least one of the following areas:

- Demonstrate how artificial intelligence (AI) and/or machine learning (ML) can be utilized to enhance water quality, habitat, and/or HAB (includes SIE and potential SIE) monitoring and management efforts throughout the Gulf of America watershed.
- Develop new or expand the capability of existing innovative technology to improve water quality, habitat, and/or HAB (includes SIE and potential SIE) monitoring, or management.

Applicants should describe how the effectiveness of project activities will be demonstrated through monitoring activities and compared with baseline data to show improvements. Baseline data may be existing or collected as a project activity.

Applicants should describe how proposed activities and/or innovation/s will be evaluated alongside existing or commonly used practices to determine cost effectiveness. The evaluation should articulate how activities and/or innovation/s will lead to cost savings and economic benefits in the future.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to propose the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (“UAV,” i.e., drone) footage to document project activities and successes within the targeted watershed.

(3) Environmental Results

Applicants are required to describe how funding will help EPA achieve outputs and outcomes in their responses to the review criteria in [Section 6](#). Outputs and outcomes specific to each project and any applicable deliverables will be identified in the negotiated workplan if the application is selected for award. Recipients will be expected to report quarterly progress toward the attainment of expected project outputs and outcomes during the project performance period. Outputs and outcomes are defined as follows:

Outputs: Outputs are an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided over time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during the project period. The expected outputs for the grants awarded under these guidelines may include, but are not limited to:

- Activities performed to enhance, protect or restore habitat via demonstration projects
- Number of habitat acres enhanced, protected or restored
- Activities performed to improve water quality/reduce the amount of nutrient pollution from reaching water bodies
- Monitoring to demonstrate reduction in specific nutrient concentrations in waterbodies
- Estimated reduction in specific nutrients via monitoring or modeling
- UAV/Drone imagery providing visual documentation of watershed change as a result of project activities
- Enhancement of existing or the creation of new, innovative technology
- Completion of an economic benefits analysis
- Estimated volume of stormwater runoff captured and/or increased infiltration (if applicable)

Outcomes: Outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out the activities under the grant. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic; must be qualitative or quantitative; and may not necessarily be achievable during the project period. EPA anticipates the outcomes from the projects awarded under this announcement may include:

- Increase in the enhancement, protection, or restoration of habitat acres (can include habitat “windows”) over the life of the project with clear, quarterly milestones reflected.
- Improvement in at least one nutrient related water quality parameter (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorus, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chlorophyll, algal toxin) in a water body and/or segment over the life of the project with quarterly milestones reflected. Applicants should evaluate the baseline conditions as a part of their project to provide an accurate view of progress.
- Increase in the number of resilient communities over the life of the project because of increased adoption of practices, willingness to adopt, fund, and implement nutrient pollution reduction and/or HAB mitigation projects. The applicant should describe how the change will be measured, the barriers overcome, and how resiliency was improved.
- Increase in the number of individuals with improved understanding of nutrient issues in their community and the actions they can take to reduce nutrient loads. Applicants should describe how these changes will be measured.
- Development of a new technology or enhancement of an existing technology that allows for nutrient pollution and/or HAB management and monitoring to become more accessible and cost efficient.
- Demonstrate how AI and ML can be used by Federal, State, and local entities to increase efficiency of water quality monitoring and management.
- Reduced economic and public health impact of SIEs

Additional appropriate outputs and outcomes accomplished because of project activities should also be included.

B. Program Goals and Objectives

Activities to be funded under this funding announcement support Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American and, if applicable, Pillar 4: Make the United States the Artificial Intelligence Capital of the World of [EPA’s “Powering the Great American Comeback” initiative](#).

EPA also requires that grant applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under this grant (see [EPA Order 5700.7A1 Environmental Results Under Assistance](#)). Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined outputs, and to the maximum extent practicable, well-defined outcomes that will demonstrate how the project will contribute to the priorities described above.

