

Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Water Quality and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water

Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated 4/29/26

Note to Applicants: In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1) and consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement. In accordance with the Policy, EPA cannot meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications.

Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified above as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be clarified prior to submitting a proposal. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination.

Questions about this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by SmallSystemsRFA@EPA.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time, April 27, 2026. Written responses will be posted on [EPA's website](#). Please note answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), including relevant definitions, are available at [the same website](#). EPA strongly recommends interested applicants refer to the FAQs webpage prior to submitting a question.

Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications.

Categories

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A. Applicant Eligibility

A1: Am I eligible to apply for the Notice of Funding Opportunity?

Eligible applicants are nonprofit organizations, [public institutions of higher education \(IHES\)](#), and nonprofit private universities and colleges. Selected applicants are expected to provide direct technical assistance and training to assist small drinking water systems, small publicly-owned wastewater systems and onsite/decentralized wastewater systems, and private well owners.

For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply. States, municipalities, Tribal governments, and individuals are not eligible to apply. Nonprofit 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 to apply. The EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.

Consistent with Assistance Listing No. 66.436 and 66.424 and the EPA's Policy for Competition of Assistance Agreements (EPA Order 5700.5A1), this funding opportunity is being limited to a subset of eligible applicants.

A2: How does the EPA define nonprofit organization?

Consistent with the definition of Nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Note that 2 CFR 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. While not considered to be a nonprofit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this Notice of Funding Opportunity. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status; such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or Tribal law. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for the EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

A3: If I have questions regarding this announcement, will the EPA respond to them?

It depends. The EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement. Questions must be submitted via e-mail to (smallsystemsrf@epa.gov) by April 27, 2026. However, the EPA staff will NOT discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications.

A4: Can individual non-profit water systems apply for a grant to make improvements to their systems?

No, individual water systems are not eligible for funding under this announcement. It is designed to provide funding to eligible non-profit organizations (as described in Section 2, “Eligibility”, of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, quoted below), which in turn will provide training and technical assistance to eligible drinking water and wastewater systems and private well owners.

Section 2.A., “Eligible Applicants”, of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, states: “Only these types of organizations may apply:

- [Nonprofit organizations](#)
- [Public institutions of higher education \(IHEs\)](#)
- Nonprofit private universities and colleges

For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply. States, municipalities, Tribal governments, and individuals are not eligible to apply. Nonprofit 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 to apply. The EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.”

A5: Are public health agencies eligible to apply?

If your public health agency is an agency of your county government, then your public health agency is not eligible to apply. For this Notice of Funding Opportunity, the EPA does not consider units of government such as counties as well as their component agencies to be nonprofit organizations. See Section 2.A., “Eligible Applicants,” of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for additional information.

A6: Do you foresee any similar funding opportunities for which states will be eligible to apply?

In accordance with Section 2.A., “Eligible Applicants,” of the competitive announcement, states are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. The EPA cannot speculate regarding future grant opportunities in which states would be eligible to apply. You may wish to monitor the [Grants.gov](#) web site in the future to see if there are any other grant competitions that may include states as eligible applicants.

A7: To what extent will proposals that limit the geographic scope to a particular state be positively reviewed?

Please refer to Section 3.B., “Program Goals and Objectives.”

This section states:

“Applications for projects under all of the National Priority Areas described above should demonstrate the applicant’s ability and approach to making training and technical assistance available on a national basis. Applicants should make training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories (i.e., Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa), including to Tribally-owned and -operated systems, through a combination of face-to-face/onsite and remote training and technical assistance approaches. The training and technical assistance may include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance, or some other program design that makes training and technical assistance available nationally. Applicants should describe how they will reach out to Tribally-owned and -operated systems and how they will provide training and technical assistance to these systems. Please note the “Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis” evaluation criteria in Section 6.”

Please also refer to Section 6.B., “Review Criteria,” and evaluation criteria 2) Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis (worth a total of 26 points):

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for making training and technical assistance available nationally in a maximum number of states and U.S. territories (see Section 3 of this announcement) taking into account the following factors.

- i. The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates the ability to provide training and technical assistance in a maximum number of states and U.S. territories through face-to-face/onsite training and/or through remote or other alternative means. **(10 points)**
- ii. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an effective process for reaching out to Tribally-owned and operated systems and providing training and technical assistance to these systems. **(7 points)**
- iii. The extent and quality to which the applicant’s strategy utilizes flexibility to tailor the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience in as many states and U.S. Territories as possible. **(9 points)**

B. Project Eligibility

B1: Does an onsite/decentralized wastewater system include an individual home sewerage system?

