

Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity

September 22, 2026

This presentation will be recorded.

Overview of Today's Briefing

- **Grant Background**

- Available Funding and Expected Awards
- Eligibility
- Project Areas

- **How to Apply**

- Required Documents
- Project Narrative Requirements
- Scoring Criteria

The Water Workforce: The Backbone of Safe Water and Wastewater Services

- America's water sector depends on hundreds of thousands of skilled professionals, "water protection specialists."
- These workers ensure communities have safe, reliable water and wastewater services every day.
- Recruiting, training, and retaining these workers is an increasing challenge.
- About one-third of the workforce may retire within the next 10 years, and new technologies demand new skills.

Grant Background

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is soliciting applications under the authority of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) section 1459E to accelerate career pipelines in the water utilities sector and provide access to water utility workforce opportunities.
- This action will help inform people about the role of water and wastewater utilities in their communities and increase the awareness of water utility career opportunities.

Available Funding & Expected Awards

Total funding of \$10.8million available

Project Area	# Of Awards Anticipated	Funding Range/Award	Funding Available
Project Area 1: Targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship	1-8 awards	\$1,000,000-\$7,800,000	\$7.8 million
Project Area 2: Education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students	1-4 awards	\$250,000-\$1,000,000	\$1 million
Project Area 3: Regional industry and workforce development collaborations	1-4 awards	\$250,000-\$1,000,000	\$1 million
Project Area 4: Training programs for decentralized workforce	1-4 awards	\$250,000-\$1,000,000	\$1 million

Eligibility

- Non-profit organizations: Nonprofit organization, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, means any organization that: (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 net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the organization's operations.
- Institutions of Higher Education: Institutions of Higher Education are defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001.... institutions of higher education who otherwise qualify as nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply as indicated in the Office of Management and Budget's July 2017 Frequent Questions on the Uniform Grant Guidance.
- Public works departments and agencies: Public works department or agency as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 300j-19e(a), means a political subdivision of a local, county, or regional government that designs, builds, operates, and maintains water infrastructure, sewage and refuse disposal systems, and other public water systems and facilities.

Important Dates

- **NOFO Questions Deadline:** September 14, 2026, EST.
- **Applications Due:** October 15th, 11:59pm EST.
- **Anticipated Notification of Selection:** January 2027
- **Anticipated Award Notification:** April 2027

Project Areas

- **Project Area 1** – Targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post secondary bridge programs for skilled water utility trades.
- **Project Area 2** – Education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students.
- **Project Area 3** – Regional industry and workforce development collaborations to address water utility employment needs and coordinate candidate development, particularly in small and rural areas, areas of high unemployment or for water utilities with a high proportion of retirement eligible employees.
- **Project Area 4** - Education and training programs, including internship or apprenticeship programs, designed for decentralized water workers (i.e., private well and/or septic system service professionals) to support public health outcomes for communities that rely on private wells for drinking water or decentralized systems for adequate treatment and disposal of wastewater.

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How to Apply

- Submit an application through GRANTS.gov
- Enter **EPA-OW-OWM-26-03** in the search bar.
- Register at SAM.gov to get a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) which you'll use in your application.

Threshold Requirements

- Meet all eligibility requirements in **Section 2**.
- Applications must address only one of the four Project Areas listed in **Section 3**. Applications that address more than one Project Area will not be reviewed.
- Under this NOFO, only one application can be submitted per applicant. If an applicant submits more than one application, EPA will contact them before the review process begins to determine which application(s) will be withdrawn.
- Applications must address all three required elements described in **Section 3.A**; Project Area, Geographic Area, and Innovative Approach.
- If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.
- Threshold Criteria are listed in **Section 6**.

Required Documents

Mandatory Documents:

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
- EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report
- Project Narrative Attachment Form: use this to submit your Project Narrative

Optional Documents:

- Other Attachments Form- Biographical Sketches
- Other Attachments Form- Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement, if applicable.

Project Narrative

- No more than **20 pages**
- **Must include:**
 - Cover Page
 - Executive Summary
 - Workplan
- More detailed description of each of the above items are listed in Section 4B of the NOFO

Project Narrative- Workplan

The workplan must address the following sections and align with the review criteria in Section 6B of the NOFO, for a more detailed description of each section please refer to Section 3A the NOFO:

1. Project Area
2. Geographic Area
3. Innovative Approach
4. Project Partnerships
5. Transfer of Results
6. Environmental Results and Measuring Progress
7. Milestone Schedule
8. Detailed Budget Narrative
9. Programmatic Capability and Experience
10. Past Performance

Scoring Criteria

Project Area: Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing the Project Area in Section 3.A.(1) of the NOFO that the application focuses on. In conducting this evaluation, the following factors will be considered (25 points)

1. The extent and quality of the overall approach to addressing the Project Area described in the application and the proposed community outreach strategies, particularly if the project will involve and benefit rural, small, and tribal communities. (10 points)
2. The extent to which the applicant describes the proposed approach to share (or make available) the project activities, the results of the project activities, and the lessons learned to geographically diverse areas. (7 points)
3. The extent to which the applicant includes innovative approaches in addressing the workforce needs of drinking water and wastewater utilities. (8 points)

Scoring Criteria

Project Partnerships (10 points)

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project, including whether they have provided a clear description of the roles, or planned roles, of each partner in the project's component/ tasks, and how these partnerships will contribute to the success of the project. If the applicant does not intend to have partners, then the applicant will be evaluated based on how they demonstrate they will be able to successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section 3.A.2 without the use of partners. (See Section 3.A.2 of this announcement)

Scoring Criteria

Transfer of Results (10 points)

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results, and methods and/or effective strategies to other water utilities, as well as states, tribes, and/or other interested stakeholders to assist them with building their drinking water and wastewater utility workforce (see Section 3.A.3. of this announcement)

Scoring Criteria

Environmental Results and Measuring Progress (10 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates:

- i. The potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American described in Section 3.B. of this announcement. (5 points)
- ii. A sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section 3.A.2. of this announcement). (5 points)

Scoring Criteria

Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget (15 points)

Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criteria.

- i. The adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (7.5 points)
- ii. The reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. Applicants will be evaluated based on the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are cost effective, reasonable, and allowable, including consideration of indirect/administrative costs. (7.5 points)

Scoring Criteria

Programmatic Capability/Experience (20 points)

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the following.

- i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project. (10 points)
- ii. Staff expertise/qualifications, cultural competency to effectively work with communities in the geographic area to be served, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. (10 points)

Scoring Criteria

Past Performance

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:

- (i) Past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements). (4 points)
- (ii) History of meeting reporting requirements under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements. (2 points)
- (iii) Extent and quality to which the applicant adequately documented and/or reported on their progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outcomes and outputs) under federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements), and if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately documented and/or reported why not. (4 points)



Thank you for your interest in this grant program!

Questions?