

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

TITLE: Chesapeake Bay Program Office Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Applications for Capacity Expansion and Integration of Citizen-based Monitoring and Nontraditional Monitoring Partners into the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Initial Announcement - Request for Applications (RFA)

RFA NUMBER: EPA-R3-CBP-21-02

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 66.466

IMPORTANT DATES

02/16/2021	Issuance of RFA
03/31/2021	Application Submission Deadline (see Section IV for more information)
04/23/2021	Approximate date for EPA to notify applicants of results
04/29/2021	Approximate date for applicant(s) to submit revised federal cooperative agreement application
05/08/2021	Approximate date of award

EPA will consider all applications that are submitted via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm EST on **March 31, 2021** and consider any applications submitted after the due date as ineligible. EPA will only accept applications submitted via Grants.gov, except in limited circumstances where applicants have no or very limited Internet access (see section IV.).

COVID-19 Update: EPA is providing flexibilities to applicants experiencing challenges related to COVID-19. Please see the **Flexibilities Available to Organizations Impacted by COVID-19** clause in Section IV of [EPA's Solicitation Clauses](#).

SUMMARY

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office (CBPO) is announcing a Request for Applications (RFA) for applicants to provide the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) non-federal partners with support for further expanding the capacity of citizen-based and nontraditional environmental monitoring programs and integrating these programs into the CBP partnership's existing monitoring networks. Citizen-based monitoring programs are routine environmental data collection efforts carried out by volunteers and overseen and coordinated by a given organization. Nontraditional monitoring programs are defined here as routine environmental data collection carried out by a given organization or agency and may include local governments, conservation districts, or nongovernmental organizations (academia, river basin commissions, watershed organizations, etc.) that are currently not formally part of the CBP partnership's existing monitoring networks. Expanding capacity of citizen-based and nontraditional partner monitoring programs will enable more partner organizations to conduct monitoring that can be utilized by the CBP partnership and its members to address CBP

programmatic data gaps. Further integration of citizen-based and nontraditional partner monitoring programs into the CBP partnership’s monitoring networks through a strategic data gap-filling approach will provide additional cost-effective data and information that supports shared decision-making and adaptive management by the CBP partners focused on restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

The work outlined for completion under this agreement includes providing technical, logistical, training, networking, communication, and outreach support for the expansion of CBP monitoring capacity. Integration of data occurs based on applications of regionally consistent data collection protocols aligned with existing or developing watershed and tidal monitoring program networks that support CBP information and analysis needs. Monitoring capacity expansions are conducted in coordination with efforts under nontraditional partners’ monitoring programs. Collaborations on data collection with monitoring partners may involve monitoring groups adopting new networks, engaging existing network activities, or integrating an activity in a portion of, or throughout, their total network operation depending on the level of involvement by the groups. Activities to address CBP data gaps and needs are identified and directed with coordination of the CBP Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting (STAR) Team.

The CBP partners include federal agencies, seven watershed jurisdictions, and many non-federal organizations; however, work funded under this RFA will support the seven watershed jurisdictions and other non-federal partners. The seven watershed jurisdictions are Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

FUNDING/AWARDS: This RFA will cover the project period up to and including six years from an expected start date of May 08, 2021. CBPO plans to award one cooperative agreement under this RFA. The total estimated funding for six years is approximately \$2,700,000-\$3,000,000 with an estimated \$450,000 to \$500,000 available for the first year and each additional year. There is no guarantee of funding throughout this period or beyond.

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

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I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Background

1. About the Chesapeake Bay Program

The Chesapeake Bay is North America's largest and most biologically diverse estuary. A resource of extraordinary productivity, it is worthy of the highest levels of protection and restoration. Authorized by Section 117 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. Section 1267, the Chesapeake Bay Program is responsible for supporting the Chesapeake Executive Council through many actions, including the coordination of federal, state, and local efforts to restore and protect living resources and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Section 117 also authorizes EPA to provide assistance grants to support the goals of the program.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a unique regional partnership that has led and directed the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. The CBP partners include the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body; EPA, representing the federal government; and participating citizen, local government, and scientific and technical advisory groups.

The CBP partnership is guided at the direction of the Chesapeake Executive Council (Executive Council). The Executive Council sets the policy direction for the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed and uses its leadership to rally public support for Chesapeake Bay and watershed restoration and protection. The Executive Council also signs directives, agreements, and amendments that set goals and guide policy for Chesapeake Bay and watershed restoration and protection.

The Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) acts as the senior policy advisor to the Executive Council, accepting items for Executive Council consideration and approval and setting agendas for Executive Council meetings. The PSC also provides policy and program direction to the Management Board.

The Management Board provides strategic planning, priority setting, and operational guidance through implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, accountable implementation strategy for the Chesapeake Bay Program. It directs and coordinates all of the Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) and their respective workgroups.

The membership of the GITs and the Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team includes federal and non-federal experts from throughout the watershed. Thus, academic experts, advocacy organizations, and others become active members of the broad Chesapeake Bay and watershed restoration and protection partnership.

Pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 117(b)(2), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267(b)(2), the Chesapeake Bay Program Office is the office within EPA charged with providing support to the Executive Council in the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Bay Program Office and Chesapeake Bay Program, both mentioned above, are two distinct entities.

2. 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

On June 16, 2014, the Chesapeake Executive Council, CBP's governing body signed a new voluntary Chesapeake Bay agreement (referred to as *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* throughout this RFA) that will guide the CBP partnership's work into the future. For the first

time, Delaware, New York, and West Virginia signed the agreement as full CBP partners in the overall effort. This agreement is one of the most comprehensive restoration plans developed for the Chesapeake region, providing greater transparency and accountability of all CBP partners. With 10 interrelated goals and 31 outcomes, this watershed-wide accord advances the restoration, conservation, and protection of all the lands and waters within the 64,000-square-mile watershed by promoting sound land use, environmental literacy, stewardship, and a diversity of engaged citizens. Additionally, the goals and outcomes aim to better protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay's living resources, water quality, and vital habitats. The new *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* also recognizes the unique and vital role local governments play and how they are essential to the restoration effort.

This cooperative agreement will help fulfill the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* outcomes under several of the agreement's goals.

B. Program Goals, Objective, and Scope of Work under Assistant Listing Number 66.466

This RFA is seeking cost-effective applications from eligible applicants for providing the CBP non-federal partners with support for expanding capacity of citizen science and nontraditional monitoring programs and integrating these programs into the CBP partnerships' tidal and watershed monitoring networks using regionally consistent protocols supporting existing and developing information needs. This work will provide the partners with additional data and information that address the data gaps identified during CBP's Strategy Review System (SRS) process and tracked through STAR's Strategic Science and Research Framework (SSRF), and supports shared decision-making on Chesapeake Bay and watershed restoration efforts (See <https://star.chesapeakebay.net/>).