A home septic system is an example of an onsite/decentralized system. The funding opportunity is intended for technical assistance activities that would help multiple onsite/decentralized systems (e.g., a community, a collection of houses, part of a watershed, a geographic region, etc.) to improve their performance. In Section 3.B. , “Program Goals and

Objectives,” of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, on- site/decentralized systems are defined as: publicly-owned or privately-owned onsite or clustered systems used to collect, treat, and disperse or reclaim wastewater from a small community, tribe or service area that are publicly or privately-owned and/or serve tribal communities (with the exception of systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities).

B2: What types of projects are eligible to apply for these funds? For example, I work with a number of small communities who need funds to conduct or update their technical, managerial, and financial assessments for water systems, do planning and/or design work for needed water or wastewater system improvements, and to construct improvements to their systems. Which of these activities would qualify? And can we request funds for specific communities, or does it have to be broader, i.e. across a number of states?

The types of activities and services that are eligible for funding are described in Section 3.B. “Program Goals and Objectives”, of the announcement, under “National Priority Areas.” Additionally, the funding opportunity is intended to provide training and technical assistance on a national basis. In accordance with Section 6.B., “Review Criteria”, criterion number 2, “Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis,” applicants will be evaluated on a number of factors, such as providing training and technical assistance in a maximum number of states and U.S territories, demonstrating an effective process for reaching out to tribally-owned and operated systems utilizing flexibility to tailor the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience.

Section 6.B., “Review Criteria,” criterion number 1, “National Priority Area”, asks applicants to describe a process for consulting with the appropriate regulatory authority in each state, Tribe, or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities. This process would take place before assistance is provided to individual communities or systems.

Also, note that this funding opportunity is designed to provide funding for eligible nonprofit organizations, nonprofit private universities and colleges, and public institutions of higher education (as described in Section 2.A. "Eligible Applicants" of the Notice of Funding Opportunity), which in turn will provide training and technical assistance to eligible drinking water and wastewater systems and private well owners.

For-profit organizations, states, municipalities, or tribal governments, and individuals are not eligible to apply. Nonprofit 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 to apply. The EPA may ask applicants to demonstrate that they are eligible for funding under this announcement.

B3: We have a population of 1,779 in our municipality and are currently undergoing a mandatory upgrade to our wastewater treatment facility. Will this project meet the criteria of the grant monies to be awarded, or is this type of grant for training only?

This funding opportunity is only for training and technical assistance projects. See Section 2.A.,

“Eligible Applicants”. “Infrastructure projects such as repairing water or sewer lines, adding new equipment, or upgrading, retrofitting, or rehabilitating existing equipment, are not eligible for funding under this announcement.”

B4: Are “urban” communities ok for us to service as long as they are below 10,000 in population? Is that the same for decentralized wastewater systems?

As indicated in the announcement, the systems targeted to receive training and technical assistance under National Priority Area 1 include “small public water systems,” which are defined as “community and non-community water systems serving a population of less than 10,000 persons.” The systems targeted for assistance under National Priority Area 2 are “small publicly-owned wastewater systems” or “onsite/decentralized wastewater systems.” “Small publicly-owned wastewater systems” are defined as “wastewater systems or treatment facilities that have permitted and actual flows of less than 1 million gallons per day (MGD) and are: owned by a public entity (such as a municipality) or not-for-profit entity (such as regional sewer districts), and/or serve tribal communities (with the exception of systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities).” “Onsite/decentralized systems” are defined as “publicly-owned or privately-owned onsite or clustered systems used to collect, treat, and disperse or reclaim wastewater from a small community, tribe or service area that are publicly or privately-owned and/or serve tribal communities (with the exception of systems that are owned by U.S. federal entities).” There is no size designation for onsite/decentralized systems, and as long as the criteria in the above definitions are met, any of the water and wastewater systems described above may be located in either rural or urban communities.

B5: If a county/municipality operates several distinct "systems" that are not connected to each other, and one of these distinct systems serves less than 10,000 people, would it qualify as a "small system," or do we aggregate all the distinct systems operated by single entity to determine "smallness"?