C. Statutory Authority

GAD’s statutory authority to award assistance agreements is the Clean Water Act, §104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution as codified in [33 U.S Code 1254\(b\)\(3\)](#). Further noting that “hypoxia continues to be a growing cause for concern,” the legislature has directed the EPA’s Gulf of America Program to “coordinate with the Department of Agriculture, the Gulf States, and other State, local, and private partners to leverage greater resources toward conservation projects on working-lands within the Gulf Region and Mississippi River Basin.” See

Congressional Record, 2025 (Division E, Title II: Environmental Protection Agency, p. 632-633), <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-170/issue-39/senate-section>. Furthermore, the 2024 (Pub. L. 118-42) and 2025 (Pub. L. 119-4, Sect. 1101(a)(7)) Fiscal Year Appropriations Acts have appropriated funding to carry out the purpose highlighted in this explanatory statement.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity is being offered under [Assistance Listing 66.475](#).

D. Funding Type

It is anticipated that grants will be funded under this funding opportunity.

4. Application Contents and Format

A. Application Forms

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
6. Budget Narrative

Optional Documents:

7. Other Attachments Form: Budget Table (highly recommended)
8. Other Attachments Form: Resumes or Curriculum Vitae
9. Other Attachments Form: Letters of Support

Project Narrative Attachment Form: Includes the **Summary Information Page; Project Workplan; Detailed Budget Narrative; and Maps**. The project narrative must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the threshold eligibility criteria in [Section 2.A.1](#), the requirements of [Section 3](#), and address the review criteria set forth in [Section 6.B](#). Supporting materials, such as project team biographies, letters of support, and negotiated indirect cost rate agreements can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 12-page limit. Supporting materials should be submitted using the "Optional Attachments" form.

Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and must take precedence in application format.

- Select a legible font type no smaller than an 11- point Calibri font for use in the application.
- The project narrative cannot exceed a maximum of 12 - 8½" x 11" single-spaced typewritten pages with 1" margins, including the summary page, workplan, and detailed budget narrative.
- Do not use a "double column" (aka newspaper) format. Excess pages (i.e., longer than 12 pages) will not be reviewed.
- Do not include more than one application in any file.
- Do not zip the file or use a zip extension for your file because it will not be accepted.
- Do not include confidential business information in your application.

The project narrative must substantially comply with the specific instructions, format, and content as shown below or it will be rejected.

Project Narrative Format
<p>The narrative has a 12-page limit including the summary information page. Budget tables, citations, maps, and quality assurance statement (required for awards over \$200,000) do not count towards the page limit and should be included at the end of the document.</p>
<p>SUMMARY INFORMATION PAGE (SHOULD NOT EXCEED ONE PAGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunity and FON: EPA-R4-GAD-2025-WQ “Innovative Solutions for Improving Water Quality and Strengthening Local Economies in the Gulf of America Watershed” • Project Title: Please limit to 60 characters. EPA reserves the right to change the project title for its administrative convenience. • Applicant Information: Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, e-mail address, and UEI number. Do not include private information. • Type of Organization: Specify, consistent with your SF-424, one of the following eligible entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indian Tribes. ○ State & Local Governments. ○ Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). ○ Nonprofit organizations. • Proposed Funding Request: The total dollar amount requested from EPA must be within the limits specified in Section 2.A.1 or the application will be rejected. • Project Period: Provide anticipated project start and end dates. (See in Section 1.D). • Project Focus Area: Applicant must declare the primary focus area (i.e., water quality, habitat restoration, or harmful algal blooms) that the project should be evaluated under and indicate any secondary focus areas included. • Project Description: Clearly and succinctly summarize the proposed project. This should be done in 100 words or less. Include environmental KEY TERMS that could be used as search terms (e.g., water quality, nutrient reduction, harmful algal bloom, innovation). Do not use acronyms. If the application is selected and a grant is awarded, this description may be posted to an EPA website. EPA reserves the right to make unilateral changes to conform to posting requirements. • Environmental Results: Describe major anticipated environmental results from this project. • Place of Performance: Identify the location(s) where project activities will take place. Project activities <u>must</u> be in the Gulf of America watershed within the contiguous United States. Activities proposed in the Gulf of America must be limited to the United States contiguous zone. <p>* For more details on eligible locations, please see Figure 1 and Section 2.A.1.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify a single, representative project location within the Gulf of America Watershed, including 8- or 12-digit HUC code (available from http://water.usgs.gov/wsc/reg/04.html). Please identify a single, representative location within the Gulf of America watershed even if the work will be done at multiple locations or by applicants who are located outside the watershed. Please include the reason for the location you identify if that is not self-evident. • In addition to the single best representative location, for projects with multiple locations, specify up to five cities, counties, states, zip codes, or congressional districts where work will be performed. If your project includes more than five locations, select the five that best represent the project.