The state- and EPA-funded CBP partnership water quality and biological resource monitoring programs and networks include:

- 1) The Chesapeake Bay tidal water quality monitoring program with 161 long-term water quality monitoring stations sampled annually at a biweekly to monthly frequency for a suite of physical, chemical, and biological parameters;
- 2) The Chesapeake Bay tidal benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring program;
- 3) The Chesapeake Bay tidal water submerged aquatic vegetation aerial survey and ground truth monitoring program;
- 4) The Chesapeake Bay river input monitoring program on the nine major tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay;
- 5) The Chesapeake Bay watershed non-tidal water quality monitoring network of 115 stations sampled on average 20 times per year for chemical conditions and coordinated with real-time stream and river flow monitoring across a wide range of watershed sizes; and,
- 6) Coordination of citizen science monitoring groups sampling for water quality and benthic macroinvertebrates.

The CBP partnership is also investigating new monitoring data streams and technologies, including remote sensing and satellite-based imagery, fixed-site continuous monitoring, and

vertical water quality monitoring profilers. The CBP partnership's monitoring networks also support sample analysis, quality assurance for field, laboratory, and data submittal, data management, data analysis, data synthesis, publication, and reporting. Further, the CBP partnership tracks changes in land use, land cover, and best management practice implementation in the accountability framework for watershed restoration. These data support the reporting of Chesapeake Bay and watershed health patterns and trends observed through the above-mentioned monitoring networks.

The long-term vision of the CBP partnership's Bay-wide and watershed-wide monitoring networks is to develop and establish institutional structures and procedures for coordination and integration of citizen-based and nontraditional partner monitoring programs into the partnership's shared decision-making framework. This coordination and integration will support management decisions and adaptive management by the CBP partners aimed at improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Priority will be placed on the integration of citizen-based and nontraditional partner monitoring program data that provide regionally consistent, reliable, quality-assured data streams, aligned with CBP partner needs expressed through the SRS process and tracked in the SSRF, and can be used to enhance the CBP partners' decision-making process.

Applications should specifically address how to best approach increasing the capacity of citizen-based and nontraditional partners' ability to collect environmental data aligned with CBP data needs that can be integrated into the larger set of data used in making shared decisions within the CBP partnership. Applications should describe plans for maturing the citizen science and nontraditional partner networks, strategizing gap-filling data collection approaches to meet CBP needs using regionally standardized approaches, and directly incorporating nontraditional partner and citizen-based monitoring data into existing or complementary data streams (e.g. Bay water quality, Bay living resource health, watershed water quality and living resource health). Applications should specifically address how increasing capacity of and integrating data from citizen-based and nontraditional monitoring programs into the CBP partnership's existing monitoring networks will:

- 1) Fill spatial and/or temporal gaps in existing monitoring networks;
- 2) Improve the ability of the CBP partnership in explaining the patterns observed in the status and trends of the Chesapeake Bay and watershed health indicators; and
- 3) Improve cost efficiencies as the CBP partnership continues to strategically develop its monitoring networks in ways to answer the continually evolving set of information needs for implementation of the goals and outcomes within 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the resultant management strategies.

The CBP partnership plans to continue to develop and expand the necessary institutional structures and procedures for the continued coordination and integration of nontraditional partners into the larger monitoring networks by providing information on monitoring data needs, coordinating program-wide and regionally-consistent monitoring and quality assurance protocols, technical guidance, equipment, communication strategies, and synthesized data results. This will include mechanisms for effective communication of results to the CBP partnership in support of their continued implementation of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Agreement. The recipient of this cooperative agreement will facilitate and carry out this work. Applications should also describe how the applicant will specifically engage and build the capacity of underrepresented communities and federally-recognized tribes to build and participate in citizen-led or nontraditional monitoring programs.

CBPO plans to award one cooperative agreement under this RFA. The estimated funding for the first year is approximately \$450,000 to \$500,000 with an estimated \$2,700,000 to \$3,000,000 available over the six-year period.

If your organization has an interest in this project, has the skills to accomplish the activities, and is eligible to receive a federal assistance agreement as described in Section III of this announcement, we encourage you to submit an application. Each eligible application will be evaluated using the criteria described in Section V. The activity is a multi-year project (up to six years), and the application should have a work plan and budget for the first year and an estimated budget detail for each of the remaining five years.

Activity: Integration of Citizen-based Monitoring and Nontraditional Monitoring Partners into the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership. Estimated Funding: \$450,000 to \$500,000 annually (\$2,700,000 to \$3,000,000 total)

The millions of environmental measurements generated annually through the CBP partnership's monitoring networks, described above, are used by the CBP partners to assess the Bay jurisdictions' achievement of Chesapeake Bay water quality standards and progress towards Chesapeake Bay and local TMDL allocated loading targets; to evaluate the effectiveness of management actions taken to reduce pollutant loads, improve habitats, and restore stream health; and to report to the public on Bay and watershed health. The work described here is to support the expansion of the spatial representation of unsampled and under-sampled areas of the Bay and its watershed and enhance temporal frequency as necessary, aligned with, and compared to, existing monitoring coverage of water quality and biological resources in the tidal Chesapeake Bay and streams and rivers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. A key outcome of this work is the integration and use of the resultant quality-assured data by the CBP restoration decision-making and supportive adaptive management activities.

EPA intends to award one cooperative agreement to an organization to support the CBP's goals of expanding and accelerating the implementation of:

- Nutrient and sediment load reduction practices and technologies,
- Habitat restoration and protection actions, and
- Living resource population health

throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed based on evaluation of programmatic gaps, targeted enhancement of institutional capacity in addressing gaps, and implementation effectiveness, all leading to support of adaptive management in the CBP.

These goals aim to increase the capacity of the CBP partners to focus on implementing the pollution reduction practices resulting in the highest load reductions for the lowest costs as well as restoring those habitats that will yield the highest ecological benefits. The goals also include

enhancing the use of water quality and biological resource monitoring data to (1) better understand the causes behind spatial patterns and observed trends for Bay and watershed health and (2) improve the CBP partnership's accountability systems for providing more direct measures of the success (or lack thereof) in response to implemented management actions.

The resultant monitoring data are used by the CBP partnership's seven watershed jurisdictions to:

- Assess attainment of Chesapeake Bay water quality standards for dissolved oxygen, water clarity/submerged aquatic grasses and chlorophyll *a* criteria applicable to the designated uses defined for restoring and protecting tidal water habitat of the four Bay jurisdictions (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia) associated with the Chesapeake Bay TMDL;
- Determine management effectiveness of locally implemented practices, treatments, and technologies in controlling nutrients and sediments with related co-benefits (e.g., controlling toxic contaminants);
- Explain observed water quality and biological resource trends in local streams, rivers, and tidal waters;
- Report on the effectiveness of the Chesapeake Bay and watershed restoration actions to the public; and
- Support adaptive management by the jurisdictional and local partner agencies.