A distinct system serving less than 10,000, is eligible for receiving training or technical assistance from a grant recipient under this funding announcement. However, the Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires funding recipients to prioritize the use of their funds by working with the state or territory where they are providing assistance, to identify the systems in greatest need of assistance. The Notice of Funding Opportunity, Section 4.B., “Project Narrative Description” states that applicants should:

“Describe the roles and responsibilities of the applicant in carrying out the project elements. Describe the process for consulting with the appropriate regulatory authority in each state, Tribe, or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities. Include a process for reporting back to those authorities, to the EPA grant project officer, and to the appropriate EPA regional coordinators regarding the assistance provided and documented results. Describe the process for coordinating with other technical assistance providers to reduce duplication of efforts. If you are addressing National Priority Area 2, also describe your approach for addressing the two elements of that priority.

B6: Would regional in-person trainings satisfy the need to make it nationally available (rather than state by state)? Or would there need to be additional web based trainings for those unable to attend and in-person event?

Please refer to Section 3.B., “Program Goals and Objectives”:

“Applicants should make training and technical assistance available nationally in all 50 states and the U.S. territories (i.e., Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa), including to Tribally-owned and -operated systems, through a combination of face-to-face/onsite and remote training and technical assistance approaches.”

Please also refer to Section 6.B., *Application Review Information, Review Criteria*: “i. The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates an effective process for consultation with the appropriate regulatory authority in each state, Tribe, or territory prior to initiating training and technical assistance activities.” (7 points)

B7: Would training and TA that serves homeowners using rainwater catchment systems be an acceptable activity under NPA 3?

No. Please refer to Section 3.B., “Program Goals and Objectives.”. “Under this National Priority Area, the EPA is soliciting applications to provide training and technical assistance to private drinking water well owners. For the purposes of this announcement, a “private well” is defined as a well owned by a homeowner or group of homeowners that supplies drinking water to fewer than 25 people and contains fewer than 15 service connections.”

B8: What are example activities under National Priority Area 1?

Example activities include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Provide operator training and technical assistance such as: (1) on how to comply with National Primary Drinking Water Regulations (NPDWRs), with emphasis on regulatory requirements that present a particular challenge for small systems, such as the Ground Water Rule and the Disinfection and Disinfectant Byproducts Rules. Applicants should identify the specific rules that present these challenges in their applications, including any state rules that might apply; (2) assist operators with newer regulations such as the PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation, the Revised Total Coliform Rule requirements, and the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions requirements and related guidance; (3) address microbial, nitrate/nitrite, arsenic, radionuclides, lead and disinfection byproducts contamination; and (4) improve the knowledge and skill competency of drinking water system personnel in the areas of managerial and financial capacity.
- Provide technical assistance on applications to access water infrastructure funding.

- Provide training sessions for water system managers and board members in fiscal planning, communicating effectively with system customers, asset management program implementation, and development of financial assessments and rate analyses.
- Provide training to decision makers and board members on water infrastructure and operations as well as Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requirements and their responsibilities.
- Provide training and technical assistance to diagnose and trouble-shoot system operational and compliance-related problems and identify solutions.
- Provide training and technical assistance to systems to help develop and implement source water protection plans.
- Provide training and technical assistance to systems facing malevolent acts and earthquake impacts, drought, flooding, and other weather-related challenges.
- Provide training and technical assistance to community water systems to assist them with Safe Drinking Water Act section 1433/America’s Water Infrastructure Act section 2013 risk and resilience assessments and emergency response plan requirements.
- Conduct preliminary engineering evaluations to assess treatment, storage, and distribution system issues, and identify low-cost alternative technology and management techniques.
- Provide training and technical assistance on workforce development and training for operator certification and continuing education units (CEUs). Applicants should describe how they would obtain state approval for CEU credits for their training courses.
- Work with systems to evaluate opportunities of collaboration with other systems, including shared operators and treatment; and identification, restructuring, connection and consolidation of systems to support SDWA compliance and the provision of safe water to their communities.

The EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this National Priority Area. All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6, including how well and thoroughly the National Priority Area is addressed.

B9: What are example activities under National Priority Area 2, Element (a): Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems?

Examples of training and technical assistance activities for small publicly-owned wastewater systems that support this element include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Perform on-site trainings or technical solutions that focus on improving performance at local facilities (e.g., training on nutrient removal technologies, rate structures, and assessments of proper management of small publicly-owned

wastewater systems).