PROJECT WORKPLAN (must not exceed 11 pages, excess pages will not be reviewed)

Applicants must ensure that the workplan addresses the review criteria in [Section 6.B](#) of the NOFO. Applicants should use the section and subsection numbers and headings below which correspond with the review criteria in [Section 6.B](#) of the NOFO.

Section 1. Project Design:

Provide detailed descriptions of activities. Refer to [Sections 3.A, 3.B](#), and [6.B](#) for specific application requirements and scoring information:

A. **What:** Describe what the project will do. List out all major tasks for the project.

- Describe at least one of the three allowable demonstration projects as described in [Section 3.A](#).
- Describe which innovative activities and/or technologies will be used to support nutrient reduction and/or HAB mitigation and what will be accomplished.
- Describe the monitoring activities that will be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of project activities. Baseline data, whether existing or determined as a project activity, must be used to show improvements.
- Describe the economic benefit analysis procedure that will be used to show cost effectiveness of activities in this project.

Why: Describe why you are proposing this project and the goal(s) of the project.

How: Describe how the activities and tasks proposed will be used to accomplish the innovative priorities of this NOFO.

- Describe how the project activities were determined and how activities will reduce nutrient pollution and/or mitigate HAB impacts. Applications should demonstrate proof of concept by providing literature citations or providing studies supporting proposed activities. (Citations should be included in the Narrative Proposal but will not be counted in the page limit.)
- Describe how innovative technologies were chosen and how technologies will be leveraged to support project activities. If applicable, describe how artificial intelligence and machine learning can be used to enhance water quality monitoring, habitat, and/or HAB management, or monitoring.

Where: Describe where the project will take place and why choosing this location will provide the greatest nutrient reduction and/or HAB mitigation outcomes for the Gulf of America. Include a map at the end of the narrative that delineates the project boundaries and/or shows the expected location(s) of project(s).

Additional Project Design Details: Include appropriate additional information as described in [Section 3](#).

B. **Statutory Authority:**

Explain how your project meets the items:

- **Clean Water Act 104(b)(3):** Explain how the project meets [GAD's statutory authority](#) in Clean Water Act 104(b)(3).
- **EPA's "Powering the Great American Comeback" initiative:** Explain how the project meets Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American, and if applicable, Pillar 4: Make the United States the Artificial Intelligence Capital of the World of EPA's "Powering the Great American Comeback" initiative.

Section 2. Innovative Technology:

Provide details on the use of new or expansion of existing innovative technologies that enhance monitoring or management of nutrient pollution and/or HABs and **how** the use of those innovative technologies could lead to cost savings and economic benefits in the future. In addition, describe the relevance of the innovative technology to the local community(ies).

Section 3. Economic Benefits Analysis:

Provide details for how activities and/or innovation/s will lead to cost savings and economic benefits in the future. Applications should clearly describe how proposed activities and/or innovation/s will be evaluated alongside existing or commonly used practices to determine cost effectiveness.

Section 4. Environmental Results – Outputs and Outcomes:

The following items should be included in this section:

- Specify the estimated quantitative and qualitative results (outputs and outcomes) of the proposed project including, but not limited to, those specifically identified in [Section 3.A.3](#) and any other measurable outputs and outcomes. Points will be deducted if no quantitative targets are identified.

Section 5. Milestone Schedule:

Provide a timetable or schedule with target dates projected for every major task, accomplishments and deliverables for each task, including development and submittal of quality assurance documents (if applicable), quarterly progress report, and final reports. Providing milestones in quarterly increments per year is encouraged to correlate with progress reporting. The link between the activities and achievement of identified outputs and outcomes should be clear.

Section 6. Past Performance and Programmatic Capability:

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

- A. If and how the applicant's organization successfully completed and managed those agreements; and
- B. The applicant's history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether progress reports adequately and timely reported on progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (if not, explain why) and whether acceptable final technical reports were submitted under the agreements; and
- C. The applicant's organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. These descriptions should be supplemented in a separate attachment with supporting documentation (i.e., resumes or curricula vitae for key staff).