The proposing organization should be able to demonstrate the institutional capacity for developing, expanding, and sustaining monitoring networks within a partnership-oriented, implementation-focused organizational structure.

The applicant should be able to demonstrate successful experience in:

- Effectively working with citizen-based monitoring programs and nontraditional monitoring partners;
- Effectively working with state agencies, federal agencies, and river basin commissions traditionally responsible for the operation and maintenance of water quality and biological resource monitoring programs;
- Providing expert advice and direction to citizen-based and other organizations with interests in participatory science through generating, quality assuring, and managing data directed towards better understanding the health of local and regional waterways; and
- Understanding and evaluating opportunities for how to best integrate citizen monitoring and nontraditional monitoring partners into existing CBP partnership's monitoring networks and ensuring the protocols applied in data collection and the quality of the resulting data is consistent with and relevant to the intended management applications.

The cooperative agreement recipient will work with the CBP partnership's STAR Team and its associated workgroups to actively seek collaborative development of projects, methodologies, procedures, protocols, programs, policies, and shared decision-making supporting efforts by the partners. The recipient will coordinate and collaborate work targeted at filling data gaps identified in the CBP partnership's existing and developing water quality and living resource monitoring networks through continued integration of citizen monitoring and nontraditional

monitoring partner efforts and their resulting data.

The following are examples of the types of activities to support the goals of the CBP partnership in improving capacity and integration of data from citizen science and nontraditional monitoring partners. Applicants may consider these activities as well as describe alternative approaches to providing the requested technical support to the partners and the larger partnership:

Improve Capacity of Citizen Science and Nontraditional Monitoring Partners to Conduct Monitoring

- Schedule, coordinate, and facilitate meetings to assist in the building and strengthening of partnerships.
- Build partnerships with existing funders of citizen-based monitoring and nontraditional partner monitoring programs (i.e., Chesapeake Bay Trust, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, etc.) to leverage funding opportunities.
- Improve capacity of federally-recognized tribes and other underrepresented and environmental justice communities to conduct citizen-oriented or nontraditional monitoring by collaborating with members or programs in these communities to understand interests, identify barriers and intersections of common need and understanding, and develop and deliver resources.
- Provide trainings for existing citizen science and nontraditional monitoring programs that expand engagement with underrepresented and environmental justice communities.
- Foster collaborations between existing citizen science and nontraditional monitoring partners and newly-engaged communities or programs to enable peer-to-peer learning.
- Provide infrastructure assistance focused on building capacity, including expansion of support, with underrepresented communities to conduct citizen and nontraditional monitoring by offering either financial awards for equipment purchases or developing an equipment loan program.

Development and Improvement of Data Analysis, Data Management, and Reporting Procedures

- Research, develop, and streamline onboarding of groups into programs and projects, streamline data submittal, input, management and reporting tools and procedures such as automated tools, for citizen-based monitoring and nontraditional monitoring programs to easily and independently upload quality-assured data into existing database (and water quality exchange) and train program participants on use of these procedures.
- Improve flexibility of an existing database to incorporate new data streams and structures beyond current water quality and benthic monitoring data structures (e.g., SAV Watchers submerged aquatic vegetation data, continuous water quality monitoring data).
- Research, develop, and test new data display/visualization and data analysis tools and capabilities to enable citizen-oriented monitoring and nontraditional monitoring programs to conduct consistent analyses on their data (e.g., trend graphs, basic statistical calculations).
- Provide support to citizen-oriented monitoring and nontraditional monitoring programs in utilization of data analysis tools, interpretation, presentation and communication of results.

Strategize Data Collection Efforts by Citizen Science and Nontraditional Partners to Fill Data Gaps Using Regionally Standardized Approaches

- Work with STAR and its workgroups to identify priorities for developing project efforts that will use regionally consistent gap-filling data collection methodologies aligned with and targeted to address the science and information needs identified in CBP's SSRF.
- Facilitate project-oriented approaches and collaborations between CBP and citizen science groups to develop monitoring plans, programs and protocols to address data gaps.
- Target citizen science and nontraditional partner data collection of benthic macroinvertebrate samples to fill CBP Stream Health Indicator gaps, using a standard protocol and standard equipment across the full area of the watershed, with a target of at least 100 samples over a 6-year period based on present partnership capacity.
- Target citizen science and nontraditional partner data collection of water quality parameters to address temporal and spatial density gaps in tidal water quality monitoring including tidal tributaries and potentially portions of the mainstem Bay associated with short-duration (e.g., weekly, daily or hourly frequency, e.g., greater than 1-3 locations in a tidal tributary) tidal water quality criteria assessments.
- Coordinate with other CBP partners on targeting data collection including USGS, state agency, academia, and other partners.
- For all new gap-filling data collection efforts, develop and ensure use of watershed-wide and Bay-wide standardized and consistent protocols for each particular data collection effort.
- Work with EPA and states on protocols for incorporating citizen science data into CBP indicator, CBP factor influencing and state water quality and living resource-based assessments.

Coordinate and Conduct Training and Support for Monitoring Program Integration

- Provide training for citizen-based monitoring and nontraditional monitoring program partners to develop and maintain adherence to protocols for quality assurance and integrity purposes.
- Develop training activities and assist monitoring program partners in analyzing, interpreting, presenting, and communicating monitoring data and results.
- Develop consistent procedures to streamline onboarding of new member organizations, including streamlining essential components such as Quality Assurance planning and auditing.
- Continually assess monitoring methods available to citizen-based and nontraditional monitoring groups for improved efficiency and effectiveness with data collections on priority parameters of interest.

Obtaining Additional Information

For additional background information on the CBP achievements and 2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement commitments, see the CBP Partnership's website located at <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/>.

C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage & Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs

Pursuant to Section 6a of EPA Order 5700.7, “Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements,” EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to the Agency’s Strategic Plan. EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements (see EPA Order 5700.7, Environmental Results under Assistance Agreements, accessible at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-order-57007a1-epas-policy-environmental-results-under-epa-assistance-agreements>).

1. Linkage to EPA’s Strategic Plan

The overall objective of this competition is to provide technical, programmatic, and administrative support for the CBP partnership in support of the most cost-effective and efficient ways to increase citizen monitoring efforts that will evaluate and guide future targeted pollutant load reduction activities and other implementation actions toward reaching the goals and outcomes of the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* under Section 117(d)(1) of the Clean Water Act.

The activity to be funded under this announcement supports [EPA’s FY 2018-22 Strategic Plan](#). The award made under this announcement will support Goal 1: A Cleaner, Healthier Environment and Objective 1.2: Provide for Clean and Safe Water Goal of the EPA Strategic Plan. All applications must be for projects that support the goal and objective identified above.