- Provide technical assistance on applications to access wastewater infrastructure funding.
- Provide training to operators, staff, and managers on effective management of small wastewater treatment systems.
- Provide training to help small wastewater treatment operators obtain and maintain certification.
- Conduct training visits, calls, or webinars to facilitate reaching small wastewater treatment systems nationwide on topics described in this element.
- Provide technical assistance to improve the skills of municipalities, publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment system personnel in the areas of technical, managerial, and financial capacity.

The EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of Element (a) of this National Priority Area.

B10: What are example activities under National Priority Area 2, Element (b): Training and Technical Assistance for Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems?

Examples of training and technical assistance activities for onsite/decentralized wastewater systems that support this element include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Assistance in accessing funds for communities with decentralized wastewater system projects.
- Development of preliminary needs analysis.
- Project planning, siting, and design.
- Development of outreach tools and materials to support facilitating regionalization and interconnection opportunities between septic owners and centralized wastewater systems.
- Development of maintenance schedules.
- Assistance forming responsible management entities ([RMEs](#)) and supporting the development of a long-term business plan.
- Outreach to individual system owners and the general public on the basics of decentralized systems, such as how they function and the wastewater treatment process.
- Outreach to individual system owners and the general public on proper preventative and corrective maintenance techniques.
- Assist publicly owned treatment works and decentralized wastewater treatment systems in conducting analyses on the potential benefits of partnerships and collaboration with other systems.
- Provide technical assistance to improve the knowledge and skill of municipalities, publicly owned treatment works and/or decentralized wastewater treatment system

personnel in the areas of technical, managerial, and financial capacity.

- Train community leaders, service providers, and regulatory officials to assist in considering funding access/mechanisms, construction alternatives, highlighting the importance of maintenance and management, and facilitating a properly trained workforce (e.g., certification of installers and operators).
- Develop or provide information, training, and technical assistance to organizations that work with decentralized wastewater system owners (e.g., county public health offices).

The EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of Element (b) of this National Priority Area. All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6, including how well and thoroughly the National Priority Area is addressed.

B11: What are example activities under National Priority Area 3?

Examples of eligible training and technical assistance activities for private drinking water wells that support this National Priority Area include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Educate private drinking water well owners through face-to-face visits regarding potential or actual threats to their wells and whom to contact for help.
- Provide technical assistance or outreach on options for connecting private wells to public water systems.
- Adequately staff a hotline with a toll-free number for private drinking water well owners to call for timely assistance and advice on private drinking water well matters.
- Develop or provide online and hard copy information and materials on topics of interest to private drinking water well owners, such as well construction, well maintenance and operation, well testing, ground water quality and protection, state regulations impacting private wells, water rights, and how to respond to well contamination emergencies.
- Provide assistance with identifying funding sources.
- Provide information, technical assistance, and training to other organizations with activities that affect private drinking water well owners.
- Provide electronic newsletters or using social media to provide topical or emergency information quickly to private drinking water well owners with internet access.

The EPA also encourages applicants to propose other types of activities that may achieve the objectives of this National Priority Area. All eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6, including how well and thoroughly the National Priority Area is addressed.

B12. Can the application focus on strengthening and expanding our already-established educational programs in-state, and then provide trainings/technical assistance for the use of

these curriculum/educational materials elsewhere? Do the trainings and technical assistance to the intended, national audiences have to occur throughout the course of the grant, or can the educational programs and materials strengthened/expanded/developed be made accessible during the grant period for the intended audiences? Should we have state/territory/tribal nation connections pre-established, or are these connections okay to establish during the course of the grant period?

For the Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Water Quality and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water grant program, selected applicants are expected to provide direct technical assistance and training to assist small drinking water systems, small publicly-owned wastewater systems and onsite/decentralized wastewater systems, or private well owners.

Training and technical assistance may take the following forms.

- Face-to-face and onsite training or technical assistance, which includes, for example, classroom training, workshops and exercises, site visits, and circuit-riders or other multi-state and/or regional approaches to provide onsite technical assistance.
- Remote training or technical assistance, which includes, for example, webcasts, video conferencing, routine conference calls, hotline and helpdesk access, online courses, and other forms of distance learning.

Training and technical assistance may also include developing and disseminating (through web posting and other means) various resources such as training and educational materials or tools that can be used nationally and/or with state or territorial-specific variations, as appropriate.