In evaluating applicants under these factors in [Section 6.B](#), EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the

information provided by the applicant). If the applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and a neutral score will be given (2.5 points for these subfactors). If no response is provided for this, a score of 0 will be given.

Section 7. Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds:

Describe the applicant's approach, procedures, and internal controls to ensure awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. **Applicants should describe how these internal controls will prevent waste, fraud, and abuse in the expenditure of this award.**

Section 8. Detailed Budget Narrative:

The applicant must provide a detailed budget with estimated funding requested **for each project task**. A detailed budget narrative is mandatory and must be included in the 12-page workplan (see [Section 2.A](#)). Use of the suggested budget table template is highly recommended (not mandatory) and is not counted against the 12-page limit. Regardless of format used, the budget information in the application should provide sufficient detail for EPA to determine cost-effectiveness, reasonableness and allowability of costs. It must include all proposed budget subcategories present on the SF-424A if applicable (Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Equipment, Contractual, Other and Indirect); the amount requested per subcategory and a detailed description of what the funds will be used for; and how requested funds support each of the tasks proposed in the workplan. **There must be sufficient detail for EPA to determine how much of requested funds are going to be allocated to each project task. The budget should indicate which tasks can be scaled down or removed to reduce overall budget requests as the EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions of proposed projects.**

The budget narrative provides greater detail about tasks in the budget table. Common examples include: 1) description of the roles and responsibilities of personnel, 2) description of what supplies will be used for, 3) description of why the equipment is needed and why purchase is preferable to rental of equipment, 4) description of activities of the contract, whether it will be sole sourced or competed, and why that choice was made, and 5) description of activities of a subrecipient, etc. All subaward funding should be located under the "Other Direct Cost" cost category. Please see EPA's [Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#) for more information.

Section 9. Map(s) (not counted towards page limit):

Include a map that delineates the project boundaries and/or shows the expected location(s) of the project(s).

Section 10. Quality Assurance (not counted in page limit):

- For awards under this competition that are expected to exceed \$200,000 in federal funding AND involve the generation or use of environmental data, provide a statement acknowledging: 1) the need to demonstrate competency prior to beginning work and 2) an understanding that a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required. Please see Section VIII.A at the following link for more information: [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). For further information, please see the Frequently Asked Questions Document regarding this EPA requirement: <https://www.epa.gov/measurements-modeling/documents-about-measurement->

competency-under-assistance-agreements.

- If the applicant or subrecipients plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain compliance with the QA requirements (see [Section 4.D.1 Quality Assurance](#) of this announcement for additional information).

B. Applicants Using Contractors

Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the [procurement provisions](#) of the regulations at 2 CFR Part 200.

Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a “partner” or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements. If an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application, it does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements.

The EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subrecipients and/or named contractor(s) during the application evaluation process unless the applicant provides documentation that it has complied with these requirements.

For additional guidance, applicants should review [EPA’s Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#), [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#), and [EPA’s Subaward Policy Frequent Questions](#). The EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500 as well the requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.321 and 40 CFR Part 33.

C. Release Copies of Applications

Copies of applications submitted under this NOFO may be made publicly available on <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofamerica> for approximately 30 days after selections are made.

Applicants should:

- clearly indicate which portion(s) of the application are confidential, privileged, or sensitive information, or
- state ‘n/a’ or ‘not applicable’ if the application does not have confidential, privileged, or sensitive information;
- not include trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is confidential or privileged, or sensitive information that would invade another individual’s personal privacy (e.g., an individual’s salary, personal email addresses, etc.);
- be aware that if such information is included, it will be treated in accordance with 40 CFR § 2.203.

