

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Federal Agency Name: US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4

Funding Opportunity Title: FY15 Region 4 Wetland Program Development Grants

Announcement Type: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 66.461

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-REG04 -15-01

Dates:

Proposal submission

All proposals must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov as explained further in Section IV. Proposals must be submitted by **Friday, May 15, 2015 at 11:59 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)**. Late proposals will not be considered for funding.

Questions submission

Questions about this RFP must be submitted in writing via e-mail and must be received by the Agency Contact identified in Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS, before **Friday, May 8, 2015, at 5:00 P.M. EDT**. Written responses to frequently asked or general questions will be posted on the EPA's website at: http://www.epa.gov/region4/water/wetlands/wetlands_grants.html.

Evaluation of Proposals: *A full, final application package is not required at this time. Following the EPA's evaluation of proposals, all applicants will be notified regarding their status. Final application(s) will be requested from the eligible applicants whose proposal(s) have been preliminarily recommended for award. The applicants will be provided with instructions and a due date for submittal of the final application packages.*

Note to Applicants: If you name subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractor(s) in your proposal to assist you with the proposed project, pay careful attention to the information in the CONTRACTS AND SUBAWARDS provisions found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm.

SUMMARY

Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs) provide eligible applicants an opportunity to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. WPDGs assist state, tribal, local government (S/T/LG) agencies and interstate/intertribal entities in building state/tribal/local programs which protect, manage, and restore wetlands. The primary focus of these grants is to build state and tribal wetland programs. A secondary focus is to build local (e.g. county or municipal) programs. All proposals submitted under this RFP must be for projects that *build or refine* state/tribal/local government wetland programs. **Implementation of wetland protection programs is not an eligible project under this announcement.** An implementation project is one that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge. All monitoring and mapping projects should transfer information or advance the state of knowledge and therefore are eligible under this grant.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to build or refine state/tribal/local government wetland programs as described in Section I, FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION, of this announcement. States, tribes, local government agencies, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia are eligible to apply under this announcement, as further described herein. Universities that are agencies of a state government are eligible, but **must** include documentation demonstrating that they are chartered as part of a state government in the proposal submission. Non-profit organizations are not eligible to compete under this RFP.

Under this announcement, as more fully explained in Section I, there will be two separate applicant tracks for eligible applicants. Eligible states and tribes can submit proposals under either Track One or Track Two, while eligible local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and eligible universities that are agencies of a state government can only submit proposals under Track Two. Applicants under each track will only compete for awards against other applicants in their track. See Section V for further information.

Applicants may submit more than one proposal under this RFP under the applicable tracks. Each proposal must be separately submitted. In addition, state and tribal applicants may submit proposals under each track but each proposal must be submitted under either Track One or Track Two. **State and tribal applicants cannot submit one proposal covering both tracks.**

This document describes the grant selection and award process for eligible applicants interested in applying for WPDGs under this announcement. A list of previously funded proposals is posted at the EPA's Wetland Grants Database (<http://iaspub.epa.gov/wgd-public>) for reference. Basic information on previously awarded grants, organized by general topic areas, has also been posted at http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/wetlands/grantguidelines/upload/wetland-grants-fy-2006-2011.pdf.

The total amount of federal funding available under this announcement is approximately \$2,084,000, depending on Agency funding levels, which may vary from year to year, and other applicable considerations. The EPA anticipates awarding approximately \$1,500,000 in federal funds under Track One and approximately \$584,000 in federal funds under Track Two under this announcement. It is anticipated that approximately 4 to 6 awards will be made under Track One and approximately 2 to 4 awards will be made under Track Two. Awards will likely range from \$100,000 to \$400,000 in federal funds.

The EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including to zero) the total number of awards and dollar amounts for each Track, or change the ratio of Track One to Track Two assistance agreements it awards. Such change may be necessary as a response to the quality of proposals received by the EPA, the amount of funds awarded to the selected applicants, or budget availability.

All applicants must describe in their proposal how they will contribute the required minimum cost share/matching funds (see Section III.C for information on the minimum non-federal 25 percent cost share/match requirement).

Important Dates:

05/15/15 Proposals must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov by **11:59 P.M. EDT**. See Section IV for further information.

06/19/15 The EPA tentatively selects proposals for awards. Successful applicants will be requested to submit full grant applications and workplans for selected projects to be funded.

09/30/15 The EPA tentatively awards grants to recipients.

The dates above (other than the **May 15, 2015** proposal submission date) are anticipated dates and may be subject to change. See Section IV for further information on submission methods and dates, submission through Grants.gov, and alternative submission methods if necessary and approved.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The goals of the EPA's wetland program include increasing the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and restoring wetland acreage and improving wetland condition. In pursuing these goals, the EPA seeks to build the capacity of all levels of government to develop and refine effective, comprehensive programs for wetland protection and management.

WPDGs provide states, tribes, local governments, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia (hereafter referred to as applicants or recipients) an opportunity to develop and refine comprehensive state/tribal/local government wetland programs. These programs are meant to:

- build the capacity of state/tribal/local governments to increase the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and restoring wetland acreage and improving wetland condition; and
- use one or more of the following "Core Elements" in order to achieve this goal.

Core Elements. With the work of many states and tribes, the EPA has distilled a set of core elements, actions, and activities that together comprise a comprehensive wetland program. The EPA has summarized these common core elements, actions, and activities in the *Core Elements of an Effective State and Tribal Wetland Program Framework*, also called the *Core Elements Framework*. The CEF describes in greater detail each of the four core elements that make up an effective state/tribal wetland program. These four core elements are:

1. monitoring and assessment;
2. voluntary restoration and protection;
3. regulatory approaches including CWA 401 certification; and
4. wetland-specific water quality standards.

Eligible activities. Each of these four core elements is comprised of several broad "actions" that if collectively carried out would complete that core element. Of this broad array of actions, only some are program development actions (as opposed to implementation actions) that are eligible for funding under this RFP. Examples of actions eligible for funding are listed below as outputs. A larger list of examples of actions that are eligible for funding under this RFP can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/>.

The statutory authority for WPDGs is Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act (CWA), 33 U.S.C. §1254(b)(3). Section 104(b)(3) of the CWA restricts the use of these funds to build or refine wetland programs by conducting or promoting the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. Projects that are demonstrations must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches. The EPA expects that the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project.

Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement. A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not considered a demonstration project.

Wetland mapping as part of a project to build or refine a state/tribal/local government program to research, investigate, experiment, train, demonstrate, survey, and study the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution is eligible for funding. Wetland mapping and monitoring projects are eligible for funding under this announcement as they are considered studies or investigations that build or refine state/tribal/local government programs.

A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not considered a demonstration project. Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement. Funds received through the WPDG competition cannot be used to fund proposal tasks to implement a wetland program, for fundraising, honorarium, or to fund the purchase of land or conservation easements. Proposal tasks that are or might be required by a previous or pending permit, e.g., CWA Section 404 permit, CWA Section 402 permit, CWA Section 401 certification, or federal, state, tribal, or local government regulatory requirement(s) are not eligible for funding because they are implementation tasks. Implementation of individual mitigation projects, mitigation banks, or in-lieu-fee mitigation programs are not eligible for funding. Funds cannot be used to construct wetlands used for wastewater treatment, unless those constructed wetlands are to be demonstrations and considered “waters of the United States” protected by the Clean Water Act.