Applicants should indicate in their applications an estimate as to what portion of their training and technical assistance would be face-to-face and onsite versus remote training and technical assistance.

Applicants should describe their proposed approach for providing training and technical assistance throughout the project period. Training and technical assistance may be provided through face-to-face trainings and site visits or through remote learning approaches, taking into consideration the benefits of face-to-face assistance. This assistance may also include circuit-rider and multi-state regional technical assistance programs and training.

Applications will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section 6 including the demonstrated ability and described approach to making training and technical assistance available nationally in the maximum number of states and U.S. territories through face-to-face/onsite and/or remote training and technical assistance. The EPA will give priority consideration to applications that describe a thorough, quality, and flexible approach that

tailors the training and technical assistance techniques and resources to address the specific needs of the target audience in as many states and U.S. territories as possible.

Please refer to Section 6.B. of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. That section covers the number of points that are allocated per criteria, such as providing training and technical assistance on a national basis, which is worth 26 out of the 100 points. It is not a requirement to have state/territory/tribal national connections pre-established.

Please also refer to **B11: What are example activities under National Priority Area 3?**

C. Threshold Issues

C1: If I put charts and exhibits in my proposal can they be a smaller font than the 12 point font that is required of the body of the proposal?

The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not establish a required minimum 12 point font for the project narrative or any charts and/or exhibits; however, the Notice of Funding Opportunity does indicate that readability is of paramount importance. Section 4.A., “Application Forms” , , states in part:

“...It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative.”

The EPA recommends that all of the project narrative, including any charts and/or exhibits, is in a 12-point font.

C2: Is there a grant ceiling & floor for applications?

Yes. There is a maximum amount of federal funds applicants can request in their application, and a minimum amount of federal funds applicants may request. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Section 2.A., “Eligible Applicants,” states that:

“Applications for awards under National Priority Area 1 **must request at least the minimum of \$8,000,000 in federal funds and no more than \$13,000,000 in federal funds**; applications for awards under National Priority Area 2 must not request more than \$1,250,000 in federal funds; and applications for awards under National Priority Area 3 must not request more than \$3,450,000 in federal funds. Applications exceeding the maximum federal funding request amount for the applicable National Priority Area it addresses will be rejected.”

D. Evaluation Issues

D1: Will entities that already provide technical assistance to small public water suppliers have an advantage in the proposal selection? Is this NOFO primarily intended for national organizations that work with small water suppliers on an ongoing basis?

All eligible applicants, based on the threshold eligibility review, will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria provided in Section 6.B., “Review Criteria”. Applications will be evaluated on the applicant’s ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their programmatic capability, experience and community support. Under the past performance evaluation factors, applicants will be evaluated on their past performance. Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the application and they will receive a neutral score for the past performance criterion.

D2: Please provide additional clarity on what information EPA seeks applicants to address in sub criteria “ii. Plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project” of the workplan’s section 5? (pg. 26). The language could be interpreted in several ways and/or overlap with information in the other workplan sections such as milestone progress/plan for completing the project, (e.g., who will implement proposed activities and drive progress toward achieving objectives, how objectives are measured and tracked to demonstrate success, etc.).

Section 4.B of the NOFO has been revised to clarify that the evaluation subcriteria **5) Programmatic Capability/Experience/Community Support**, “ii. Plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project. **(7 points)**” is requesting a description of the applicant’s plan to timely and successfully complete the objectives of the project. Evaluation subcriteria **4) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget** “i. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, a plan for timely and successfully completing the proposed project, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. **(6 points)**” is evaluating the milestone schedule and plan to successfully complete the significant project tasks and project within the project period.

E. Timing and Logistics

E1: When does the EPA anticipate that awards will be announced?

The EPA anticipates making funding awards by Summer 2026, but this is only an estimate, and not a guarantee.

F. Budget Concerns

F1: The NOFO states a project period of up to two years. Do you anticipate that this type of funding will be available in future years?

This funding announcement is based on the EPA's budget and fiscal funding cycle.

F2: If an applicant applies for a certain amount...e.g., \$1,200,000...and after reviewing the applications the agency feels that the work in the proposal is eligible but that there is only \$750,000 available, would the agency go back to the applicant and invite a revised application for the lower amount? Or would the application be rejected because the amount was higher than the funds available?