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

2. Outputs

The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and 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 an assistance agreement funding period. Expected outputs from the project(s) to be funded under this announcement may include the following:

- Number of citizen-based and nontraditional partners’ monitoring programs that are cataloged and prioritized for integration into the CBP partnership’s existing watershed and tidal waters monitoring networks.
- Number of citizen-based and nontraditional partners’ monitoring programs that are fully integrated into the CBP partnership’s existing watershed and tidal waters monitoring networks.
- Number of training sessions held.
- Number of contacts with citizen-based and nontraditional partner monitoring program organizations.
- Number of dollars leveraged by integrating citizen-based nontraditional partner

monitoring program into the CBP partnership's monitoring networks.

- Increased spatial (e.g., number of stations) and temporal (e.g., frequency of sample collection) coverage through programming and projects enhancing the CBP partnership's existing and developing watershed and tidal Bay monitoring networks.
- Increased number of new environmental data points reported from each of the seven Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions' water quality and biological resource monitoring efforts every year as a function of coordination with and integration of citizen-based and nontraditional monitoring program partners addressing CBP and jurisdiction priority data needs.
- Progress reports and a final report will also be required outputs, as specified in Section VI(C) of this announcement, "Reporting Requirement."

3. Outcomes

The term "outcome" means the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must also be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. **An example outcome under this application could include the following:**

- Increased confidence in, and more complete accounting within, individual Bay watershed jurisdictions' assessments of impaired waters, due to increased sample size and spatial and temporal coverage, in their biennial assessment of their jurisdictions' free flowing and tidal water bodies.
- Improved ability by the jurisdictional and other partners to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented management practices toward improving stream, river, and tidal water quality conditions through additional support for existing indicators and/or development and application of enhanced indicators based on new citizen-based and nontraditional partners monitoring program generated data.

D. Authorizing Statutes and Regulations

This grant is made pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 117(d), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267(d), which authorizes EPA to issue grants and cooperative agreements for the purposes of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem. This project is subject to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200) and EPA-specific provisions of the Uniform Grants Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 1500).

E. Minority Serving Institutions:

EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available minds to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by encouraging participation by members of communities which may have not fully participated in such dialogues. For this reason, 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 at: <https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/one-hundred-and-five-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 at <https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-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 at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/idues/hsi-eligibles-2016.pdf>;
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 at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1XVkOWKMDORm53pvU0L8EPsrJC94&msa=0&ie=UTF8&t=m&z=3&source=embed&ll=40.58644586187277%2C-148.28228249999984>; 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 at https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1wLi3j7gtlNq_w-0NKAb2bF2VmY&ie=UTF8&msa=0&ll=37.35160769312532%2C-96.17229800000001&z=4

II: AWARD INFORMATION

A. Funding Amount and Expected Number of Awards

The U.S EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office plans to award one cooperative agreement under this RFA. Funding for the activity listed above is approximately \$450,000 to \$500,000 annually for FY2021 through FY2026, depending on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations. The total estimated funding for six years is approximately \$2,700,000 to \$3,000,000.

EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no award under this announcement or less than the estimated funding amounts above. **Funding for the activity depends on funding availability, satisfactory performance, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. EPA makes no commitment of annual funding amounts for any fiscal year(s), as funds may be limited based on these applicable considerations.**

EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selection is made. Any additional selection for awards will be made no later than five months after the original selection decision.

B. Award Type

The award will be issued in the form of a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement is an assistance agreement that is used when there is substantial federal involvement with the recipient during the performance of an activity or project. EPA awards cooperative agreements for those projects in which it expects to have substantial interaction with the recipient throughout the performance of the project. EPA will negotiate the precise terms and conditions of “substantial involvement” as part of the award process. Federal involvement may include close monitoring of the recipient’s performance; collaboration during the performance of the scope of work; in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.317 and 2 C.F.R. 200.318, as appropriate, review of proposed procurements; reviewing qualifications of key personnel; and/or review and comment on the content of printed or electronic publications prepared. 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.

For this project, federal involvement would typically be in the form of participation with other CBP partners and stakeholders in an advisory capacity to the grantee. This participation is expected to include involvement through the various CBP Goal Implementation Teams and related committees and workgroups (on which EPA also participates to ensure that all the recommendations for technical work support the CBP partners). All work conducted is to support the efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its surrounding watershed.

C. Partial Funding

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund a project, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice the applicant 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.

D. Expected Project Period

The expected project period for the cooperative agreement is six years, with funding provided on an annual basis. **No commitment of funding can be made beyond the first year.** The expected start date for the award resulting from this RFA is **May 08, 2021.**

E. Pre-Award Costs

The recipient may incur otherwise eligible and allowable pre-award costs up to 90 days prior to award at their own risk without prior approval of EPA’s award official. Pre-award costs must comply with 2 C.F.R. 200.458 and 2 C.F.R. 1500.8. If EPA determines that the requested pre-award costs comply with the relevant authorities, and that the costs are justified as allocable to

the project, then these costs may be included as allowable expenditures at the time that the assistance award document is prepared.

However, if for any reason EPA does not fund the application or the amount of the award is less than the applicant anticipated, then EPA is under no obligation to reimburse the applicant for these costs incurred. Thus, applicants incur pre-award costs at their own risk. Costs incurred more than 90 days prior to award require the approval of EPA Region 3's grant official.

III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, colleges, universities, and interstate agencies are eligible to submit applications in response to this RFA. For-profit organizations are not eligible to submit applications in response to this RFA.

B. Cost-Share or Matching Requirements

Pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 117(d)(2)(A), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267(d)(2)(A), the agency shall determine the cost-share requirements for awards. The Assistance Listing Number 66.466 states that assistance agreement applicants must commit to a cost-share ranging from five to fifty percent of eligible project costs as determined at the sole discretion of EPA. For this RFA, EPA has determined that an applicant must provide a minimum of five percent of the total cost of the project as the non-federal cost-share.

Cost-share may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. Involvement from foundations, watershed groups, private sector, eligible governmental, as well as non-conventional partners can help with the match. This match must be met by eligible and allowable costs and is subject to the match provisions in grant regulations. Applications that do not demonstrate how the five percent match will be met will be rejected.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

Only applications from eligible entities (see Section III.A above) that meet the following threshold eligibility criteria will be evaluated against the criteria in Section V.B. Applicants must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered for funding. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified in writing within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected. Where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the project narrative, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
2. 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) 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 timely submitted.

3. 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 EPA mishandling or because of technical problems associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) 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](https://www.sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with James Hargett at hargett.james@epa.gov (see Section VII, Agency Contact) as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your application(s) not being reviewed.
4. The project funded under this announcement must be linked to the strategic goal outlined in Section I.C.1.
5. Applications must show how they will meet the five percent cost-share requirement of Section III.B.
6. Applications requesting more than the maximum funding amount listed in the range for the applicable activity will be rejected.
7. Applicants must address the activity listed in Section I.B
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.

IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain an Application Package

Applicants can download individual grant application forms from the application package associated with this opportunity on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Each application will be evaluated using the criteria referenced in Section V.B. of this announcement. You must submit a single-spaced project narrative of up to 15 pages in length by the date and time specified in Section IV.C below. Excess pages will not be reviewed. The format for this application is contained in Appendix A of this announcement. Review the directions for the preparation of the application. Applications that are not prepared in substantial

compliance with the requirements in Appendix A will not be considered for funding and will be returned to the applicant.

The application package **must** include all of the following materials:

1. **Standard Form (SF)-424, Application for Federal Assistance** – Complete the form. There are no attachments. Please be sure to include organization fax number and email address in Block 8 of SF-424. Please note that the organizational Dunn and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or visiting their website at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.
2. **SF-424A, Budget Information** – Complete the form. There are no attachments. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown in Section A on Line 5(e) and on Line 6.k of Column (1) of Section B while recipient's total cost-share should be shown in Section A on Line 5(f) and Line 6.k of Column (2) of Section B. The amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22.
3. **EPA Form 4700-4, Pre award Compliance Review Report for All Applicants and Recipients Requesting EPA Financial Assistance**
4. **EPA Key Contacts Form**
5. **Project Narrative Attachment Form** – The format for the project narrative and the budget narrative are contained in Appendix A of this announcement. Review the directions for the preparation of the application.
6. **Budget Narrative Attachment Form** – The budget narrative should include a spreadsheet that shows each year's cost for the salaries, fringe benefits, total salaries/wages, travel expenses, equipment, supplies, contractual expenses, other cost, and indirect cost. Please refer to EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment's budget detail guidance and IDC guidance located at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02> and <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2018-g02>, respectively.

Requirements for Project Narrative — See Appendix A

All application review criteria in Section V must be addressed in the project narrative. The project narrative shall not exceed **15** pages in length. Pages refer to one side of a single-spaced, typed page. Font size should be no smaller than 10, and the application must be submitted on 8.5" x 11" paper. Note that the **15** pages include all supporting materials such as resumes or *curriculum vitae* and letters of support. Documentation for the budget narrative, non-profit status, cost-share letters of commitment, and the SF-424 and SF-424A forms are **not** included in the page limit.

C. Intergovernmental Review

Please review the Intergovernmental Review clause included as part of the [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). This program is eligible for coverage under Executive Order (EO) 12372, An Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. See this link for information and instructions: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-region-3-grants-and-audit-management-branch-intergovernmental-review-process-and-single>. Further information regarding this requirement will be provided if your application is selected for funding.

D. Funding Restrictions

Administrative Cost Cap Requirement under Statutory Authority

Grantees applying for CBP assistance agreements must adhere to the requirements for “Administrative Costs” under the Section 117 (d)(4) of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. Section 1267 (d)(4), which states that administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award (annual grant award = federal share plus cost-share). **Appendix B: Administrative Cost Cap Worksheet** is provided as an example of a method to calculate the 10-percent limitation. You are not required to submit Appendix B with your application.

Allowable Costs

EPA assistance agreement funds may only be used for the purposes set forth in the grant and must be consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Federal funds may not be used for cost sharing for other federal grants (except where authorized by statute), lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. In addition, federal funds may not be used to sue the federal government or any other government entity. All costs identified in the budget must conform to the provisions of 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E, Cost Principles. During the grant negotiation, any ineligible costs outlined in the application (i.e. lobbying activities) will be excluded in the final grant award.

E. Requirement to Submit Through Grants.gov and Limited Exception Procedures

Applicants, except as noted below, must apply electronically through Grants.gov under this funding opportunity based on the grants.gov instructions in this announcement. If an applicant does not have the technical capability to apply electronically through grants.gov because of limited or no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials to Grants.gov, the applicant must contact OGDWaivers@epa.gov or the address listed below in writing (e.g., by hard copy, email) at least 15 calendar days prior to the submission deadline under this announcement to request approval to submit their application materials through an alternate method.

Mailing Address:

OGD Waivers
c/o Jessica Durand
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.

Mail Code: 3903R
Washington, DC 20460

Courier Address:
OGD Waivers
c/o Jessica Durand
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Rm # 51278
Washington, DC 20004

In the request, the applicant must include the following information:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Organization Name and DUNS
- Organization's Contact Information (email address and phone number)
- Explanation of how they lack the technical capability to apply electronically through Grants.gov because of 1) limited internet access or 2) no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials through Grants.gov.

EPA will only consider alternate submission exception requests based on the two reasons stated above and will timely respond to the request -- all other requests will be denied. If an alternate submission method is approved, the applicant will receive documentation of this approval and further instructions on how to apply under this announcement. Applicants will be required to submit the documentation of approval with any initial application submitted under the alternative method. In addition, any submittal through an alternative method must comply with all applicable requirements and deadlines in the announcement including the submission deadline and requirements regarding application content and page limits (although the documentation of approval of an alternate submission method will not count against any page limits).

If an exception is granted, it is valid for submissions to EPA for the remainder of the entire calendar year in which the exception was approved and can be used to justify alternative submission methods for application submissions made through December 31 of the calendar year in which the exception was approved (e.g., if the exception was approved on March 1, 2018, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to EPA through December 31, 2018). Applicants need only request an exception once in a calendar year and all exceptions will expire on December 31 of that calendar year. Applicants must request a new exception from required electronic submission through Grants.gov for submissions for any succeeding calendar year. For example, if there is a competitive opportunity issued on December 1, 2018 with a submission deadline of January 15, 2019, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2019.

Please note that the process described in this section is only for requesting alternate submission methods. All other inquiries about this announcement must be directed to the Agency Contact listed in Section VII of the announcement. Queries or requests submitted to the email address identified above for any reason other than to request an alternate submission method will not be acknowledged or answered.

F. Submission Instructions

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information on the registration requirements that must be completed in order to submit an application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), go to Grants.gov and click on “Applicants” on the top of the page and then go to the “Get Registered” link on the page. If your organization is not currently registered with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), please encourage your office to designate an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible. Please note that the registration process also requires that your organization have a Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. DUNS number) and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met in order to apply for this opportunity through Grants.gov and should ensure that all such requirements have been met well in advance of the submission deadline. Registration on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov), and DUNS number assignment is FREE.

Applicants need to ensure that the AOR who submits the application through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and whose Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. DUNS number) is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the DUNS number listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization’s SAM account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and click on “Applicants” on the top of the page and then “Apply for Grants” from the dropdown menu and then follow the instructions accordingly. Please note: To apply through Grants.gov, you must use Adobe Reader software and download the compatible Adobe Reader version. For more information about Adobe Reader, to verify compatibility, or to download the free software, please visit [Adobe Reader Compatibility Information on Grants.gov](https://www.adobe.com/reader/compatibility).