Purchase of vehicles (including boats, motor homes, etc.) and office furniture is not eligible for funding under this program. The lease of vehicles is eligible for funding under this program but must be described in the budget detail.

Proposed projects must comply with all state and federal regulations applicable to the project area. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance. Under the competition, each proposed project must be able to be completed within the project period.

Funds awarded under this announcement for wetland meetings/training workshops may be used by recipients to promote participation and to support the travel expenses of non-federal personnel. Assistance funds may be used by the successful applicant to defray transportation and subsistence expenses for non-federal attendees at training sessions, roundtables, or work group meetings. The applicant will select meeting locations, secure meeting facilities (e.g., meeting rooms, accommodations, audio-visual equipment), and develop meeting agendas and materials. The successful applicant will use its logos on any materials it provides; the EPA will use its logos on any materials it provides. The applicant is solely responsible for determining a methodology for selecting and funding reimbursement requests and providing a report on how participating non-federal attendees benefited from the meetings. The EPA will not participate in the selection or approval of individuals who receive travel assistance.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS AND LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The WPDG program supports the EPA’s 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. Awards made under this announcement will support *Goal 2: Protecting America’s Waters, Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems, Increase Wetlands* of the EPA Strategic Plan (available at <http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan.html>).

Goal 2: Protecting America’s Waters -- Protect and restore our waters to ensure drinking water is safe, and that aquatic ecosystems sustain fish, plants, and wildlife, and economic, recreational, and subsistence activities.

- *Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems* -- Protect the quality of rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands on a watershed basis, and protect urban, coastal, and ocean waters.
 - *Increase Wetlands*: By 2015, working with partners, achieve a net increase in wetlands nationwide with additional focus on coastal wetlands, and biological and functional measures, and assessment of wetland condition.

All proposed projects must demonstrate the linkage to the Strategic Plan 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 demonstrate how the project will contribute to the overall goal of restoring and protecting ecosystems. Additional information regarding the EPA's Strategic Plan and discussion of environmental results can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/epa_order_5700_7a1_10_1_13.pdf.

Outputs (deliverables/products) 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 assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of anticipated outputs from the assistance agreements to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:

- Development of a state/tribal Wetland Program Plan (described in Section I.C.1.a, Track One Applicant Proposals) (All Core Elements);
- Development of training materials and tools to help local decision-makers integrate wetland protection into watershed planning (Voluntary Restoration/Protection and/or Regulatory Core Elements);
- Development of protocols and assessment criteria that can be used to identify wetland restoration and protection priorities (Voluntary Restoration/Protection Core Element);
- Development of a wetland restoration/protection prioritization process that considers whether climate change may impact project success (Voluntary Restoration/Protection Core Element);
- Development of a report on the ambient condition of wetland resources at a state/tribal or population scale (Monitoring and Assessment Core Element);
- Development of methods or strategies to incorporate wetland water quality standards into EPA approved state/tribal water quality standards (Wetland-specific Water Quality Standard Core Element);
- Development of a subaward program to help fund research, investigations, experiments, trainings, studies, surveys and demonstration project(s) by local, university, or nonprofit organizations (All of the Core Elements);
- Development of tools or procedures [(or) studies and programs] to evaluate the ecological performance of wetland/stream compensatory mitigation projects (e.g., mitigation banks, in-lieu fee projects and permittee-responsible mitigation) and incorporate the results/findings/lessons learned into future compensatory mitigation project decision-making (Regulatory Core Element).

Outcomes (objectives/goals) are 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 are used as a way to gauge a project's performance. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related or programmatic in nature. For instance, if there is great need to improve the knowledge and decision-making ability, with respect to environmental issues, of local and state government officials who are in the position of creating laws, ordinances, permits, etc. In this context, certain efforts designed to improve decision-making and behavioral changes can be viewed as environmental outcomes (results) if the grantee can show or measure the improvement in the knowledge of decision-makers who are in the position to create environmental institutional changes that are necessary to restore or protect the environment. In

such instances, outcomes are not measured typically by environmental or water quality indicators, but rather by the institutional indicators that lead to the adoption and application of laws and regulations and the active management of programs necessary to provide environmental protection.

Outcomes must be quantitative and may not necessarily be achieved within an assistance agreement funding period. Outcomes may be short term (changes in learning, knowledge, attitude, or skills), intermediate (changes in behavior, practice, or decisions), or long-term (changes in condition of the natural resource).

Examples of anticipated outcomes from the assistance agreements to be awarded under this announcement include, but are not limited to:

- Increased understanding of a wetland's condition;
- Increased understanding of wetland ecologic condition at population scales (i.e., state, tribal, or regional);
- Improved wetland protection efforts;
- Increased understanding of how to ensure "no net loss" in quality and quantity of wetlands in the CWA 404 or state/tribal regulatory program;
- Increased quantity of wetlands;
- Increased quality of wetlands;
- Increased understanding of whether climate change will affect the ability to protect or restore wetlands; and
- Increased understanding of and ecological success of wetland/stream compensatory mitigation.

As part of the proposal workplan, applicants must describe how the project will result in the protection of wetland resources and link the anticipated outputs and outcomes to the Agency's Strategic Plan. Further information is located in Section IV.C, CONTENT OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION, of this RFP. Additional information regarding the EPA's definition of environmental results in terms of outputs and outcomes can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/epa_order_5700_7a1_10_1_13.pdf.

C. TRACK CONCEPT AND PRIORITY AREAS

The EPA is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to build or refine state/tribal/local government wetland programs. Comprehensive wetland programs help enable states/tribes/local governments to more effectively protect, restore, and manage their wetland resources.

Under this announcement, the EPA will have two separate applicant tracks for eligible applicants.

- **States and tribes** can apply under *Track One or Track Two*.
- **Local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and eligible universities that are agencies of a state government** can apply under *Track Two only*.

Applicants may submit more than one proposal under this RFP under the applicable track. Each proposal must be separately submitted. In addition, state and tribal applicants may submit proposals under each track but each proposal must be submitted under either Track One or Track Two. State and tribal applicants cannot submit one proposal covering both tracks.

Wetland plans for states and tribes are an EPA priority and are referred to as “Wetland Program Plans” that are submitted to EPA for approval. Local government wetland plans, while eligible for funding, are not subject to EPA approval.

All proposals submitted under this RFP, regardless of track, must be for projects that build or refine state/tribal/local government wetland programs. Accordingly, all applicants must demonstrate in their proposal how their project will build or refine a state/tribal/local government wetland program as follows:

- A. Track One Applicants:** demonstrate how they will develop a Wetland Program Plan (and, if they so choose, by also carrying out actions described in the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefddevelop/>), or by referencing one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved Wetland Program Plan (see Section I.C.1. a, Track One Applicant Proposals) that they plan to undertake; or
- B. Track Two Applicants:** demonstrate that their proposal is building or refining a core element(s), and one or more action(s) under a core element(s) described in the CEF at [http://www.epa.gov/cefddevelop/ they plan to complete](http://www.epa.gov/cefddevelop/theyplancomplete). A local government, university, interstate agency, or intertribal consortium applicant can reference one or more grant eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved State or Tribal Wetland Program Plan (see Section I.C.1. b, Track Two Applicant Proposals) that they plan to undertake as part of the proposed project.

Effective partnerships are important for the success of projects under this announcement. Proposals will be evaluated based on their partnerships as described in Section IV.C.3.B.6, Partnership Information, and Section V, PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION, partnership criteria.

Track One eligible applicants will only be evaluated against other Track One eligible applicants. Track Two eligible applicants will only be evaluated against other Track Two eligible applicants. See Section V, PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION, for further information.

The two tracks are described in more detail below.

1. Track Concept

a. Track One Applicant Proposals

Only **state and tribal** applicants are eligible to submit proposals and compete under Track One. Track One proposals will be evaluated based on the Track One criteria in Section V.A. of this RFP.

The EPA has found that long-term wetland planning (i.e. Wetland Program Plans, or WPPs) helps states and tribes build their wetland programs more effectively and efficiently, and is therefore emphasizing WPPs as a national priority.

Under Track One, states and tribes must submit proposals for either: 1) carrying out grant-eligible actions from an EPA-approved WPP, or 2) developing or updating a WPP (and, if they so choose, also carrying out actions that build or refine a wetland program described in the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefddevelop/>). If a state or tribe submits any other type of proposal they will be included and evaluated under Track Two.

Wetland Program Plans. WPPs are voluntary plans developed by state and tribal agencies that articulate what the state or tribe wants to accomplish with their wetland programs over time. WPPs describe overall program goals along with broad-based actions consistent with the CEF and more specific activities that will help achieve the goals. Timelines for the WPPs vary between 3-6 years, with more specific timeframes typically associated with the WPP actions/activities.

WPPs should include the following five minimum components:

1. An overall goal statement(s) for the program over the time period covered by the WPP.
2. An overall timeframe for the WPP, with a minimum timeframe of three years and a maximum of six years, starting from the time of WPP submittal to the EPA.
3. A list of planned actions consistent with the CEF that the program intends to carry out over the WPP's timeframe, and which, if collectively met, will accomplish the overall WPP goal(s).
4. An intended schedule for the achievement of each action.
5. A listing of more specific activities to be accomplished under each action.

WPPs do not need to be elaborate documents. An effective WPP may be a concise list of planned actions to help create a focused and sustainable wetland program. A WPP can refer to both wetland program implementation and program development efforts planned for the upcoming 3 to 6 years (please note, however, that program implementation efforts are **not** eligible for WPDG funding). WPPs should also include any actions that the state or tribe anticipates funding through sources other than WPDGs. Actions listed in a WPP should be consistent with the broad actions listed in the relevant core elements chapter of the CEF (see individual core element tables at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/initiative/cefintro.html>). It is not necessary for CEF actions to be included verbatim in a WPP, but WPPs should reference the part of the CEF that most closely relates to the proposed actions. WPPs are approved by the EPA in a process that is independent of the WPDG process. EPA-approved state/tribal WPPs can be found at: <http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/wpp.cfm>.

WPP versus WPDG proposal. As described above a WPP is a plan that outlines the goals, broad actions, and activities that a state/tribal wetland program may want to undertake to build or refine their wetland program. A WPDG proposal is a more detailed set of projects and tasks that an eligible applicant may undertake over the next year or two to develop actions or activities in an approved WPP, or in the absence of a WPP, a set of actions or activities to build or refine a state/tribal/local wetland program.

If a state or tribe already has an EPA-approved WPP, they may submit a proposal to develop or refine their wetland program in accordance with their WPP. The state or tribe must indicate in their proposal(s) which of the development or refinement actions from their EPA-approved WPP that they intend to carry out. All EPA-approved state/tribal WPPs for Region 4 can be found at: <http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/wpp.cfm>.

If a state or tribe does not have an EPA-approved WPP or if their EPA-approved WPP is expiring, they may submit a proposal to develop a WPP. In addition to developing a WPP, a state or tribe may want to include in its proposal other program building or refining tasks it wants to undertake during the time it will be developing its WPP. The state or tribe must indicate in its proposal which core element(s) its project would include, and which associated action(s) its project would take, as described in the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/>.

A state or tribe may submit a proposal to refine an EPA-approved WPP if the plan needs significant changes. While this is not recommended, a WPP may be refined when the plan has not expired or is not about to expire but additional changes need to be made to update the WPP as a whole or in part, because of more recent developments in the state/tribal program.

States or tribes submitting proposals to develop a WPP under Track 1 may want to include travel support and meeting set-up and facilitation support to hold meetings amongst state agencies, tribal agencies, or stakeholders.

b. Track Two Applicant Proposals

State, tribal, local government, interstate agencies, intertribal consortium, and university applicants that are agencies of a state government are eligible to compete under Track Two, and these proposals will be evaluated based on the Track Two evaluation criteria in Section V.A of this RFP. Local government, interstate agencies, intertribal consortium, and university applicants **that are agencies of a state government** are only eligible to compete under Track Two.

Under Track Two, states, tribes, local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and universities that are agencies of a state must submit proposals that will develop or refine a state, tribe, or local government's wetland program by either carrying out one or more action(s): 1) under a core element(s) from the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/>, or 2) from the grant-eligible actions articulated in an EPA-approved WPP. Applicants must indicate in their proposals which core element(s) their project would develop or refine, and which associated action(s) their project would take from the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/>. If the applicant is a local government, university, interstate agency, or intertribal consortium and is carrying out an action(s) from an EPA-approved WPP they must indicate which state or tribal EPA-approved WPP they are working from and which core element(s) their project would develop or refine, and which associated action(s) their project would take from the WPP.

As noted above, local government, university, interstate agency, and intertribal consortium applicant's proposals can link to the grant-eligible actions in an EPA-approved WPP in their state or tribe. Local government, university, interstate agency, and intertribal consortium applicants can link to an EPA-approved state/tribal WPP in a variety of ways. Examples of how to link to an EPA-approved WPP include but are not limited to:

- In their EPA-approved WPP, a state/tribe proposes to develop regulations on groundwater withdrawals in areas surrounding vital wetlands. To link to this WPP, a university proposes to study the effect of groundwater withdrawals on particular types of wetlands common in the state/tribe, and provide the results of the study to the state/tribe. The goal would be to inform the regulations governing ground water withdrawals in areas near vital wetlands.
- In their EPA-approved WPP, a state/tribe proposes to survey wetlands identified in its existing wetland inventory to verify location, hydric conditions, and wetland type. To link to this WPP, a county proposes to perform this verification within its own boundaries.

EPA-approved state/tribal WPPs can be found at: <http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/wpp.cfm>.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. AMOUNT OF FUNDING

The EPA anticipates approximately \$2,084,000 in federal funding to be available for assistance agreements under this announcement to fund approximately 6 to 10 awards, depending on funding availability and other applicable considerations. Under this announcement, the EPA will have two separate applicant tracks with states and tribes in Track One or Track Two, and local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and universities that are agencies of a state government in Track Two.

The EPA anticipates awarding approximately \$1,500,000 in federal funds under Track One and approximately \$584,000 in federal funds under Track Two. It is anticipated that approximately 4 to 6 awards will be made under Track One and approximately 2 to 4 awards will be made under Track Two. Awards for the selected projects will likely range from \$100,000 to \$400,000 in federal funding. The EPA will fund a maximum of 75 percent of the total project cost (see Section III.C, COST SHARING/MATCH REQUIREMENTS, for information on minimum non-federal cost share/match requirement).

It is anticipated that the assistance agreements awarded under this announcement will have two to four year project periods. The project period for assistance agreements under this announcement should be no more than four years.