D. Other Program Specific Application Information

(1) Quality Assurance

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

GAD uses a graded approach to QA requirements for recipients depending on the environmental information being collected and how it will be used. Prior to collecting environmental information, the recipient must develop and implement QA procedures, specifications, and documentation sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives through a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). A QMP is an organization-specific document that describes the quality control, policies, qualifications, and procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating work and may apply to multiple projects. A QAPP is a project-specific planning document that describes comprehensive details about the QA requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure the project objectives are met and are of sufficient and known quality. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with [EPA Directive No: CIO 2105-S-01.1: Quality Management Plan Standard](#), and the QAPP should be prepared in accordance with [EPA Directive No: CIO 2105-S-02.1: Quality Assurance Project Plan Standard](#). EPA can assist successful applicants in determining which QA document(s) is(are) required for the proposed project. The recipient shall ensure that subrecipients generating or using environmental information issued under this agreement include appropriate quality requirements for the work. The recipient shall ensure those subrecipients develop and implement QA planning document(s) in accordance with EPA Quality policy and terms and conditions of the award. **The QMP and/or QAPP must be approved by EPA prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation.** Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process.

Organizations may be granted an exception or modification to the QMP requirement if they meet certain criteria which may include, but are not limited to, one-time, short-term, and special projects or projects of limited scope; and/or organizations generating, collecting, compiling, and/or using environmental data for public education purposes. EPA requirements for QMPs and QAPPs can be found here: <http://www.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial>.

(2) Water Quality Exchange

If water quality data are generated, either directly or by the subrecipient, the recipient must ensure that all data are transmitted into the Agency's Data Warehouse annually or by project completion using the Water Quality Exchange ("WQX") in accordance with an EPA approved QAPP. Appropriate water quality data include physical, chemical, and biological sample results for water, sediment, and fish tissue. The data may include toxicity data, microbiological data, and the metrics and indices generated from biological and habitat data. WQX is an online tool for EPA data partners to upload and share data with EPA and the public. Water quality data collected using continuous monitors, either by the recipient or

subrecipient, are not required to be uploaded into the EPA Data Warehouse. More information about WQX including tutorials can be found at: www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-wqx.

5. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

A. Submission Dates and Times

September 19, 2025 11:59 pm ET Application Submission Deadline

Grants.gov creates a date and time record when it receives the application. If you submit the same application more than once, we will accept the last on-time submission.

B. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

SAM.gov

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. SAM.gov will provide a UEI for your organization, which is required to apply for grants using Grants.gov. To register, go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and click Get Started. From the same page, you can also click on the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for the information you will need to register. Make sure you are current with SAM.gov and UEI requirements before applying for the award.

SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. [Begin that process today.](#)

Grants.gov

You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](#). You can see step-by-step instructions at the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for Applicants](#).

Please visit [How to Register to Apply for Grants](#) for additional information.

C. Submission Instructions

You must submit your application through Grants.gov. See Section 5.B. above for information on getting registered.

Important tips:

- 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.
- See the Quick Start Guide for Applicants for instructions on how to submit.
- Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks.
- Do not encrypt, zip, or password protect any files.
- Your application must be submitted by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance.
- If you receive an error or the 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.
- See Grants.gov Errors for information on other Grants.gov errors.

- 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.

D. 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:

- Contact Grants.gov Support Center before the application deadline date.
- Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
- Send an email with the EPA-R4-GAD-2025-WQ in the subject line to GAD-NOFO@epa.gov before the application deadline time and date and must include the following:
 - Grants.gov ticket/case number(s)
 - Description of the issue
 - The entire application package in PDF format.

Without this information, the 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.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants should submit application information for [Intergovernmental Review](#) (IR) under Executive Order 12372. Some states have this process, and others do not. Use the list of [state single points of contact](#) (SPOC) to identify the contact for IR in the state where project activities will occur. Contact the SPOC to learn their process. If a contact is not listed, contact the [Regional Grants Office](#) for further instruction. The IR process, if applicable, should begin as early as possible, preferably at least 60 days prior to submitting your application to EPA.

This requirement never applies to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes or tribal organizations.

6. Application Review Information

A. Responsiveness Review

Applications must meet the threshold criteria requirements described in [Section 2](#) to be evaluated. Applicants not meeting these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will be notified within 15 calendar days of the determination.

- Applications must adhere to the page limit requirements. Any pages over the limit(s) in [Section 4](#) will not be reviewed.
- Initial applications must be submitted *on or before* the application deadline through Grants.gov or through limited circumstances as expressed in [Section 5](#). The EPA will not evaluate applications that are not submitted on time.
- *Technical difficulties applying:* Applicants having technical difficulties applying must contact the Grants.gov hotline at 1-800-518-4726 *and* then must email a PDF of the full application to the

EPA contact listed in [Section 1](#). The submission must be received prior to the application deadline for consideration.