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Go to Grants.gov and then click on “Search Grants” at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-R3-CBP-21-02 or the Assistance Listing number that applies to the announcement (Assistance Listing 66.466), in the appropriate field and click the Search button

Please Note: All applications must now be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) using the “Workspace” feature. Information on the Workspace feature can be found at the [Grants.gov Workspace Overview Page](https://www.grants.gov/workspace/overview).

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 31, 2021 at 11:59 PM EST**. Please allow for enough

time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

Please submit all of the application materials described below using the grants.gov application package that you accessed using the instructions above

Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

- 1. Standard Form (SF)-424, Application for Federal Assistance**
- 2. SF-424A, Budget Information**
- 3. EPA Form 4700-4, Pre award Compliance Review Report for All Applicants and Recipients Requesting EPA Financial Assistance**
- 4. EPA Key Contacts Form**
- 5. Project Narrative Attachment Form**
- 6. Budget Narrative Attachment Form**

See Section IV. B. for additional instructions on preparing these materials.

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 James Hargett at hargett.james@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

G. Technical Issues with Submission

1. Once the application package has been completed, the “Submit” button should be enabled. If the “Submit” button is not active, please call [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for assistance at 1-800-518-4726. 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](https://www.grants.gov) representative by calling 606-545-5035. Applicants should save the completed application package with two different file names before providing it to the AOR to avoid having to re-create the package should submission problems be experienced, or a revised application needs to be submitted.

2. Submitting the application. The application package must be transferred to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by an AOR. The AOR should close all other software before attempting to submit the application package. Click the “submit” button of the application package. Your Internet browser will launch, and a sign-in page will appear. Note: Minor problems are not uncommon with transfers to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation. The [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) support desk operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except Federal Holidays.

A successful transfer will end with an on-screen acknowledgement. For documentation purposes, print or screen capture this acknowledgement. If a submission problem occurs, reboot the computer – turning the power off may be necessary – and re-attempt the submission.

3. Transmission Difficulties. If transmission difficulties that result in a late transmission, no transmission, or rejection of the transmitted application are experienced, and following the above

instructions do not resolve the problem so that the application is submitted to Grants.gov by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will make a decision concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to James Hargett with the FON in the subject line. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or relevant www.Sam.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit timely because they did not properly or timely register in [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of a late submittal.

- a. If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 before the application deadline. 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](https://www.grants.gov) representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be sure to obtain a case number from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).
- b. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, and you have already attempted to resolve the issue by contacting [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), send an email message to James Hargett at hargett.james@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the problem and include the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) case number as well as the entire application in PDF format as an attachment.
- c. Grants.gov rejection of the application package: If a notification is received from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal and it is too late to reapply, promptly send an email to James Hargett at hargett.james@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line within one business day of the closing date of this solicitation. The email should include any materials provided by [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and attach the entire application in PDF format.

Please note that successful submission through Grants.gov or via email does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

H. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to confidential business information, contracts and sub-awards under grants, and application assistance and communications, can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>. These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Evaluation Process

After EPA reviews applications for threshold eligibility purposes as described in Section III, CBPO will conduct a merit evaluation of each eligible application. Reviews will be performed by a team of professionals from EPA and other CBP partner organizations with a working knowledge of the technical analysis and programmatic evaluation needs of the CBP partnership. All reviewers will sign a conflict of interest statement indicating they have no conflict of interest.

B. Evaluation Criteria: Maximum score: 100 points

The evaluation criteria below apply to this RFA.

Criteria	Points
<p>1. Organizational Capability, Scope and Approach: Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How well the proposal demonstrates that the applicant has the skill and experience in the proposed activity under Section I.B. (25 points) b. The quality of the proposal and how it demonstrates the ability to timely and successfully achieve the relevant activity to support the CBP partners described in Section I.B. regardless if the application encompasses one of the examples provided or puts forth an alternative approach that achieves the goal of each respective activity. (20 points) 	45
<p>2. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance: Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project, taking into account the applicant’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements identified in their project narrative; (6 points) b. History of meeting the reporting requirements under assistance agreements identified in their project narrative, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable, final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not; (5 points) c. Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project; and (5 points) d. Staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. (5 points) <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Note: In evaluating applicants under items a. and b. of this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant</p>	21

<p>and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items a. and b. above--a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.</p>	
<p>3. Cost-effectiveness: Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate each application based on the degree of cost-effectiveness, considering the following factors: organizational overhead, budget breakdown, and ability to control costs for the relevant activity listed in Section I. Additionally, applicants who maximize project cost efficiency by minimizing personnel costs while still maintaining effective management of the cooperative agreement will receive a more favorable score in this criterion. (10 points)</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>4. Transferability of Results to Similar Projects and/or Dissemination to the Public: Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the degree to which the application includes an adequate plan to gather information and lessons learned from the project <u>and</u> transfer that documentation/information/data/results/recommendations to CBP partners and stakeholders across the Chesapeake Bay watershed in a timely manner. (6 points)</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>5. Successful Transition: Applicants will be evaluated based on how well they can become fully functional in the roles described in the announcement once a cooperative agreement is awarded and how well the applicant will bring about a successful transition in the provision of the described support to the CBP partnership and its management structure. (6 points)</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>6. Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds: Under this criterion, reviewers will evaluate the application based on the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (6 points)</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>7. Environmental Results: Applicants will be evaluated based on their plan and approach for tracking and measuring their progress towards achieving the environmental outputs and outcomes identified in Section I.C of the RFA. (6 points).</p>	<p>6</p>

C. Review and Selection Process

Eligible applications will be evaluated and ranked using the criteria stated in Section V.B. above by a panel of reviewers from EPA and other CBP partner organizations with a working knowledge of the technical analysis and programmatic evaluation needs of the CBP partnership. The review team will then forward the highest-ranked applications for the activity to the director or deputy director of CBPO for final selection. EPA expects to select one application for each activity described in Section I for funding. In making the final funding decisions, the selection

official may also consider programmatic goals and priorities, including those described in the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* at https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement.

D. Additional Provisions

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation including the clause on Reporting and Use of Information Concerning Recipient Integrity and Performance can be found at EPA Solicitation Clauses. These points and the other provisions that can be found at the website link <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

E. Reporting and Use of Information Concerning Recipient Integrity and Performance

For any award under this solicitation where EPA anticipates that the total Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance (see 2 CFR §200-as of August 19, 2020 the threshold is \$250,000 but it is periodically adjusted), applicants are notified:

- i. That EPA, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS)
- ii. That an applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM;
- iii. That EPA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205.

VI: AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notices and Instructions for Submission of Final Application

It is expected that applicants will be notified in writing of funding decisions on or around **April 23, 2021** either via email or U.S. Postal Service. This 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 EPA Region 3 grants office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grant 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 EPA to make an award to an applicant. The award notice, signed by an EPA grant award official, is the authorizing document and will be provided either via email or U.S. Postal Service.

Notification of selection does not indicate that the applicant can start work on the project. The selected applicant will be asked to submit a full federal assistance agreement application package. A federal project officer provides assistance in the application process and negotiates a work plan, budget, and starting date. Processing for this particular cooperative agreement award is expected to take 60 days.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

If your application is selected, the following information will be helpful in preparing your cooperative agreement application. Any information about general EPA regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/>

Combining Applications into One Award

If an applicant submits applications for multiple tasks/ activities under this competition, and is selected for multiple tasks/activities, EPA may award a single assistance agreement that combines separate applications for different tasks/activities

Federal Requirements

An applicant whose application is selected for federal funding must complete additional forms prior to award. If the same applicant is selected for more than one activity, EPA may request that the applicant submit a revised application that includes the activities they are selected for and may choose to issue one award to the applicant with multiple activities. EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final cooperative agreement amount and work plan content prior to award consistent with agency policies.

Indirect costs (IDCs)

Indirect costs (IDCs) may be budgeted and charged by recipients of Federal assistance agreements in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200](#). EPA's [Indirect Cost Policy for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) (IDC Policy) implements the Federal regulations, and the following applies to all EPA assistance agreements, unless there are [statutory or regulatory limits on IDCs](#).

In order for an assistance agreement recipient to use EPA funding for indirect costs, the IDC category of the recipient's assistance agreement award budget must include an amount for IDCs and at least one of the following must apply:

- With the exception of “exempt” agencies and Institutions of Higher Education as noted below, all recipients must have one of the following current (not expired) IDC rates, including IDC rates that have been extended by the cognizant agency:

- Provisional;
- Final;
- Fixed rate with carry-forward;
- Predetermined;
- Ten percent *de minimis* rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f)
- EPA-approved use of one of the following:
 - Ten percent *de minimis* as detailed in section 6.3 of the IDC Policy;
 - or
 - Expired fixed rate with carry-forward as detailed in section 6.4.a. of the IDC Policy.

“Exempt” state or local governmental departments or agencies are agencies that receive up to and including \$35,000,000 in Federal funding per the department or agency’s fiscal year, and must have an IDC rate application developed in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Appendix VII](#), with documentation maintained and available for audit.

Institutions of Higher Education must use the IDC rate in place at the time of award for the life of the assistance agreement (unless the rate was provisional at time of award, in which case the rate will change once it becomes final). As provided by [2 CFR Part 200, Appendix III\(C\)\(7\)](#), the term “life of the assistance agreement”, means each competitive segment of the project. Additional information is available in the regulation.

IDCs incurred during any period of the assistance agreement that are not covered by the provisions above are not allowable costs and must not be drawn down by the recipient. Recipients may budget for IDCs pending approval of their IDC rate by the cognizant Federal agency or an exception granted by EPA under section 6.3 or 6.4 of the IDC Policy. However, recipients may not draw down IDCs until their rate is approved or EPA grants an exception.

The IDC Policy does not govern indirect rates for subrecipients or recipient procurement contractors under EPA assistance agreements. Pass-through entities are required to comply with [2 CFR 200.331\(a\)\(4\)](#) when establishing indirect cost rates for subawards.

See the [Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for additional information.

Incurred Costs

Funding eligibility ends on the date specified in the award. The time expended, and costs incurred in either the development of the application or the final assistance application, or in any subsequent discussions or negotiations prior to the award, are neither reimbursable nor recognizable as part of the recipient’s cost share.

EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans

In accordance with 2 C.F.R. Section 1500.11, projects that include the generation or use of environmental data are required to submit a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

The QMP must document quality assurance policies and practices that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet program objectives. The QMP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R-2: EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans (refer to <https://www.epa.gov/quality/epa-qar-2-epa-requirements-quality-management-plans>, Chapter 2). The recipient's QMP should be reviewed and updated annually as needed. The QMP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 45 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation.

The recipient must develop and implement quality assurance and quality control procedures, specifications and documentation that are sufficient to produce data of adequate quality to meet project objectives. The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is the document that provides comprehensive details about the quality assurance/quality control requirements and technical activities that must be implemented to ensure that project objectives are met. The QAPP should be prepared in accordance with EPA QA/R-5: EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans. The QAPP must be submitted to the EPA project officer at least 30 days prior to the initiation of data collection or data compilation. Requirements for QAPPs can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/quality/template-developing-generic-quality-assurance-project-plan-or-plan-elements-model>.

Deliverables

Awarded applicant will be required to provide a chart or list of deliverables, providing items and due dates.

C. Reporting

Quarterly or semiannual progress reports, as determined by the federal project officer, will be required as a condition of this award.

D. Debriefings

Unsuccessful applicants interested in requesting a debriefing should refer to the procedures for debriefings in the [Dispute Resolution Procedures](#), which can also be found at 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement. Please note that the FR notice referenced above refers to regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 and 31 that have been superseded by regulations in 2 CFR parts 200 and 1500. Notwithstanding this, the procedures for competition-related debriefings and disputes remains unchanged from the procedures described at 70 FR 3629, 3630, as indicated in 2 CFR Part 1500, Subpart E.

E. 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.

F. Additional Provisions for Applicants Incorporated into the Solicitation

Additional provisions that apply to this solicitation and/or awards made under this solicitation, including but not limited to those related to DUNS, SAM, copyrights, disputes, and administrative capability, can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses>. These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, 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 communicate with the EPA contact listed in this solicitation to obtain the provisions.

G. Mandatory Disclosures

As required by 2 CFR § 200.113, non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR § 200.338 including suspension and debarment.

VII: AGENCY CONTACT

For administrative and technical issues regarding this RFA, please contact James Hargett via email at hargett.james@epa.gov. All questions must be received in writing via with the reference line referring to this RFA (Re: RFA EPA-R3-CBP-21-02). All questions and answers will be posted on <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-your-region-information-specific-epa-region-3>.

VIII: OTHER INFORMATION

In developing your application, you may find the following documents helpful. Websites for guidance documents are listed here. If you prefer a paper copy, please call 1-800-YOUR BAY.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Management Strategies

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement

CBP STAR Strategic Science & Research Needs Online Database:

<https://star.chesapeakebay.net/>

Electronic copy of the *CBP Guidance for Data Management*

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/201601/documents/attachment8cimsgrant_guidance.pdf

Electronic copy of the *Chesapeake Bay Program Office Grant and Cooperative Agreement Guidance*

<https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance>

EPA Requirements for Quality Management Plans and Quality Assurance Plans

<https://www.epa.gov/grants/implementation-quality-assurance-requirements-organizations-receiving-epa-financial>

Please visit the EPA Grants website (<https://www.epa.gov/grants>), the EPA Region 3 Grants website (<https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-your-region-information-specific-epa-region-3>) or the Chesapeake Bay Program website (<https://www.epa.gov/restoration-chesapeake-bay/chesapeake-bay-program-grant-guidance>) if you have questions about grant issues such as costs or eligibility.