The EPA would not necessarily reject an otherwise meritorious application if the Agency did not have adequate funding to provide the full amount the applicant requested, provided the applicant did not request more funding than the maximum amount specified in Section 2.A., "Eligible Applicants", of the NOFO.

Additionally, Section 1.F., "Other Funding Considerations" would apply:

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

F3: When determining cost share/match, can the average hourly wage of the trainees attending the courses be used as cost share?

No. Trainees would not be performing services for the applicant and, accordingly, their wages would not meet the standards at 2 CFR 200.306 for allowability as cost share. Applicants may pay trainee travel as a "participant support cost" with their own funds and include those costs as a match. Additional information is available in the [EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs](#)

F4: If the applicant develops curriculum for training delivery, can that curriculum be used as voluntary cost share/match? And if so, who then owns the curriculum?

Yes, provided the applicant can meet the requirements at 2 CFR 200.306 for documenting that the amount of cost share it claims reflects the fair market value of the curriculum. The applicant will “own” the curriculum. However, if the applicant uses the costs (i.e., personnel or contractor expenses) for developing the curriculum as cost share, the EPA would have a “federal purpose” license to use the curriculum under 2 CFR 200.315.

F5: If the applicant develops curriculum for training delivery, will the developer be able to use the material developed for systems not targeted by the grant? For example: municipalities larger than the target group.

Yes. The applicant will “own” the curriculum and can use it for its own purposes as long as the cost of the additional use of the curriculum is not charged to this grant.

F6: To reach private well owners, there is a need to market in unconventional ways, including advertising the training and technical assistance developed under this NOFO. Is it allowable to include advertising costs in the proposals for this NOFO, as long as the advertising is only used to market and promote training and technical assistance under this NOFO ?

Federal grant regulations and policies do not prohibit the use of grant funds to advertise the services offered by the grantee, as long as the advertising is specifically for making the intended audience aware of the specific training and technical assistance services available to them under this grant. General marketing of the grantee or its services outside of the scope of this grant would be beyond the scope of the grant and would not be appropriate. Details on what costs are allowable related to advertising and public relations are contained in https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-05/documents/recipient_guidance_selected_items_of_cost_final.pdf.

F7: Does the EPA have a limit on indirect costs that can be charged?

Prior to drawing down EPA funds for indirect costs (IDCs), and/or using unrecovered IDCs as cost-share, recipients must have an approved indirect cost rate and an EPA-approved budget that includes IDCs.. The IDC Policy defines current approved IDC rates as Federal negotiated rates as well as the , *de minimis* rate for eligible applicants without a current negotiated rate. Recipients and subrecipients that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate (including provisional rate) may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of up to 15 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). The recipient or subrecipient is authorized to determine the appropriate rate up to this limit. For more information, please read the EPA’s Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2018-g02>.

F8: Under this NOFO, are indirect/facilities and administrative costs eligible for a waiver of the cost share?

As described in the NOFO under 2.B., “Cost Sharing”,

“The non-federal cost-share/match may be provided in cash or can come from in-kind contributions, such as use of volunteers and/or donated time, equipment, expertise, etc., and is subject to the regulations governing matching fund requirements described in 2 CFR 200.306, as applicable.”

For more information, please read policy (Section 6.5) at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-08/documents/indirect-cost-policy-for-recipients-of-epa-assistance-agreements.pdf>) and EPA’s Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements (Section 6.7) at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-08/documents/indirect-cost-policy-guidance-for-recipients-of-epa-assistance-agreements.pdf>.

G. Funding Clarifications

G1: Can the funds for this grant program be used for the purchase of sewer maintenance/inspection equipment?

Equipment purchases solely for the purpose of providing training or technical assistance are eligible under this funding announcement. Equipment purchases would need to be included in the application budget and approved by the EPA as part of the final project work plan. In general, equipment purchases should represent a small portion of the total project budget. Equipment is defined in 2 CFR 200.1 as tangible, non-expendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$10,000 or more per unit. Recipients may establish a lower dollar threshold or different definition of equipment through their own written property management policies as long as the thresholds and definitions are consistent with the definitions of Equipment and Supplies in 2 CFR 200.1. The recipient’s lower threshold or different definition is binding. See also RAIN-2019-G02 [Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance](#)

H. Miscellaneous

H1: Will the EPA seek external reviewers for the Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Water Quality and Enable Small Public Water Systems to Provide Safe Drinking Water NOFO?