In appropriate circumstances, the EPA reserves the right to partially fund proposals by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If the EPA decides to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal, 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 increase or decrease (including to zero) the total number of awards and dollar amounts for each track, or change the ratio of Track One to Track Two assistance agreements it awards. Such changes may be necessary as a response to the quality of proposals received by the EPA, the amount of funds awarded to the selected applicants, or budget availability.

The EPA reserves the right to make no awards under this announcement, or make fewer awards than anticipated. In addition, the EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

B. TYPE OF FUNDING

It is anticipated that grants and cooperative agreements may be funded under this announcement. When cooperative agreements are awarded, the EPA will have substantial involvement with the project workplans and budgets. 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 projects selected may include:

1. Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
2. Collaboration during the performance of the scope of work;
3. In accordance with 2 CFR 317 and 2 CFR 318, as appropriate, review of proposed procurements;

4. Approving qualifications of key personnel (the EPA does not have authority to select employees or contractors employed by the recipient); and
5. Review and comment on content of publications (printed or electronic) prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

States, tribes, local government agencies, universities that are agencies of a state, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia are eligible to apply for WPDGs under this announcement. Tribes must be federally-recognized, although “Treatment as a state” status is not required. As explained in Section I, there will be two separate applicant tracks with states and tribes in Track One or Track Two, and local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and universities that are agencies of a state government in Track Two.

Past recipients of WPDGs include, but are not limited to: wetland regulatory agencies, water quality agencies, planning offices, wild and scenic rivers agencies, departments of transportation, fish and wildlife or natural resources agencies, agriculture departments, forestry agencies, coastal zone management agencies, park and recreation agencies, non-point source or storm water agencies, resource conservation districts, city or county, and other state/tribal/local government agencies that conduct wetland-related efforts.

Please note:

- **Intertribal consortia** must meet the requirements of 40 CFR §35.504 (a) and (c) (<http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/search/40cfr.html>). This section states that an intertribal consortium is eligible to receive grants only if the consortium demonstrates that all members of the consortium meet the eligibility requirements for the grant and authorize the consortium to apply for and receive assistance. An intertribal consortium must submit to the EPA adequate documentation of: (1) the existence of the partnership between Indian tribal governments, and (2) authorization of the consortium by all its members to apply for and receive the grant(s) for which the consortium has applied.
- **Interstate agencies** are defined in CWA Section 502 as “an agency of two or more states established by or pursuant to an agreement or compact approved by the Congress, or any other agency of two or more states, having substantial powers or duties pertaining to the control of pollution as determined and approved by the Administrator.” (Administrator refers to the head of the EPA.)
- **Universities must** include documentation demonstrating that they are chartered as a part of a state government in their proposal. Documentation may include such things as: state constitution, university charter, or case law that has confirmed the university as a state agency. Universities *that are not chartered* as a part of a state government are not eligible to apply for assistance under this RFP.
- **Non-profit organizations** are **not** eligible to compete under this RFP.

B. COST SHARING/MATCH REQUIREMENTS

All applicants, except as noted below, must describe in their proposal submission how they will contribute a minimum of 25 percent of the total project cost *in cost share/matching funds in accordance with 2 CFR 200.306*. The cost share/match must be for allowable costs and may be provided by the applicant or partner organization or institution (subawardees). The cost share/match may be provided in cash or by in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions often include salaries or other verifiable costs and this value must be carefully documented. In the case of salaries, applicants may use either minimum wage or fair market value.

If the cost share/match is provided by a partner organization (subawardee), the applicant is still responsible for proper accountability and documentation. A partner organization's indirect cost/fringe generally may be used as cost share/match. Please note that an applicant's and any subawardee's indirect cost/fringe charges must be in accordance with a federally negotiated indirect cost rate under 2 CFR 200.414. Other federal grants may not be used as cost share/ match without specific statutory authority. All grant funds are subject to federal audit.

The total project cost is the sum of the total requested federal share and applicant cost share/match. The minimum cost share/match is determined by dividing the total project cost by four as illustrated by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total Project Cost (\$)}}{4} = \text{minimum cost share/match (\$)}$$

For example, if the **total project cost** (sum of federal and non-federal funds) is \$100,000 the applicant must be able to provide \$25,000 in cash or in-kind contributions as cost share/match.

OR

$$\frac{\text{Total Federal Funds Requested (\$)}}{3} = \text{minimum cost share/match (\$)}$$

For example, if the **total federal funds requested** are \$75,000 the applicant must be able to provide \$25,000 in cash or in-kind contributions as cost share/match.

If a tribe or intertribal consortium includes its WPDG in an approved Performance Partnership Grant (PPG), the cost share/match requirement may be reduced to 5 percent of the allowable cost of the workplan budget for the first two years in which the tribe or intertribal consortium receives a PPG. After two years, the cost share/match may be increased up to 10 percent of the workplan budget, or decreased to 0 percent (as determined by the Regional Administrator based on economic indicators). See Section III.E, PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS, for additional information. Currently, the Agency is finalizing a process to determine the percent cost share/match for tribes and intertribal consortia after the two-year initial grant period (see regulations at 40 CFR Part 35.536(c)).

For example, if the **total project cost** for tribal/intertribal consortium in a PPG is \$100,000 the tribe/intertribal consortium must be able to provide a \$5,000 in-cash or in-kind contribution as cost share/match for the first two years with a 5 percent minimum cost share/ match requirement.

$$\frac{\text{Total Project Cost (\$)}}{20} = \text{minimum 5\% tribal PPG cost share/match (\$)}$$

Where the stated purpose is to include WPDG funds in a PPG, a tribe or intertribal consortium may prepare a budget and proposed workplan based upon the assumption that the EPA will approve the waiver amount for PPGs under 40 CFR 35.536. If the tribe or intertribal consortium does not or cannot include the WPDG funds as part of an approved PPG, or chooses to withdraw the WPDG from their PPG, the tribe or intertribal consortium must then meet the 25 percent cost share/match requirements identified above and, as applicable, negotiate a revised workplan with the EPA contact identified in Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS. The tribe must also provide a new budget with the final grant application based upon the program's cost share/match requirement and the federal award will be reduced accordingly. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that all workplan activities for a project which is competitively awarded will be implemented in accordance with the same budget and as described in the original proposal.

Tribes should indicate in their proposal submission if they anticipate including this project, if selected for funding, into an already existing PPG or if they intend to create a new PPG that would include this wetland project.

Insular areas. Cost sharing and matching requirements under \$200,000 for Insular area applicants (the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands) are waived as a matter of law as authorized by the Omnibus Territories Act of 1977, as amended, 48 U.S.C. Section 1469a. Insular area applicants with proposals that will require a cost share of \$200,000 or more are advised to contact EPA to determine if cost share requirements will be waived in whole or in part. For contact information, refer to Section VII.

Please contact the EPA Regional grant contact person listed in Section VII, AGENCY CONTACTS, of this RFP if you have any questions about calculating cost share/match.

In order to be considered for funding, all applicants must describe in their proposal submission how they will contribute the appropriate cost share/match requirement. In addition, if an applicant cannot meet the appropriate cost share/match by the time of award, they will not be eligible to receive funding.

C. THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

These are requirements that if not met by the time of the proposal submission will result in elimination of the proposal from consideration for funding. Only proposals that meet all of these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of the 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. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements in Section III. A, ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS, of this announcement.
2. All applicants must state which track they are applying under. Eligible states and tribes can be in Track One or Track Two and eligible local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and universities that are agencies of a state government must be in Track Two. Applicants in each track will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria for that track, as described in Section V of this announcement.
3. Applicants must demonstrate in their proposal submission how they will meet the cost share/match requirements in Section III.B, of this announcement.
4. Projects must be performed within one or more of the states of EPA Region 4, specifically: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, to be eligible to apply for funding. Inter-jurisdictional watershed projects must primarily be implemented in EPA Region 4. Applicants need not be located within the boundaries of the EPA Region to be

eligible to apply for funding so long as the project will be performed within the geographic boundaries of the Region.

5. Proposals must **substantially** comply with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV, PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION, of this announcement, or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the proposal, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. If a single-spaced proposal is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 16 page double-spaced page limit for the proposal specified in Section IV.C.3, Proposal Workplan, of the announcement (Section IV.C.3 establishes a 16 page double-spaced proposal workplan page limit which would be the equivalent of 8 single-spaced pages; any single-spaced pages in excess of 8 will not be reviewed).
6. All proposals submitted under this RFP, regardless of track, must be for projects that build or refine state/tribal/local government wetland programs. Accordingly, all applicants must demonstrate in their proposal how their proposed project will build or refine a state/tribal/local government wetland program as follows: A. For Track One Applicants, by demonstrating how they will develop a Wetland Program Plan, or by referencing one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved WPP they plan to undertake as part of the proposed project, **or** B. For Track Two Applicants, by demonstrating which core element(s) and one or more actions under a core element(s) from the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/> their proposal is building or refining, or for local governments, universities that are agencies of a state, interstate agencies, or intertribal consortia by referencing one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved Wetland Program Plan they plan to undertake as part of the proposed project.
7. All proposals submitted must conduct or promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution as described in Section I., of this announcement.
8. **Demonstration projects** must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, where the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not a demonstration and all or parts of the proposal will be eliminated from consideration. Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement. Individual project tasks that are for program implementation are not eligible for funding. See Section D., below, on ineligible activities.
9. Proposals must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov/) as specified in Section IV, PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION, 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 proposal 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 proposal is timely submitted. Proposals 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 because of technical problems attributable to Grants.gov or relevant Sam.gov system issues and not the applicant. An applicant's failure to timely

submit their proposal through Grants.gov because they did not timely or properly register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov will not be considered an acceptable reason to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with Geryl Ricks as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

10. Applicants may submit more than one proposal under this RFP under the applicable tracks. Each proposal must be separately submitted. In addition, state and tribal applicants may submit different proposals under either track but each proposal must be separately submitted. State and tribal applicants cannot submit one proposal covering both tracks.

D. INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

If a proposal is submitted that has ineligible tasks, that portion of the proposal will be ineligible for funding and **may, depending on the extent to which it affects the proposal, render the entire proposal ineligible for funding.**

1. Funds cannot be used to fund wetland program implementation tasks.
2. Funds cannot be used for fund-raising, honorarium, or for the purchase of land or conservation easements.
3. Proposal tasks that are or might be required by a previous or pending permit, e.g., CWA Section 404 permit, CWA Section 402 permit, CWA Section 401 certification, or federal, state, tribal, or local government regulatory requirement(s) are **not** eligible for funding because they are implementation tasks.
4. Funds cannot be used to construct wetlands used for wastewater treatment, unless those constructed wetlands are to be demonstrations and considered “waters of the United States” protected by the Clean Water Act.
5. Implementation of individual mitigation projects, mitigation banks, or in-lieu-fee mitigation programs are not eligible for funding. Proposals that carry out studies that maybe part of an in lieu fee program/instrument are eligible for funding but the actual creation of an in lieu fee instrument is not eligible for funding.
6. Purchase of vehicles (including boats, motor homes) and office furniture is **not** eligible for funding under this program. The lease of vehicles is eligible for funding under this program but must be described in the budget detail and clearly linked to project activities.
7. Restoration of wetlands through conventional methods is ineligible. If a project involves restoration, it must qualify as a demonstration project. Only education and training on restoration, or restoration involving new or experimental methods are eligible. (See also section B.8, above on limitations for demonstration projects).

E. PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS (PPG)

Funds for a WPDG may be included in a PPG. The PPG should be created and in place before the time of grant award or created concurrently with the award of the wetland grant funds. The proposed project under this grant announcement must have a project period that is within the PPG project period. It cannot be longer than the PPG project period. A PPG enables entities to combine funds from more than one environmental program grant into a single grant with a single budget. Under this competition, state and interstate agency proposals must first be selected under the competitive grant process described in this RFP and, in accordance with 40 CFR 35.138, the workplan commitments that would have been included in the WPDG workplan must be included in the PPG workplan. Similarly, tribal and intertribal consortia proposals must first be selected under this competitive grant process in accordance with 40 CFR 35.535. If a proposed PPG workplan differs significantly from the WPDG workplan approved for funding under this

competition, the Regional Administrator must consult the National Program Office (see 40 CFR 35.535). The purpose of this consultation requirement is to address the issue of ensuring that a project which is awarded WPDG funding under this competition is implemented as described once commingled with other grant programs in a PPG. For further information, see the final rules on Environmental Program Grants for state and interstate agencies at 40 CFR Part 35, Subpart A and tribes and intertribal consortia at 40 CFR Part 35, Subpart B. The rules are also available on the EPA's website at: <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&rgn=div6&view=text&node=40:1.0.1.2.32.1&idno=40> (state) and <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=36b93a1b033dd72618e9867c2032b53b&rgn=div6&view=text&node=40:1.0.1.2.32.2&idno=40> (tribal). Local governments are not eligible for PPGs.

IV. PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. HOW TO OBTAIN A PROPOSAL PACKAGE

Applicants can download individual grant application forms, including Standard Forms (SF) 424 and SF 424A, from the EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment website at: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/application.htm>.

B. FORM OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

a. 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 Barbara Perkins
USEPA Headquarters
William Jefferson Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W.
Mail Code: 3903R
Washington, DC 20460

Courier Address:

OGD Waivers
c/o Barbara Perkins
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Rm # 51267
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 www.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 proposal 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, 2015, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to EPA through December 31, 2015). 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, 2015 with a submission deadline of January 15, 2016, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1, 2016.

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.

b. Submission Instructions

The electronic submission of your application must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with 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, go to <http://www.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, 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 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, SAM.gov, and DUNS number assignment is FREE.

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to <http://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 <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>.

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on <http://www.grants.gov>. Go to <http://www.grants.gov> and then click on “Search Grants” at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, EPA-REG04 -15-01, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.461), in the appropriate field and click the Search button. Alternatively, you may be able to access the application package by clicking on the Application Package button at the top right of the synopsis page for the announcement on <http://www.grants.gov>. To find the synopsis page, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click “Browse Agencies” in the middle of the page and then go to “Environmental Protection Agency” to find the EPA funding opportunities.

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization’s AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than May 15, 2015. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application 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 downloaded using the instructions above. For additional instructions on completing and submitting the electronic application package, click on the “Show Instructions” tab that is accessible within the application package itself.

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. Proposal Narrative (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in Section IVC.3 of the announcement

Optional Documents:

4. Other Attachments, if applicable

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 Geryl Ricks, at (404) 562-9837. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

c. 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 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 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 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. It is essential to allow sufficient time to ensure that your application is submitted to Grants.gov BEFORE the due date identified in Section IV of the solicitation.*** The 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.

Note: Grants.gov issues a “case number” upon a request for assistance.

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 www.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 Geryl Ricks with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Geryl Ricks at (404) 562-9837. Be aware that EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to 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 or 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 www.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 representative by calling 606-545-5035. Be sure to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. If the problems stem from unforeseen exigent circumstances unrelated to Grants.gov, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access, contact Geryl Ricks at (404) 562-9837.

b. Unsuccessful transfer of the application package: If a successful transfer of the application cannot be accomplished even with assistance from Grants.gov due to electronic submission system issues or unforeseen exigent circumstances, send an email message to ricks.geryl@epa.gov prior to the application deadline. The email message must document the

problem and include the 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 stating that the application has been rejected for reasons other than late submittal promptly send an email to ricks.geryl@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 and attach the entire application in PDF format.

C. CONTENT OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Applicants should read the following section very carefully and address all requirements.

All proposal packages must include the following three documents:

1. Signed Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance

Complete the form and have it signed. Please be sure to include the organization fax number and e-mail address in Block 5 of the SF 424.

Please note that the organizational Dun 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 by visiting the web site at www.dnb.com.

2. Standard Form 424A (SF-424A), Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs

Complete the form. 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 (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the total indirect amount should also be indicated on line 22. In Section B: Budget Categories column (1) should be filled out for federal funds, column (2) should be filled out for non-federal cost-share/match, and column (5) should be filled out for total project cost (federal funds and non-federal cost share/match).

3. Proposal Narrative

- The proposal narrative must address Sections A-E (F is optional) below, must be no more than sixteen (16) double-spaced 8.5 x 11 inch pages (a page is one side of paper) (except for documents specifically excluded from the page limit as noted below).
- Pages should be consecutively numbered for ease of reading. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins and that applicants format their proposal narrative as described below for ease of reading. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal narrative.
- Additional pages beyond the 16 page limit will not be considered. If a single-spaced proposal narrative is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 16 page double-spaced page limit for proposal narratives (eight (8) single-spaced pages is

the equivalent of the 16-page double-spaced proposal narrative page limit; any single-spaced pages in excess of 8 will not be reviewed).

- Budget information and the milestone schedule, described below, must be included within the 16-page limit not in the supporting materials or appendix.
- Any supporting materials (such as support letters from partners, annotated resumes, and Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plans) that the applicant chooses to provide are not included in the 16-page limit for the proposal narrative and should be submitted as attachments. See Section IV.C.3.F, below, for a discussion of optional supporting materials.
- When possible please submit all supporting materials as one electronic file, such as but not limited to, PDF.

The 16-page double-spaced proposal narrative must include the information listed below in items A-E (F is optional), and address the relevant evaluation criteria in Section V, PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION, for either Track One or Track Two as applicable. The proposal narrative must also address the threshold eligibility factors in Section III.C as applicable. If a particular item is not applicable, the proposal should clearly state this.

A. Cover Page including:

1. Project Title (the project title should reflect the main project outcome/objective and should be 15 words or less);
2. Indicate whether the applicant is in Track One or Two;
3. List one or more of the **core element(s)** from the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefddevelop/> discussed in Section I.C, or from an EPA-approved WPP that are addressed in this proposal, and/or indicate if the proposal is to develop a WPP;
4. List the **action(s)** from the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefddevelop/>, or from an EPA-approved WPP (indicate which WPP and the page number), that apply to core elements that are addressed in this proposal. If the proposal is exclusively about developing a WPP (which should be indicated as per “3” above), no action from the CEF needs to be listed;
5. Name of applicant and applicant’s DUNS number;
6. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and phone number);
7. Geographic Location - state(s) **or** tribe (with the name of the state that the tribe is located in); **and** 8- or 14-digit Hydrologic Unit Code(s) with watershed name(s) if the project is not statewide, with weblink provided. If the project is local in scale, provide the name of the city or county, and state. Please note that more specific geolocational information may be requested by the EPA upon award, depending on the nature of the project (as described in VI.A. AWARD NOTICES, item #6).
8. Total project cost, federal dollars requested and cost share/match (If the proposal is from a tribal applicant and will be placed in a PPG please indicate that as well); and
9. Abstract/project summary. The abstract should begin with one or two sentences describing the main objective of the proposal. It should also include a listing of the main tasks to be accomplished, and a description of the final product(s). The entire abstract should be 250 words or less.

B. Project Description - Please address the following categories (1-10) outlined below.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the selection criteria described in Section V. PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION.

1. National Priority – see Section I. C.

Track One (states /tribal applicants):

Describe how you propose to develop a WPP consistent with the objectives and guidelines described in Section I. C, PRIORITY AREAS AND TRACK CONCEPT, of this announcement. In addition, if applicable, the proposal will also be evaluated to the extent it describes one or more core element(s) and associated action(s) (see the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/>) that the applicant proposes to carry out.

Track Two (state, tribal, local government, interstate agency, intertribal consortium, or university applicants):

Describe how the proposed project addresses the core element(s) and one or more action(s) under a core element to develop or refine a state/tribe/local government's wetland program either through the program development/refinement actions in the CEF (located in the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/>) or from the grant-eligible actions in an EPA-approved WPP (if the applicant is a local government, interstate agency, intertribal consortium, or university).

2. Description of Need

Describe the need for the project as it pertains to developing or refining a state/tribal/local government wetland program. The description should include:

the threats affecting your wetlands/streams;

the need for the particular actions you are proposing; and

how the deliverables will lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands.

Describe specific aspects of your area and specific adverse issues your wetlands face and how this issue will be addressed by the development of a WPP or through the core element(s)/action(s) you have described in the proposal.

Beyond a narrative description of the need for the project, some examples of ways to provide additional information that the project is needed by a state/tribe/local government - or that the applicant at least exercised due diligence to further demonstrate state/tribe/local government need for the project – include (but are not limited to):

- i. Letters of support/commitment from state(s), tribe(s), or local government(s) indicating their need for the project's deliverables.
- ii. Documentation of the responses from efforts made to reach out to states/tribes/local governments with respect to project need. Such documentation could include dates(s) of e-mails, letters, or phone calls and the title(s) of the person(s) the applicant reached;
- iii. Citing results of surveys or studies that show a clear need for the proposed outputs and outcomes, etc.
- iv. Citing activities articulated in an EPA-approved WPP.

The items listed in i-iv above are **not** subject to the proposal narrative page limit.

3. Project Tasks – Describe the steps you will take to meet the project product/output(s) and objective(s). Describe the projects tasks or components and the anticipated products/outputs associated with each task. Include a description of the roles and responsibilities of the applicant. If development of a methodology is part of the proposed project, then describe the planned development steps. If travel assistance is to be provided for non-Federal attendees, describe the process for selecting non-Federal attendees who may receive travel assistance.
4. Milestone Schedule - Provide a milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire grant period. Include a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks and products/outputs. Include the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task. Provide interim milestone dates for achieving each workplan component. Include an approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.
5. Detailed Budget – Provide a detailed budget and estimated funding amounts for each project task. Identify the requested federal dollars, demonstrate how the cost share/match will be met, and provide the total project cost for each project task. Provide a description of proposed cost for each of the budget categories found in Form SF 424A (i.e., personnel, travel, contractual, other). Identify funding by budget category for each year of funding request. Explain if and how non-federal partners will contribute to the required cost share/match. This section provides an opportunity for a narrative description of the budget or aspects of the budget such as other costs and contracts. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for the EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of costs for each workplan component/task, including the use of the cost share/match funds. Please note that an applicant's and any subgrantee/subawardee's indirect cost/fringe generally may be used as cost share/match.

Also indicate whether funds will be added to a PPG (cost share/match may be reduced to 5 percent for the first two years in which a tribe or intertribal consortia receives a PPG, and then maybe increased to 10 percent or decreased to 0 percent (as determined by the Regional Administrator based on economic indicators).

Tribes must indicate in their proposal submission if they anticipate including this project, if selected for funding, into an already existing PPG or if they intend to create a new PPG that would include this wetland project. An example of a detailed budget can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/recipient/ogd_budget_detail_guidance.pdf. Budget information may be provided in table format if the applicant chooses but all budget information must be included within the page limit.

If travel for staff is planned for the project, then indicate it in the budget. Include travel for applicant staff to attend wetland meetings/training workshops throughout the proposed project period that are related in scope to the proposal. If applicable, the budget workplan for the "other" cost category must include travel reimbursement to pay for travel costs of non-Federal attendees.

While contractual and subgrant efforts may be part of an applicant's proposal, each WPDG recipient must be significantly involved in the administration of the award. Note that any proposed subgrants or contracts between partners for non-commercial services should be included in the "other" cost category of the SF 424A.

Any optional letters of support that you wish to provide, from intended cost share/match partners, should be attached to your proposal as supporting documents. Letters of support are not counted in the 16-page limit for the proposal narrative. The letters should be submitted on the supporting organization's letterhead and may be addressed to the applicant. For more discussion of letters of support, see Section IV.C.3.F, below.

6. Transfer of Results – Describe the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods to other states, tribes, or local governments agencies within and beyond their own organization, so that the others can better build their wetland programs. Examples of ways to demonstrate how the project may be used by a state/tribe/local government include:
 - i. Presentations of results at forums typically attended by representatives from state/tribes/local government wetland programs;
 - ii. Documentation of how you intend to share results with a relevant agent of a state/tribal/local government wetland program;
 - iii. Conducting a webinar or other outreach to state/tribes/local governments, etc.
7. Outputs, Outcomes, and Tracking – This information may be provided in table or narrative form in the proposal.
 - i. Link to the EPA Strategic Plan - Describe how the objective of the project (outcomes) and products (outputs) contribute to meet the EPA Strategic Plan Goal of working with partners achieving a net increase in wetland acres. (See Section I.B, ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS AND LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC PLAN, of this announcement);
 - ii. Outputs (products/deliverables)- List and describe the outputs expected to be achieved through the completion of the proposed project (examples of outputs can be found in Section I.B of this announcement);
 - iii. Outcomes (objectives/environmental improvements) – List and describe the short and long-term outcomes (environmental improvements) expected to be achieved as a result of the project outputs. (examples of outcomes can be found in Section I.B of this announcement);
 - iv. Tracking Outputs and Outcomes - Describe your approach for measuring and tracking your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) and project outcome(s). This does not include your progress reports to the EPA but how you will track your progress to achieving outputs and outcomes that you will then report to EPA.

8. Programmatic Capability/ Technical Experience/ Qualifications – Provide a brief description of your ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project taking into account:

- i. Your organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure and their readiness and ability to implement the proposed project in a successful and timely manner. Describe your organization's resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project.
- ii. Staff experience/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. Provide a list of key staff and briefly describe their expertise/qualifications and knowledge as relevant to the proposed project. Providing annotated resumes of applicant's key staff is encouraged. The annotated resumes should be attached at the end of the proposal narrative. Annotated resumes are not included in the 16-page limit for the proposal narrative. See Section IV.C.3.F., below, for more on supporting documentation attachments.

9. Partnership Information – List proposed partner entities, and describe their roles, and whether they will participate as subgrantees. Describe the agencies/organizations who will partner with you as appropriate and necessary to successfully conduct the project, to help accomplish outputs/products and to achieve the objectives/outcomes for improving state/tribal/local wetland protection programs. Provide a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of specific partners in the project's components/tasks, and how these partnerships will contribute to building a state/tribal/local government's wetland program. If an applicant is in the process of engaging a partner, proposals should describe how the applicant plans to engage that partner and establish a working relationship to successfully complete the project. A **state/tribal/local government** applicant may describe how they will partner within their organization, or if appropriate, describe how having no partners is the best approach. If the applicant is an **interstate agency, intertribal consortium, or university** designated as an agency of a state government they should describe how they have already and/or will continue to partner (during the project) with the appropriate state/tribe/local government(s) in which the project is physically located, or where the results of the project are intended to be used. You may attach optional letters of support/commitment, from intended partners, to your proposal as supporting documents and they will not be counted in the 16-page limit for the proposal workplan. The letters should be submitted on the supporting organization's letterhead and may be addressed to the applicant. For more discussion of letters of support/commitment, see Section IV.C.3.F, below.

10. Past Performance - 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 you performed within the **last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements)** and:

- i. Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements;

- ii. Describe your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
- iii. Describe the extent and quality to which you adequately and timely reported on progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether you adequately reported why not.

Note: In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, the EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). **If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (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.**

- C. **Restoration Demonstration Project Information** - If you are proposing a restoration demonstration project, describe the current environmental condition of the project site and the reason for restoration. Describe how the design and installation of your restoration demonstration project would take relevant potential impacts from climate change into account when considering your project's long-term viability (i.e., sea level rise, increased storm event intensity, increased heat stress, increased potential for wildfire). Describe your post-installation monitoring program, and whether it will be funded as a part of this project or with another named funding source. If another funding source would be used, explain how you are confident that this work will be funded. Describe the regulatory authorities that you must comply with (e.g. CWA Section 404 permits, any applicable state and local permits). You may need to comply with regulations in order to conduct, monitor, and/or maintain a proposed restoration demonstration project. If you are not proposing this type of project, do not provide any description for this section and state "N/A".
- D. **Quality Assurance/Quality Control** - If you plan to collect or use environmental data or information, explain how and when you will comply with the Quality Assurance/Quality Control requirements (see Section VIII.A, QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL, of this announcement for a definition of environmental data which includes more than the collection of new data and information and any additional information). At a minimum most grants will require a Quality Management Plan. A QMP is a document that describes an organization's quality system. It identifies the organizational structure, policy and procedures, functional responsibilities of management and staff, lines of authority, and its processes for planning, implementing, documenting, and assessing all activities conducted under the organization's quality system. If data will be collected using federal funds a QMP and/or QAPP will be required before data collection can begin. To find out more about EPA's QA/QC program go to <http://www.epa.gov/quality/faq9.html>.
- E. **Invasive Species Control** – If applicable, describe how you will ensure that your project does not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive species. Explain how you would

respond if an invasive species problem occurs in relation to your project. (See Section VIII.B, INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL, of this announcement for further information).