Further information on CBP committees is located at:

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/how_we_are_organized.

Appendix A
Project Narrative Format
U. S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, Region III
Chesapeake Bay Program Office Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Applications (RFA) for
Capacity Expansion of Citizen-based Monitoring and Nontraditional Monitoring Partners and
Integration into the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership
EPA-R3-CBP-21-02

The following information must be followed, or the application may not be considered complete and may not be evaluated.

A. **Project Narrative Format:** Use the Project Narrative Attachment Form (see Section IV.F.) to submit this document. Project narratives as described below shall not exceed 15 single-spaced pages. The project narrative must be submitted on 8 ½" x 11" paper, and font size should be no smaller than 10. Note that the 15-page limit includes all supporting materials, resumes or *curriculum vitae*, and letters of support but **excludes** the budget narrative, documentation of non-profit status, and forms 1 through 5 as listed in Section IV. F. Applicants must ensure that the project narrative clearly identifies the activity number. Applicant's responses should be numbered and submitted according to the format listed below.

1. Name, address (street and email), and contact information of the applicant

2. Background - Include the following in this section:

- i) Project title.
- ii) Brief description of your organization.
- iii) Documentation of non-profit status, if applicable.
- iv) Brief biographies of applicant lead(s) including resumes and/or curriculum vitae.
- v) Funding requested. Specify total cost of the project. Identify funding from other sources, including cost-share or in-kind resources.
- vi) DUNS number — See Section VI of RFA.

3. Work plan - Include the following in this section:

- i) A clear and concise discussion of how your organization will meet the objectives and requirements of the Program as described in Section I of the announcement for the relevant activity;
 - ii) Environmental Results – Outputs and Outcomes: Address how the application will meet the expected outputs and outcomes of this project and your plan for tracking and measuring your progress towards achieving them.
1. Output: An output is an environmental activity, effort, or work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced within the assistance agreement period. Expected outputs from the activities to be funded under this announcement are

identified in Section I of this solicitation.

2. Outcome: An outcome is a result, effect, or consequence that will result from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes are quantitative measures that may not necessarily be achievable within the assistance agreement period. Examples of potential outcomes under this announcement are identified in Section I of this solicitation.

- iii) Review Criteria: Address in narrative form each of the review criteria identified in Section V.B of the RFA. Identify by the review criteria number and title followed by your narrative.

With specific respect to the Programmatic Capability Past Performance factor in V.B: Submit a list of federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include federal grants and cooperative agreements but not federal contracts) similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than five agreements and preferably EPA agreements) and describe (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements.

In addition, provide information on your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project as well as your staff's expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

- B. Budget Narrative - Use the Budget Narrative Attachment Form (see Section IV.F.) to submit this document. For the first year and each of the subsequent years, provide a budget narrative breakdown by the major budget categories (i.e. personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, other, and indirect). In each of the budgets, include the cost-share amount (a minimum of five percent for each of the total project costs) and demonstrate how the cost-share will be met, including, if applicable, letters of commitment from any third-party contributors. Please note that subaward costs must be itemized under a separate sub-line item within the "Other" budget cost category.

In addition, grantees applying for CBP assistance agreements must adhere to the requirement for "Administrative Costs" under the Clean Water Act Section 117 (d)(4), 33 U.S.C. Section 1267 (d)(4), which states that administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. Information on how to calculate the 10 percent administration cost cap is located in Appendix B: Administrative Cost Cap Worksheet. To calculate the specific cost-share amount, follow these two-steps:

- 1) EPA amount (including any in-kind) ÷ 95% = 100% of Total Grant Amount
- 2) 100% of Total Grant Amount × 5% = Applicant's Cost-Share Amount

**Appendix B
EPA-R3-CBP-21-02**

**SAMPLE
(DO NOT SUBMIT WORKSHEET WITH APPLICATION)**

**CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE COST
CAP WORKSHEET**

INSTRUCTIONS: In accordance with Section 117(d)(4) and 117(e)(6) of the Clean Water Act (CWA), the costs of salaries and fringe benefits incurred in administering a grant under Section 117(d) or 117(e) of the CWA shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. The annual grant award is the total costs including Federal and cost share amounts. The worksheet below is provided to assist you in calculating allowable administrative costs. **The Budget Detail of your Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) should reflect how your administrative costs will comply with the cap. For specific guidance refer to page 2 of this sample “Compliance with CWA Section 117 Requirements Restricting Administrative Costs.”**

Total Costs	\$ _____
Cap %	X .10
Limit on Administrative Costs	\$ (a) _____
List Administrative Costs: (Budgeted costs for application)	
_____	\$ _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Total	\$ (b) _____

Line (b) cannot exceed Line (a).

COMPLIANCE WITH CWA SECTION 117 RESTRICTING ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Statutory Authority

Under statutory authority, grantees applying for Chesapeake Bay Program grants/cooperative agreements under Section 117 (d) or (e) must adhere to the requirement on administrative costs as follows:

Under Section 117(a)(1) Administrative Cost - The term “administrative cost” means the cost of salaries and fringe benefits incurred in administering a grant under this section.

Under Section 117(d)(4) - Administrative Costs. - Administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award.

Under Section 117(e)(6) - Administrative Costs. -Administrative costs shall not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award.

Guidance for Determining Administrative Costs

As determined by EPA/CBPO, the following provides guidance in determining administrative costs for grants/cooperative agreements under Section 117 (d) and (e) of the Clean Water Act.

1. Administrative Costs

Salaries and fringe benefits charged against the project or program element for the sole purpose of administering the grant/cooperative agreements shall not exceed 10% of the annual grant **award (Federal and cost share)**. One hundred percent of the salaries and fringe benefits related to these functions are considered administrative costs. Examples of administrative costs include, but are not limited to:

- preparation and submission of grant applications
- fiscal tracking of grants funds
- maintaining project files
- collection and submission of deliverables

2. Non-administrative Costs

Salaries and fringe benefits related to the implementation of the project or program element of the grant/cooperative agreement are not considered administrative costs. None of the salaries and fringe benefit costs related to these functions shall be considered administrative costs. Example:

- the salaries and fringe benefits for technical staff to conduct work to accomplish specific Bay Program goals as outlined in the program or project elements are not administrative costs.

3. Calculation of Administrative Costs

In order to ensure compliance with this requirement, use the format above or a similar format to calculate the costs and include in the Budget Detail of your Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).

4. Questions Regarding Administrative Costs

The grantees shall direct questions to the EPA Project Officer who will determine what costs should be included as administrative costs on a case-by-case basis.