No. the EPA will not seek external reviewers for this announcement. Section 6.C., “Review and Selection Process”, of the NOFO states that a panel(s) comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications by National Priority Area based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section 6.B., “Review Criteria.”

H2: What systems will we work with, how are those systems chosen, who will choose them, and who has the contact information?

Identifying the small public water systems to work with will be the responsibility of the successful applicant. The EPA will evaluate your approach to identifying systems to serve under the “National Priority Area” and “Providing Training and Technical Assistance on a National Basis”, as described in Section 3.B., “Program Goals and Objectives”, of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

As required by Section 3.B., “Program Goals and Objectives”, of the NOFO,, the successful applicant must work with the appropriate regulatory authorities “...to identify the systems in greatest need of assistance...” Your application should describe a process that you propose to follow to assure proper consultation with the appropriate regulatory authority such as the state or territorial primacy agency or the EPA regional direct implementation coordinator.

H3: Does this NOFO require a Significant Financial Interests Disclosure (SFI) such as that required by some other funding agencies?

Under this funding announcement there is no requirement for a Significant Financial Interests Disclosure for key personnel or any equivalent requirement.

H4: Section 3.D., regarding anticipated substantial federal involvement, includes the statement “collaboration during performance of the scope of work”; Could the EPA provide examples of substantial federal involvement? Will the EPA provide trainers for workshops or simply be in attendance? Will the EPA assist in developing agendas for workshops?

Depending on the topic area and the specific location and timing of training or workshops, the EPA may sometimes choose to be in attendance. It is less likely but certainly appropriate, that on some occasions the EPA personnel may participate in developing workshop agendas or in conducting training activities in conjunction with the training being provided by the grantee and/or state regulatory officials. This would be determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the grantee and state regulatory officials.

H5: We are hoping to find more information or clarification on the two different applications offered (two different assistance listing numbers); we are not clear which application we should complete. Can you clarify the difference between the two applications?

Assistance listing Number(s):

66.424 -- Surveys, Studies, Investigations, Demonstrations, and Training Grants - Section 1442 of the Safe Drinking Water Act

66.436 -- Surveys, Studies, Investigations, Demonstrations, and Training Grants and Cooperative Agreements - Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act

If you are applying for:

National Priority Area 1 (Training and Technical Assistance for Small Public Water Systems to Achieve and Maintain Compliance with the SDWA, including Improving Financial and Managerial Capacity) you should use the application for **assistance listing number 66.424**.

If you are applying for:

National Priority Area 2 (Training and Technical Assistance for Small Publicly-Owned Wastewater Systems and Onsite/Decentralized Wastewater Systems to Help Improve Water Quality and Sustainable Operations) you should use the application for **assistance listing 66.436**.

If you are applying for:

National Priority Area 3 (Training and Technical Assistance for Private Well Owners to Help Improve Water Quality), you should use the application for **assistance listing 66.436**.

Applications will not be rejected solely for using an incorrect assistance listing number, and the number can be corrected later in the application process.

H6: Our research program has been working with private well owners in rural communities. We are considering submitting a proposal addressing Priority Area 3.

We have worked with the U.S. Geological Survey and state agencies in the past. Could they be sub-awardees of the grant? The eligibility criteria indicate, "States, municipalities, tribal governments, and individuals are not eligible to apply." What role could they play?

Generally, unless prohibited by statute, an entity/individual is eligible to receive a subaward even if it is not eligible to receive an assistance agreement. So, the state agencies could be eligible to be subawarders of this grant. However, one of the entities you inquired about, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), is a federal entity. OMB's revisions to the definition of Subrecipient in 2 CFR 200.1 and the regulatory coverage in 2 CFR 200.101, Applicability, provides that Federal agencies may receive subawards from pass-through entities when authorized by Federal statutes. In order to award a subaward to USGS, you must demonstrate that USGS has the statutory authority to receive subawards from pass-through entities.

Additional information regarding Contracts and Subawards can be found at:

<https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>.

H7: Is the EPA available to discuss the program and answer questions from an applicant on achieving the program objectives prior to submitting an application?

As described in Section 1.E., "Agency Contact Information", , the EPA staff cannot meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications. Section 1.E. states:

“Note to Applicants: In accordance with EPA’s Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1) and consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement. In accordance with the Policy, EPA cannot meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications.”

Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified above as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be clarified prior to submitting a proposal. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination.