

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Centers of Excellence for Stormwater Control Infrastructure Technologies Grant Program

Announcement Type: Request for Applications (RFA)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-I-OW-OWM-23-04

Assistance Listing Number: 66.490

Dates: Application packages must be submitted electronically to EPA through Grants.gov ([Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)) no later than **11:59 PM ET, March 18, 2024, in order to be considered for funding.** Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the agency contact identified in Section VII before **March 1, 2024.** Written responses will be posted on EPA's website at: <https://www.epa.gov/npdcs/stormwater-centers-excellence-grant>.

Note to Applicants: Following the EPA's evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s), including individual consultants, in your application as partners to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at <http://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>.

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SECTION I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

Stormwater is a significant source of water pollution and a threat to ecosystems across the country. Climate change, land-use and development, and other stressors are exposing many communities to stormwater impacts that lead to flooding, water quality impairments, and soil erosion. In addition, many communities face financial challenges when trying to rectify their

stormwater issues due to the costs associated with construction, operation, and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure.

As the EPA supports continued progress to improve water quality and the safety and resilience of all communities, we are mindful that some communities have never been able to access stormwater infrastructure solutions critical to withstanding more extreme and unpredictable climate events. Nationwide, many communities need practical stormwater technologies and the scientific understanding of those technologies to effectively implement stormwater management solutions. Additionally, many communities are already dealing with climate impacts that exacerbate existing stressors and affect public health, degrade the quality of our waterways, and destabilize the critical water infrastructure we rely upon. Underserved communities are particularly vulnerable to these impacts. Vulnerable populations include low-income communities, children, elderly, Indigenous people, and Tribes. Investments in stormwater infrastructure can be one of the most effective tools to ensure clean water, create jobs, and establish more equitable water quality outcomes. The EPA supports cultivating resilient solutions to ensure stormwater infrastructure built today can properly and adequately manage future conditions and discharges.

To improve the effectiveness, cost efficiency, and protection of public safety and water quality, Congress authorized the EPA to develop a grant program to establish multiple Centers of Excellence for Stormwater Control Infrastructure Technologies (Centers of Excellence) nationwide (33 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 1302f). EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants for projects described in Section I.B., Project Areas, of this announcement. These Centers of Excellence will be dedicated to new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies as well as to developing funding approaches to address stormwater and sewer overflow needs.

The Centers of Excellence will play an important role in providing technical assistance, helping to ensure that underserved communities receive the assistance they need to access resources to support stormwater infrastructure improvements that protect public health, safeguard the environment, increase climate resilience, and mitigate environmental justice concerns.

B. Project Description

The EPA is soliciting applications from eligible entities to establish and maintain regional Centers of Excellence for new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies, with the goal of improving the effectiveness, cost efficiency, and protection of public safety and water quality. The EPA is also soliciting applications from eligible entities to create and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse to centrally collect and distribute the work of the Centers of Excellence. For the purposes of this announcement, “regional” or “geographical region” means consisting of two or more states.

The EPA is soliciting applications from eligible applicants in two Project Areas, as described below. Under this competition, only one application can be submitted per applicant under a Project Area. If an applicant submits an application under Project Area 1, they may then submit a separate application under Project Area 2. That is, an applicant cannot submit an application for Project Area 2 without submitting an application for Project Area 1. Each application submitted

under this announcement must address one, and only one, of the Project Areas described below. The cover page of each application package must clearly indicate the Project Area addressed in the application. While the EPA intends to make awards in all Project Areas, the EPA reserves the right to make more than one award in a Project Area and/or make no awards in a Project Area.

Project Area 1: Establish and maintain a regional Center of Excellence.

The EPA is soliciting applications to establish regional Centers of Excellence that will: i) conduct research on new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies, including stormwater and sewer overflow reduction, other approaches to water resource enhancement, alternative funding approaches, and other environmental, economic, and social benefits; ii) provide technical assistance to state, Tribal, and local governments to assist with the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of stormwater control infrastructure projects that use innovative technologies; and iii) collaborate with regional institutions of higher education and private and public organizations, including community-based public-private partnerships and other stakeholders.

Under this Project Area, the Centers of Excellence will be required to meet (virtually is acceptable) on a quarterly basis to coordinate with the other Centers of Excellence to avoid duplication of efforts.

The following sub-sections define the programmatic priorities under Project Area 1 of this RFA. All applications under Project Area 1 must address all sub-sections, i, ii, and iii. For each sub-section, the application must be relevant to the geographical region and climate (i.e., historical, current, and anticipated climate events) where the Center of Excellence will be located. Additionally, for each sub-section, the application should describe the approach they will use to reach diverse communities, of varying sizes, including urban, suburban, and rural communities that are in the greatest need of research, technical assistance, and collaboration on new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies, other approaches to water resource enhancement, and alternative funding approaches (e.g., low-income, disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, or historically underserved populations, have permit violations, future permit limits, etc.).

- i. Conduct research on new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies:** This research may include stormwater and sewer overflow reduction, other approaches to water resource enhancement, alternative funding approaches, and/or other environmental, economic, and social benefits. For the purposes of this announcement, “research” may include original research, a literature review, systematic review, and/or a meta-analysis. The applicant should describe how their proposed research will achieve the goal of improving the effectiveness, cost efficiency, and protection of public safety and water quality.

Examples of research topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The use of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater, either by building new or retrofitting existing controls, such as rain gardens, green roofs, pervious pavement, constructed wetlands, and others;
- Cost saving approaches to better construct, operate, and maintain stormwater control infrastructure technologies that are effective and protect

water quality;

- Enhancements of traditional asset management approaches to include effectiveness metrics like estimates of pollutant load and water quantity reduction associated with stormwater infrastructure;
- Enhancements of grey and green infrastructure solutions to increase the climate resilience of communities and stormwater infrastructure to the impacts of climate change;
- Smart technologies, which includes digital technologies such as sensors, controls, communication networks, or existing or new physical infrastructure; and
- Platforms to increase green infrastructure performance by integrating real-time weather forecasts, and system conditions to enable real-time decision making via monitoring, control and management.

- ii. Provide technical assistance to state, Tribal, and local governments to assist with the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of stormwater control infrastructure projects that use innovative technologies:** For the purposes of this announcement, the term “technical assistance” means a broad range of activities that supports and provides assistance to a community. These activities may include, but are not limited to answering phone calls, offering a webinar training, conducting a workshop at a regional or national meeting, addressing NPDES challenges, and providing access to information on stormwater funding. Applications should describe how the Center of Excellence will provide technical assistance that supports the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of stormwater control infrastructure projects to state, Tribal, local governments to implement stormwater control infrastructure projects that use innovative technologies. Technical assistance should also be provided to assist with the financial components of funding stormwater control infrastructure technologies and projects. Additionally, applications should also describe how the applicant will maintain a listing of communities’ stormwater control infrastructure and financial needs, as well as an analysis of new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies that are available.

Examples of technical assistance may include, but are not limited to:

- Finding ways to better manage stormwater under changing precipitation scenarios;
- Offering training to communities regarding research on emerging contaminants as well as technology effectiveness and cost to mitigate these contaminants related to stormwater control infrastructure projects.
- Developing a contact system for state, Tribal, and local governments to request technical assistance from the Center of Excellence.
- Diagnosing and trouble-shooting system operational and effectiveness-related problems.
- Providing information on state and federal stormwater requirements, permitting practices, and other long-term planning.
- Identifying funding sources options that will support the areas of design and construction of stormwater control infrastructure, including possible changes to better manage stormwater.
- Enhancing traditional asset management approaches.

- iii. **Collaborate with regional institutions of higher education and private and public organizations, including community-based public-private partnerships, and other stakeholders: The goal is to share findings, recommendations, and best practices with state, Tribal, and local governments, as well as institutions of higher education and private and public organizations, including community-based public-private partnerships and other stakeholders to strengthen regional stormwater approaches. The applicant should describe their proposed approaches to developing and implementing collaborative initiatives in the geographical region in which the Center of Excellence is located.**

Examples of collaboration may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting webinars on research and findings;
- Co-authorizing scientific publications and co-hosting workshops with other organizations;
- Collaborating with local community leaders and members (or community organizations) to identify areas of concern, gain their support and buy-in;
- Developing plain language factsheets, presentations, and other communication tools regarding the research conducted in an effort to collaborate with institutions of higher learning, state, Tribal, local government, municipalities, and other interested stakeholders;
- Developing graphics and other visualizations that may be used by others to convey information simplistically;
- Attending conferences, association meetings, and other events to conduct workshops, presentations, or any other form of engagement to share the research findings; and
- Promoting the national electronic clearinghouse to state, Tribal, local governments, and other interested stakeholders, such as other technical assistance providers.
- Promoting the work of the Centers with programs such as the state SRF programs, along with Tribes, territories, other federal agencies, local governments, and community groups, to meet the technical assistance needs of communities.

Project Area 2: Create and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse.

If an applicant submits an application under Project Area 1, they may then submit a separate application under Project Area 2. Under Project Area 2, the EPA is soliciting applications to create and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse. Applications should describe how they will develop, operate, and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse that contains information relating to new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies and posts information from the other Centers of Excellence. The national electronic clearinghouse should be populated with research, findings, technical assistance, recommendations, best practices, and outreach (e.g., trainings, webinars, fact sheets) from each Center of Excellence and promoted to other organizations to expand the availability of water technical assistance, including to disadvantaged and underserved communities.

The applicant's plan should describe how they will work with the other Centers of Excellence

to populate the clearinghouse and how it will promote the information among other technical assistance providers, government and other interested parties that can help engage the broader community, including harder-to-reach portions of the community. Additionally, the applicant selected to create and maintain the national electronic clearinghouse must meet with the EPA within the first quarter after the award is made to avoid duplication of efforts with the EPA's existing clearinghouses. Applicants may want to review the EPA's existing clearinghouses (i.e., the [Searchable Clearinghouse of Wastewater Technology](#) and the [Clearinghouse for Environmental Finance](#)) to minimize duplication of efforts as well as to ensure that the new national electronic clearinghouse is able to cross-coordinate with existing the EPA clearinghouses and to promote the Clearinghouse and its resources and tools among other technical assistance providers.

Finally, the applicant should describe the approach they will use to reach diverse communities, of varying sizes, including urban, suburban, and rural communities to promote and amplify the national electronic clearinghouse (e.g., low-income, disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, or historically underserved populations, have permit violations, future permit limits, etc.). The outreach should be provided in a culturally competent manner, cognizant of community sensitivities that support and build community trust and assist harder-to-reach portions of the community.

C. Project Partnerships

The EPA encourages collaboration and partnerships to better align stormwater management resources and accelerate the implementation of innovative stormwater infrastructure approaches. In their applications, applicants should identify those partnerships necessary to successfully conduct the project, including any regional partnerships. Under Project Area 1, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project within the geographical region and climate (i.e., historical, current, and anticipated climate events) where the Center of Excellence will be located. Additionally, applicants should consider community sensitivities and partners who possess the capability to engage the broader community, including harder-to-reach portions of the community. Under Project Area 2, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully develop, operate, maintain, and populate a national electronic clearinghouse.

Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components/tasks. If an applicant chooses not to partner, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's description of how it will successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.B without partners. If the applicant chooses to identify any partner entities who will receive subawards or procurement contracts (including consultants), please pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provision found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses> since the EPA will not consider their qualifications unless the applicant selects them in compliance with applicable regulations and provisions.

D. Transfer of Results

The application should include a description of the applicant's proposed approach for active transfer of project results (as defined in Section I.B., Project Areas), methods, and/or effective strategies to stormwater managers, states, Tribes, and/or other interested stakeholders. Under Project Area 1, this includes, but should not be limited to, plans for sharing all results and information from each Center of Excellence with the national electronic clearinghouse. Under

Project Area 2, this includes their plan for collecting the results and information from each Center of Excellence as well as promoting the national electronic clearinghouse. Reference Section I.B. of this announcement for additional information. Examples of ways to transfer results may include, but are not limited to:

- i. Sharing results through the national electronic clearinghouse;
- ii. Sharing the results with stormwater professionals, other relevant stakeholders, and stakeholder organizations via various platforms like webinars, published articles, websites, meetings, and conferences;
- iii. Promoting and amplifying the national electronic clearinghouse through published materials, websites, and conferences.

E. The EPA's Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Environmental Results

All applicants must demonstrate in their application how their project and proposed activities link to the EPA's Strategic Plan Goal and Objectives identified below. The EPA requires applicants adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7A1, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements, <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements>).

This announcement is consistent with the EPA's priority to provide for clean and safe water. The activities to be funded under this announcement support the EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (available at: <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>). Awards made under this announcement will support progress toward Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for all Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds.

All proposed projects must address the Strategic Plan Goal 5, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds, and 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 overall protection of human health and the environment by ensuring safe drinking water and preventing water pollution.

Outputs and outcomes are defined as follows:

Outputs: Environmental outputs (or deliverables) refer to an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during the project period.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 1, *Establish and maintain a regional Center of Excellence*, may include, but are not limited to:

- An increased number of published documents that reflect research findings on new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies and funding approaches;
- An increased number of identified cost saving measures for stormwater infrastructure design, operation, and maintenance;
- An increased number of operation and maintenance considerations to ensure resilience of stormwater infrastructure and ability to address

emerging contaminants;

- An increased number of classes (classroom or online) offered at community and technical colleges related to implementation (design, construction, and operation, and maintenance methods of innovative control infrastructure technologies and funding mechanisms;
- Development, distribution, and use of materials to raise awareness about innovative stormwater infrastructure control technologies as well as funding mechanisms;
- An increased number of disadvantaged communities with training and knowledge of available stormwater technology infrastructure funding and financing resources;
- Establishment of new regional partnerships with community organizations, educational institutions, utilities, or other organizations to address the stormwater infrastructure needs as well as financial mechanisms, which includes disadvantaged communities.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the cooperative agreement expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 2, *Create and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse*, may include, but are not limited to:

- An increased number of materials relating to new and emerging, but proven, stormwater control infrastructure technologies available online to the public.
- A publicly available website that is easy to navigate for both stormwater professionals and the public.
- Awareness of the national electronic clearinghouse by stormwater professionals and community organizations, educational institutions, utilities, and other organizations.

Outcomes: Environmental outcomes are the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to the environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature. Outcomes should be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within the assistance agreement funding period. Outcomes may be short-term (changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, skills), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (changes in condition of the natural resource).

Examples of potential outcomes from the cooperative agreements to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 1, *Establish and maintain a regional Center of Excellence*, may include, but are not limited to:

- An increased number of stormwater professionals that have been trained to implement innovative stormwater control infrastructure technologies, finance such technologies, and apply asset management programs for stormwater infrastructure;
- An increased number of technical assistance providers receiving knowledge and tools developed by the Centers of Excellence;
- An increased number of stormwater professionals that utilize operation and maintenance considerations to ensure the resilience of stormwater infrastructure to withstand climate events and build community resilience to climate change impacts;
- Increased awareness about stormwater control infrastructure technologies, benefits of green infrastructure, Clean Water Act requirements, mitigating emerging

contaminates related to stormwater, climate resilience solutions related to stormwater control technologies, and possible funding opportunities;

- Enhanced sustainable regional collaborations that support the long-term stormwater regional needs, taking into consideration disadvantage communities;
- An increased number of communities (especially small, rural, Tribal, underserved, and/or disadvantaged communities) that successfully understand and can access stormwater technology and financing opportunities for infrastructure projects;
- Greater community involvement by key stakeholder groups to increase buy-in on projects relevant to the local community.

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the cooperative agreements expected to be awarded under this announcement for Project Area 2, *Create and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse*, may include, but are not limited to:

- Increased public access to information relating to new and emerging, but proven, stormwater control infrastructure technologies.
- Visitors to the national electronic clearinghouse by stormwater professionals and community organizations, educational institutions, utilities, and other organizations from across the United States.
- Increased awareness about new and emerging, but proven, stormwater control infrastructure technologies.

As part of the Project Narrative, applicants will be required to describe how the project results will link the outcomes to the agency's Strategic Plan and this grant program's goal to establish Centers of Excellence. In addition, applicants will have to describe their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving expected outputs and outcomes. Additional information regarding the EPA's discussion of environmental results in terms of "outputs" and "outcomes" can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements> (see EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements).

F. Minority Serving Institutions

The EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available minds to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, the EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by including members of communities which may have not previously participated in such dialogues to participate in the EPA programs. For this reason, the EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III, including minority serving institutions (MSIs), to apply under this opportunity.

For purposes of this solicitation, the following are considered MSIs:

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#).
2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at [American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities](#).
3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. §

1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#).

4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions](#); and

5. Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at [Predominately Black Institutions](#).

G. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for the cooperative agreements expected to be made under this announcement is 33 U.S.C. 1302f. The U.S.C. 1302f authorizes the EPA to award grants to establish these Centers of Excellence.

H. Additional Provisions

Additional provisions that apply to sections III, IV, V, and VI of this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). These provisions are important for applying to this solicitation and applicants must review them when preparing applications for this solicitation. If you are unable to access these provisions electronically at the website above, please contact the EPA point of contact listed in this solicitation (usually in Section VII) to obtain the provisions.

SECTION II – AWARD INFORMATION

A. Amount of Funding

The total estimated amount of federal funding available under this announcement is approximately \$3,000,000, depending on agency funding levels, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. Under Project Area 1, the EPA anticipates awarding three cooperative agreements, and no more than five cooperative agreements. The EPA expects each award to range from a minimum of \$588,000 to no more than \$980,000. Applicants may not request more than \$980,000 in federal funding per application. Applications requesting more than \$980,000 are not eligible and will not be reviewed. While the EPA expects to make three awards, there is no guarantee that this will be done, and the EPA may award fewer or more cooperative agreements based on the quality of applications received.

Under Project Area 2, the EPA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement. The EPA expects the award to range from a minimum of \$30,000 to no more than \$60,000. Applicants may not request more than \$60,000 in federal funding per application. Applications requesting more than \$60,000 are not eligible and will not be reviewed. While the EPA expects to make one award, there is no guarantee that this will be done, and the EPA may award no awards based on the quality of applications received.

It is anticipated that the cooperative agreements funded under this announcement will have up to two-year project periods, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).

The actual award amounts and number of projects awarded under each of the Project Areas

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

In appropriate circumstances, 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.

The EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than anticipated. The EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions. Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

B. Type of Funding

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

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

The EPA does not have the authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient. The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.

Section III. Eligibility Information

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

A. Eligible Applicants

Consistent with Assistance Listing No. 66.490, eligible applicants under this competition are institutions of higher education, research institutions, and nonprofit organizations¹ that have demonstrated excellence in researching and developing new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies and with the core mission of water management. 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 EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611. Individuals and for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No cost share or match is required under this announcement.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that, if not met by the time of application submission, will result in the elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications that meet all these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement.

Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. An applicant must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III.A, Eligible Applicants, of this announcement at the time of application submission.
2. All applications must address Project Area 1 listed in Section I.B and must address all three sub-sections in Project Area 1. If an applicant submits an application for Project Area 2 but does not submit an application for Project Area 1, it will be rejected.
3. Under this competition, **only one application can be submitted per Project Area**. If an applicant submits more than one application per Project Area, the EPA will contact them before the review process begins to determine which application(s) will be withdrawn. If the applicant is not able to communicate a decision within 48 hours of being contacted, the EPA will accept the application received first by Grants.gov. Additional information regarding the one application per applicant requirement may be found in the FAQ document available at <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater-centers-excellence-grant>.
4. Applications for awards under Project Area 1 cannot request more than \$980,000 in federal funds. Applications for Project Area 1 requesting more than \$980,000 in federal funds will be rejected. Applications for awards under Project Area 2 cannot request more than \$60,000 in federal funds. Applications for Project Area 2 requesting more than

¹ Consistent with the definition of Nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Note that 2 CFR 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation. While not considered to be a nonprofit organization(s) as defined by 2 CFR 200.1, public or nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education are, nevertheless, eligible to submit applications under this RFA. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible.

\$60,000 in federal funds will be rejected. Additional information regarding funding levels is available in Section II.A, Amount of Funding.

5. Applications must **substantially comply** with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV, Application and Submission Information, of this announcement or they will be rejected. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV.D.2 with respect to the Project Narrative, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Section IV.D.2 establishes a **12-page, single-spaced Project Narrative page limit**. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
6. In addition, initial applications must be **submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)** as stated in **Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV)**. Applications must be submitted on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for following the submission instructions in Section IV of this announcement to ensure that their application is properly timely submitted.
7. Applications submitted after the submission deadline will be considered late and deemed ineligible without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to the EPA mishandling or due to technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant System for Award Management (SAM) (<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>) system issues. An applicant's failure to timely submit their application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will not be considered as an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their application via e-mail with Caroline Oswald at stormwatercenters@epa.gov within five business days after the submission deadline – failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
8. 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.

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

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

A. Requirement to Submit Through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under this funding opportunity based on the grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If your organization has no access to the internet or access is very limited, you may request an exception for the remainder of this calendar year by following the procedures outlined [here](#). Please note that your request must be received at least 15 calendar days before the application due date to allow enough time to negotiate alternative submission methods. Issues with submissions with respect to this opportunity only are addressed in Section C. *Technical Issues with Submission* below.

B. Submission Instructions

1. SAM.gov (System for Award Management) Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using [login.gov](https://sam.gov/login) to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization's legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday - Friday 8am - 8pm ET.

2. Grants.gov Registration Instructions

Once your SAM.gov account is active, you must register in Grants.gov. Grants.gov will electronically receive your organization information, such as e-Business (EBiz) point of contact email address and UEI. Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active Grants.gov registration. Grants.gov registration is FREE. If you have never applied for a federal grant before, please review the [Grants.gov Applicant Registration](#) instructions. As part of the Grants.gov registration process, the EBiz point of contact is the only person that can affiliate and assign applicant roles to members of an organization. In addition, at least one person must be assigned as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only person(s) with the AOR role can submit applications in [Grants.gov](#). Please review the [Intro to Grants.gov-Understanding User Roles](#) and [Learning Workspace - User Roles and Workspace Actions](#) for details on this important process.

Please note that this process can take a month or more for new registrants. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this

opportunity through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the application submission deadline.

Contact [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov to resolve technical issues with Grants.gov. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. The Grants.gov Support Center is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays.

3. Application Submission Process

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and click the red “Apply” button at the top of the view grant opportunity page associated with this opportunity.

The electronic submission of your application to this funding opportunity must be made by an official representative of your organization who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal financial assistance. If the submit button is grayed out, it may be because you do not have the appropriate role to submit in your organization. Contact your organization’s EBiz point of contact or contact [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Applicants need to ensure that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose UEI is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the UEI listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM.gov account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

4. Application Submission Deadline

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than **March 18, 2024, at 11:59 PM ET**. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

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

C. Technical Issues with Submission

If applicants experience technical issues during the submission of an application that they are unable to resolve, follow these procedures **before** the application deadline date:

1. Contact Grants.gov Support Center **before** the application deadline date.
2. Document the Grants.gov ticket/case number.
3. Send an email with the FON, EPA-OW-OWM-23-04, in the subject line to stormwatercenters@epa.gov **before** the application deadline time and date and **must** include the following:

- a. Grants.gov ticket/case number(s);
- b. Description of the issue; and
- c. 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.

The EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by-case basis. EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to submit through Grants.gov due to Grants.gov or relevant [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is **not** an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov.

D. Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
4. EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance Review Report
5. Narrative Proposal (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in Section IV.D.2 of the announcement

Optional Documents:

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

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from EPA (not from Grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact **Caroline Oswald** at stormwatercenters@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

E. Content of Application Package Submission

Applicants should read the following section very carefully. A complete application package

must include the following documents described below.

1. Application Materials

- a. **Signed Standard Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance.** Complete the form and have it signed. There are no attachments.
- b. **SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.** The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of the SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the total amount of indirect cost should also be indicated on line 22. If indirect costs are requested, a copy of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement must be submitted as part of the application package. In Section B, Budget Categories column (1) should be filled out for federal funds, column (2) should be filled out for any non-federal cost- share/match, and column (5) should be filled out for total project cost (combined federal funds and any non-federal cost- share/match).
- c. **EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54.** Complete the form. Attach additional forms as needed.
- d. **EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report.** Complete the form. There are no attachments.
- e. **Project Narrative. See Section IV.D.2** (Project Narrative) for details on specific information that must be included. When developing the Project Narrative, applicants should refer to Section I.B, I.C., and I.D of the announcement for the project description.
- f. **Other Attachments Form**
 - **Biographical Sketches.** Submit a biographical sketch of each major project manager, support staff member, or other major project participant for the proposed project.
 - **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (if applicable). The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is not included in the twelve (12) page single-spaced Project Narrative page limit. See [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information about indirect cost rates.

2. Project Narrative

NOTE: The Project Narrative must include sections A-C below. The Project Narrative (covering sections A-C below) is limited to no more than twelve (12) typewritten, single spaced 8.5x11-inch pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper) including the cover page and executive summary. Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins. While these guidelines establish the minimum type size recommended, applicants are advised that

readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the Project Narrative. **Additional pages beyond the 12-page limit will not be considered.** Supporting materials, which are limited to no more than the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate agreement, if applicable, and Biographical Sketches documentation, as described below, are not included within the page limit.

The application's Project Narrative must be typewritten and must include the information listed below. If a particular item is not applicable, clearly state this in the Project Narrative.

A. Cover Page (included in the page limit)

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

B. Executive Summary: Provide a brief summary of the proposed project (should not exceed one page). This should include a brief description of the proposed project and the anticipated environmental outputs and outcomes.

C. Workplan: The workplan must address the following elements:

1. **Project Areas:** Describe the proposed approach for addressing one of the Project Areas described in Section I.B of this announcement. If applying under Project Area 1, describe the proposed approach to establishing a regional Center of Excellence that will conduct research, provide technical assistance, and collaborate with regional institutions. If applying under Project Area 2, describe the proposed approach to developing, operating, and maintaining a national electronic clearinghouse.
2. **Project Partnerships:** Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects under this announcement. In their applications, applicants should identify those partnerships necessary to successfully conduct the project, including any regional partnerships. Under Project Area 1, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project within the geographical region and climate (i.e., historical, current, and anticipated climate events) where the Center of Excellence will be located. Additionally, applicants should consider community sensitivities and partners who possess the capability to engage the broader community, including harder-to-reach portions of the community. Under Project Area 2, applicants should identify appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully post information from the other Centers of Excellence. Applicants should also include a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of specific partners, or planned partners, in the project's components/tasks. If applicants choose not to partner, applications will be evaluated based on how the applicant will successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.B without partners.

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a

single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient (the “pass-through entity”). Subawards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with the EPA’s [Subaward Policy](#). The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to the EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332, subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding.

For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. 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.

3. **Transfer of Results**

Applications should include a description of the applicant’s plan for active transfer of project results, methods and/or effective strategies to states, Tribal, local governments, and other decision makers in an effort to assist with design, construction, operation, and maintenance of stormwater control infrastructure projects. Under Project Area 1, this includes their plan for sharing all results and information from each Center of Excellence through a national electronic clearinghouse. Under Project Area 2, this includes their plan for collecting the results and information from each Center of Excellence as well as promoting the national electronic clearinghouse. Reference Section I.D. of this announcement for additional information.

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

- a. Stated Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan - List the objective of the project and the linkage to EPA’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, (available at: <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>). Awards made under this announcement will support progress toward Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for all Communities, Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds. (See Section I.E of this announcement).
- b. Results of Activities (Outputs) - Describe the anticipated products/results that are expected to be achieved from the project. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.E of this announcement).
- c. Projected Environmental Improvement (Outcomes) - List the anticipated environmental improvements that will be accomplished as a result of the project.

These improvements are changes or benefits to the environment or public health that are a result of the accomplishment of the work plan commitments and outputs. Describe an approach for tracking and reporting progress toward achieving the expected project outcome(s) (examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.E of this announcement).

5. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a projected milestone schedule for the proposed project period. The milestone schedule should provide a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and a timeframe for completion of tasks. The schedule should also demonstrate an approach for ensuring that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. The project start date will follow award acceptance by the successful applicant.
6. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget found in the SF-424A such as “other” and “contractual.” EPA’s [*Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance*](#) is a tool that may be used by applicants of EPA funds when preparing proposed work plans, budgets, and budget narratives for EPA assistance agreements.
 - a. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total cost. All subgrant funding should be located in the “other” cost category. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for the EPA to determine the allowability of costs for each project component/task, as well as the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs.
7. **Programmatic Capability/Experience:**
 - a. Organizational Experience - Provide a brief description of the applicant organization, experience, and infrastructure as it relates to its ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
 - b. Staff Expertise/Qualifications - Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their experience, expertise, qualifications, and/or knowledge, as well as resources or the ability to obtain them, in order to successfully achieve the goals of the project.
8. **Past Performance:** Briefly describe federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements, but not contracts) that the applicant performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements). If the applicant had any EPA agreements in the last three years, those are preferred to be included. Please provide the following information.
 - a. Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
 - b. Describe your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports.

- c. Describe how you documented and/or reported on whether you were making progress towards achieving the expected results (i.e., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If you were not making progress, please indicate whether, and how, you documented why not.

Note: In evaluating an applicant's past performance, the agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and/or from current and prior federal agency grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, please indicate this in the application, and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V. Failure to provide any programmatic past performance or reporting information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, may result in a zero score for these factors (see also Section V).

Note: The applicant should also provide in the Project Narrative any additional information, to the extent not already addressed above, that addresses the selection criteria in Section V.

9. **Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)** (not counted in page limit for the Project Narrative): If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.B, Quality Assurance/Quality Control, of this announcement for additional information). **Note:** Development of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is required of all EPA assistance agreements that fund data collection and/or assessment and information analysis. The cost of the QAPP development should be included in the project budget.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) must be **received** by **11:59 PM ET March 18, 2024**. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

SECTION V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

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

A. Selection Criteria

All applications will under-go an eligibility review using the Section III.C threshold eligibility criteria. Eligible applicants will then be evaluated using the evaluation criteria and weights below (100 total point scale). Points will be awarded based on how well and thoroughly each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the application package.

**(30
points)**

1) Project Areas

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on their ability and approach for effectively addressing one of the Project Areas in Section I.B of this RFA. In conducting this evaluation, the following factors will be considered:

- i. The extent and quality of the overall approach to addressing the Project Area described in Section I.B of this announcement, including how the proposed project supports new and emerging stormwater control infrastructure technologies. Applications for Project Area 1 will be evaluated based on how well the applicant demonstrates how the project will conduct research, provide technical assistance, and collaborate. Applications for Project Area 2 will be evaluated based on how well the applicant demonstrates how the project will develop, operate, and maintain a national electronic clearinghouse (20 points).

- ii. The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates an approach to reaching diverse communities, of varying sizes, including urban, suburban, and rural communities (e.g., low-income, disproportionate environmental and public health impacts, or historically underserved populations, have permit violations, future permit limits, etc.) (10 points).

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| (10 points) | <p>2) Project Partnerships Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate appropriate and necessary partnerships to successfully conduct the project. This includes whether they have provided a clear description of the roles, or planned roles, of each partner in the project’s component/ tasks, and how these partnerships will contribute to the success of the project. If the applicant does not intend to have partners, then the applicant will be evaluated based on how they demonstrate they will be able to successfully conduct the project and meet the objectives described in Section I.B without the use of partners. (see Section I.C. of this announcement). (10 points)</p> |
| (10 points) | <p>3) Transfer of Results Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate the applicant’s plan for active transfer of technical and financial research results, methods, and/or effective strategies to stormwater managers, states, Tribes, and/or other interested stakeholders to assist them with the design, construction, operation, and maintenance, as well as financial facets of stormwater control infrastructure projects. This includes their plan for sharing all results and information from each Centers of Excellence through a national electronic clearinghouse (see Section I.D of this announcement). (10 points)</p> |
| (10 points) | <p>4) Environmental Results and Measuring Progress Applications will be evaluated based on each of these sub-criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to EPA’s Strategic Plan described in Section I.E of this announcement. (5 points) ii. The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes (examples of outputs and outcomes can be found in Section I.E of this announcement). (5 points) |
| (15 points) | <p>5) Milestone Schedule/Detailed Budget Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application addresses each of the following sub-criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The adequacy and completeness of the milestone schedule, including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project tasks, and an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (7 points) ii. The reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each project component/task, and the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget, and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. The cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs will be evaluated. (8 points) |

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| (10 points) | <p>6) Programmatic Capability/Experience</p> <p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant’s ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and the organizational infrastructure as it relates to the ability to successfully implement the proposed project (10 points) |
| (15 points) | <p>7) Past Performance</p> <p>Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) similar in size and scope to the proposed project performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements). (5 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) similar in size and scope to the proposed project performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements. (5 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. (5 points) <p>Note: In evaluating applicants under (i), (ii) and (iii) above, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and/or prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance information or reporting history must indicate that in the application and they will receive a neutral score for the factor (i.e., 2.5 points for items (i), (ii), and (iii)).</p> <p>Failure to provide any past performance information, or to include a statement that you do not have any relevant or available past performance information, may result in a zero score for these factors.</p> |

C. Review and Selection Process

All timely submitted applications will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Applications that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

A panel(s) comprised of EPA staff will review the eligible applications by Project Area based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. Ranking lists will be developed based on the panel evaluations for each Project Area. The ranking lists will be provided to the Selection Official, who makes the final funding decisions. In making the final funding decisions, the Selection Official will consider the application score/ranking on each ranking list and may also take into account other factors such as geographic distribution, diversity of projects, and availability of funds. As noted above, while the EPA expects to make three awards under Project Area 1 and one award under Project Area 2, it reserves the right not to do so and to reconsider the number of awards. While EPA intends to make awards, the agency reserves the right to make no awards.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

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

A. Award Notices

Following the EPA's evaluation of the applications, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified regarding their status. The notification will be made to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance or the project contact listed in the application. The notification, which informs the applicant that its application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Grants Management Branch.

Applicants are cautioned that only an Award Official is authorized to bind the Government to the expenditure of funds; selection does not guarantee an award will be made. For example, statutory authorization, funding or other issues discovered during the award process may affect the ability of the EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA Award Official, is the authorizing document and will be provided through electronic or postal mail. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g., workplan), which must be approved by the EPA, before the assistance agreement can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of an assistance agreement can take up to 90 days or longer.

The EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final assistance agreement amount and work plan narrative prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with agency policy including the Assistance Agreement Competition Policy, EPA Order 5700.5A1. An approvable final work plan narrative is required to include:

1. Components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each component;
3. Commitments for each component and a timeframe for their accomplishment;
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule; and

5. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and the EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the commitments.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The general award and administration process for assistance agreements are governed by regulations at 2 CFR 200 and 1500, as applicable.

C. Reporting

In general, recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and activities supported by the assistance funding, to assure compliance with applicable federal requirements, and for ensuring that established milestones and performance goals are being achieved. Performance reports and financial reports must be submitted quarterly and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 120 days after the assistance agreement has expired. Recipients will be required to report direct and indirect environmental results from the work accomplished through the award. In negotiating assistance agreements, the EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the work plan consistent with 2 CFR 200 and 1500.

D. Disputes

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at [Grant Competition Dispute Resolution Procedures](#). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement. Note, the FR notice references regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding the regulatory changes, the procedures for competition-related disputes remains unchanged from the procedures described at 70 FR 3629, 3630, as indicated in 2 CFR Part 1500, Subpart E.

Section VII. Agency Contact

A. Note to Applicants: In accordance with the EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), the EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, 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 any of the language or provisions in the announcement. Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified in Section VII of this announcement as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be resolved prior to submitting an application. In addition, if necessary, the EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination.

Questions about this RFA must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified below by **March 1, 2024**. Written responses will be posted on the EPA's website at <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater-centers-excellence-grant>.

Agency Contact: Caroline Oswald
stormwatercenters@epa.gov

Section VIII. Other Information

A. Data Sharing

All recipients of these assistance agreements may be required to share any data generated through this funding agreement as a defined deliverable in the final work plan.

B. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)

Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) requirements may apply to these grants (see 2 CFR 1500.12). QA/QC requirements apply to the collection of environmental data. Environmental data are any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology. Environmental data include information collected directly from measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature. Successful applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process. EPA can assist successful applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the successful applicant may work with EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project.