B. Review Criteria

Criteria Name and Description	Points
<p>Project Design</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which the application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Describes the proposed project approach, rationale, and plans for project execution (30 points). B. Describes how the project meets GAD’s Statutory Authority and EPA’s “Powering the Great American Comeback” initiative’s Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American and, if applicable, Pillar 4: Make the United States the Artificial Intelligence Capitol of the World (5 points). <p>Applicants should refer to Project Design of the Project Narrative in Section 4.</p> <p>Letters of Support should be included for partners with substantial involvement and/or if project successes depend on partner involvement.</p>	35
<p>Innovative Technology</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated on the quality and extent to which the projects use new or expand existing innovative technology (Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Infrastructure, etc.) to enhance monitoring or management of nutrient pollution and/or HABs (20 points).</p>	20
<p>Economic Benefits</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they articulate how activities and/or innovation/s will lead to cost savings and economic benefits in the future. Applications should clearly describe how proposed activities and/or innovation/s will be evaluated alongside existing or commonly used practices to determine cost effectiveness. <i>Applications that specifically identify the economic benefit to local community(ies) will be scored more favorably than those that make general statements on possible economies.</i> (15 points).</p>	20
<p>Environmental Results</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they demonstrate the anticipated results (outputs and outcomes), including but not limited to those identified in Section 3.A. This will include evaluating whether they described specific outputs and outcomes, including target numbers. <i>Points will be deducted if no quantitative targets are identified</i> (20 points).</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they describe monitoring activities compared with baseline data to demonstrate project effectiveness. <i>Applications with existing baseline data will be scored more favorably</i> (10 points).</p> <p>Applicants should refer to Environmental Results in the Project Narrative Format in Section 4.</p>	30

<p>Milestone Schedule</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they provide a clearly articulated milestone schedule for project activities, tasks, and deliverables. The table should include progress reporting to EPA (quarterly and final) and be organized by year and quarter. The link between the activities and achievement of identified outputs and outcomes should be clear (10 points).</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>Past Performance and Programmatic Capability</p> <p>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"> A. Past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in response to Past Performance and Programmatic Capability in the Project Narrative Format found in Section 4; B. History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Past Performance and Programmatic Capability in the Project Narrative found in Section 4, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. If such progress was not being made, did the applicant adequately describe why? C. Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving objectives of the proposed project; and D. Staff expertise and qualifications, staff knowledge and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. Supporting documentation (e.g., resumes, curricula vitae for key staff) should be included as part of your application package and can be referred to in this section. <p>Note: 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 from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (2.5 points for these subfactors). If you do not provide any response for these items, you will receive a score of 0 for these factors.</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds</p> <p>Applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and internal controls for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner while preventing waste, fraud, and abuse (5 points).</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Budget</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated on the reasonableness, necessity, allowability, and allocability (of costs) of the proposed budget for the level of work proposed and for the expected benefits to be achieved (20 points).</p> <p>This section will be evaluated based on two items:</p>	<p>20</p>

<p>A. Budget Table – This should be easy to understand and should link the expenses to the tasks and deliverables from the project narrative.</p> <p>B. Budget Narrative – This is used to provide a description of costs not easily understandable in the budget table.</p> <p>Evaluation will consider the organizational overhead (indirect costs), direct costs and ability to control costs versus anticipated results.</p> <p>Note: The budget should indicate which tasks can be scaled down or removed to reduce overall budget requests as the EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions of proposed projects.</p>	
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Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capability to successfully perform the project as described in [Section 3](#) of this funding opportunity.

Only eligible entities whose applications meet the threshold criteria in [Section 2](#) of this announcement will be evaluated against the review criteria in this section. **Applicants should explicitly address the review criteria as part of their application package submittal in the project narrative.** Each application will be rated using a point system. Applications will be evaluated based on a total of 150 possible points.

C. Review and Selection Process

Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in [Section 2](#). Only those applications which meet all the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria listed above by a review panel composed of federal agency staff and subject matter experts. Applications will be sorted by the primary focus area identified on the summary information page of the application. The secondary focus area identified may be used as needed to balance review teams. Applications may be further sorted by activity location. Review panels will rank the applications based on the criteria in [Section 6.B](#) and develop preliminary recommendations for funding to the Selection Official(s). A ranking list will be developed for each review team. Information pertaining to proposed recommendations may be shared with appropriate governmental departments or agencies before selections are made to determine whether potential selections (a) are expected to be funded by another funding source or (b) could be affected by permitting or regulatory issues. Final funding decisions will be made by the selection official. In making the final funding decision, the selection official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations and may also consider other evaluation factors described below.

Other Evaluation Factors

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

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

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

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

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

Pre-Award Costs: Recipients may incur otherwise eligible and allowable pre-award costs up to 90 days prior to award **at their own risk** without prior approval from EPA's award official. Pre-award costs must comply with 2 CFR 200.458 and 2 CFR 1500.9. If EPA determines that the requested pre-award costs comply with the relevant authorities, and that the costs are justified as allocable to the project, then these costs may be included as allowable expenditures at the time that the assistance award document is prepared. However, if for any reason EPA does not fund the application or the amount of the award is less than the applicant anticipated, then EPA is under no obligation to reimburse the applicant for these costs incurred. Thus, applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk. Costs incurred more than 90 days prior to award require the approval of EPA Region 4's grant official.

D. Risk Review

The EPA will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov., when doing the risk review as required by [2 CFR 200.206](#).

7. Award Notices

The EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made by the Administrative Contact listed in this funding opportunity: Matt Beiser, Gulf of America Division. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by EPA Region 4 Grants Management Office. Selection does not guarantee an award will be made. Statutory authorization, funding, or other issues during the award process may affect the ability of the EPA to make an award. The award notice, signed by an EPA grants officer, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms, which must be approved by the EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

8. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

A. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The recipient and any sub-recipient must comply with the applicable [General Terms and Conditions](#). These terms and conditions are in addition to the assurances and certifications made as part of the award, terms and conditions, and restrictions reflected on the official assistance award document.

Awards issued as a result of this funding opportunity are subject to the requirements of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; Title [2 CFR Part 200](#) and [2 CFR Part 1500](#).

B. Reporting

[EPA's General Terms and Conditions](#) in the Notice of Award will have information on performance and financial reports, including:

- How often you will report.
- Any required form or formatting.
- How to submit them.

C. Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

The Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires:

- Data entry at SAM.gov for all subawards and subcontracts you issue for \$30,000 or more.
- Reporting executive compensation for both recipient and subaward organizations.

9. Other Information

A. Additional Provisions for Applicants

Additional provisions that apply this funding opportunity and/or awards made under this funding opportunity, can be found at [EPA NOFO Clauses](#). If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact to obtain the provisions.

(1) Example of Demonstration Projects

- Algal growth and aquatic plant production and harvesting (Using nutrient in waterways)
- Strategic Wetland restoration to improve nutrient pollution removal
- Development of innovative materials or membranes that help remove excess nutrient pollution
- Innovative nutrient removal from water retention ponds
- Habitat creation, restoration
- Water management through subsidence, flood, and stormwater mitigation
- Infrastructure design, installation, and/or operation and maintenance
- Living shorelines
- Use case demonstration of *Sargassum* (from SIEs) as a resource

(2) Eligible Hydrologic Unit Codes

Table 9.1 Eligible Area by HUC

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

*portions that flow to the Gulf of America – see table 9.2

**portions within the United States

Table 9.2 Eligible portions of HUC 03 South Atlantic-Gulf Region

HUC4	Name
0309*	Southern Florida*
0310	Peace-Tampa Bay
0311	Suwannee
0312	Ochlockonee
0313	Apalachicola
0314	Choctawhatchee-Escambia
0315	Alabama
0316	Mobile-Tombigbee
0317	Pascagoula
0318	Pearl

*portions that flow to the Gulf of America - see table 9.3

Table 9.3 Eligible portions of HUC 0309 Southern Florida

HUC8	Name
3090203	Florida Bay-Florida Keys
3090202	Everglades
3090103	Western Okeechobee Inflow
3090201	Lake Okeechobee
3090101	Kissimmee
3090102	Northern Okeechobee Inflow
3090204	Big Cypress Swamp
3090205	Caloosahatchee