F. **Optional** - You may provide some or all of the optional attachments listed below. **They are not included in the 16-page limit for the proposal narrative.** Possible attachments (some are discussed above) include the following:

- i. Pictures and Maps: Pictures and/or maps may be attached to describe the project.
- ii. Staff Resumes: Staff resumes may be attached to describe the experience of relevant applicant staff and should not be more than approximately two pages per person.
- iii. Support Letters: Support letters may be useful in illustrating support for proposals submitted under either Track One or Track Two. Support letters may be attached to verify:
 - Partners' support for or commitment to the project;
 - Cost share/match or other resources provided by partners; and/or
 - How partners/others will make use of the project's results.

Partners who will be providing cost share/match should describe the resources (in-kind services or dollars) that they are committing to the project for each task and budget category (see item 8. Budget Workplan under the Project Description Section, above). A partner's indirect costs or fringe benefits cannot be used as cost share/match. Support letters may be useful in illustrating support for proposals submitted under either Track One or Track Two. All letters of support should be on the official letterhead of the supporting agency or organization, and can be addressed to the applicant.

NOTE: The applicant should also provide in its proposal workplan any additional information, to the extent not already identified above, that addresses the selection criteria found in Section V, PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION.

D. 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 and contracts and subawards under grants can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm. These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants must review them when preparing proposals 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.

EPA recommends that if your program is covered under E.O. 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs" that the applicant should submit their proposal and SF 424 form to the official designated point of contact in her or her state at the time of submission of your package to EPA.

E. PROPOSAL COMMUNICATIONS

In accordance with the EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft proposals, provide informal comments on draft proposals, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications/proposals. 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 proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement. In addition, if necessary, the EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making a final eligibility determination. Questions must be submitted in writing via e-mail to the Agency Contact identified in Section VII. Written responses on frequently asked questions or general issues will be posted on EPA Region 4's website at:
www.epa.gov/region4/water/wetlands/wetlands_grants.html

V. PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION

A. SELECTION CRITERIA

Only those proposals that meet the threshold eligibility criteria found in Section III will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and weights listed below (125-point scale). Applicants need to address these criteria in their proposal submittal. Points will be awarded based on how well each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the proposal submittal.

Applicants for Track One projects will be evaluated against each other based on the Track One criteria and applicants for Track Two projects will be evaluated against each other based on the Track Two criteria. There will be separate selection lists for each track.

Track One: Evaluation Criteria for TRACK ONE Applicants – states and tribes

1) National Priority Area: Wetland Program Development and WPPs (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well the applicant: Proposes to develop a WPP consistent with the objectives and guidelines described in Section I. C, PRIORITY AREAS AND TRACK CONCEPT, of this announcement. In addition, if applicable, the proposal will also be evaluated to the extent it describes one or more core element(s) and associated action(s) (see the CEF at http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelop/) that the applicant proposes to carry out. OR Describes which grant-eligible actions from an EPA-approved WPP the applicant proposes to carry out and how they will do so.
2) Project Need (15 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well the applicant demonstrates the need for the project as it pertains to developing or refining a state/tribal/local government wetland program. The description should include: the threats affecting your wetlands/streams; the need for the particular actions you are proposing; and how the deliverables will lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands. Describe specific aspects of your area and specific adverse

	issues your wetlands face and how this issue will be addressed by the development of a WPP or through the core element/action you have described in Section IV.C.3.B.1 National Priority Area.
3) Project Tasks (15 points)	Under these criteria, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate a description of the steps you will take to meet the project product/output(s) and objective(s) including a clear description of project tasks and associated products and whether the applicant's approach (methodology) or the steps they propose is sound.
4) Milestone Schedule (10 points)	Under these criteria, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they provide a clearly articulated milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire grant period. Including a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks and products. Including the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task. Provide interim milestone dates for achieving each workplan component. In addition, including a clearly articulated approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.
5) Budget (10 points)	Under these criteria, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable including whether: the applicant identified the requested federal dollars and the total project cost for each component/task for each budget item from Form 424A; the applicant explained if and how non-federal partners will provide cost share/match and demonstrated the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of costs and the value of in-kind contributions.
6) Transfer of Results (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrates the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods to other states, tribes, or local governments agencies within and beyond their own organization, so that the others can better build their wetland programs.
7) Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes and Tracking (25 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate each of the following elements: i. Outputs and Outcomes– the extent and quality to which the proposal demonstrates potential environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to EPA's Strategic Plan Goal of working with partners achieving a net increase in wetland acres. (15 points) ii. Tracking – The extent and quality to which the proposal demonstrates a sound plan for tracking progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. (10 points)
8) Programmatic Capability/Technical Experience/ Qualifications (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project taking into account their: i. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure and their readiness and ability to implement the proposed project in a successful and timely manner. (5 points) ii. Staff experience/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. (5 points)

9) Partnerships (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well the applicant has demonstrated appropriate and necessary partnerships as described in Section IV.C.3.B.9, Partnership Information.
10) Past Performance (10 points)	Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their: i. past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C of the announcement (4 points), ii. history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C of the announcement including whether they submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements, (3 points) and iii. the extent and quality to which they 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 (3 points). Note: In evaluating applicants under these criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant 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 proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (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.

Track Two: Evaluation Criteria for TRACK TWO Applicants – states, tribes, local governments, interstate agencies, intertribal consortia, and universities that are agencies of a state

1) National Priority Area: Wetland Program Development (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well the proposed project addresses the core element(s) and one or more action(s) under a core element to develop or refine a state/tribe/local government's wetland program either through the program development/refinement actions in the CEF (located in the CEF at http://www.epa.gov/cefdevelopment/) or from the grant-eligible actions in an existing EPA-approved WPP (if the applicant is a local government, interstate agency, intertribal consortium, or university).
2) Project Need (15 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well the applicant demonstrates the need for the project as it pertains to developing or refining a state/tribal/local government wetland program. The description should include: the threats affecting your wetlands/streams; the need for the particular actions you are proposing; and how the deliverables will lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of

	wetlands. Describe specific aspects of your area and specific adverse issues your wetlands face and how this issue will be addressed through the core element(s)/action(s) you have described in Section IV.C.3.B.1 National Priority Area.
3) Project Tasks (15 points)	Under these criteria, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate a description of the steps you will take to meet the project product/output(s) and objective(s) including a clear description of project tasks and associated products and whether the applicant's approach (methodology) or the steps they propose is sound.
4) Milestone Schedule (10 points)	Under these criteria, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they provide a clearly articulated milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire grant period. Including a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks and products. Including the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task. Provide interim milestone dates for achieving each workplan component. In addition, including a clearly articulated approach to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.
5) Budget (10 points)	Under these criteria, proposals will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the adequacy of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable including whether: the applicant identified the requested federal dollars and the total project cost for each component/task for each budget item from Form 424A; the applicant explained if and how non-federal partners will provide cost share/match and demonstrated the cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of costs and the value of in-kind contributions.
6) Transfer of Results (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrates the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods to other states, tribes, or local governments agencies within and beyond their own organization, so that the others can better build their wetland programs.
7) Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes and Tracking(25 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate each of the following elements: i. Outputs and Outcomes– the extent and quality to which the proposal demonstrates potential environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to EPA's Strategic Plan Goal of working with partners achieving a net increase in wetland acres. (15 points) ii. Tracking – The extent and quality to which the proposal demonstrates a sound plan for tracking progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. (10 points)
8) Programmatic Capability/Technical Experience/ Qualifications (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project taking into account their: iii. Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and their infrastructure and their readiness and ability to implement the proposed project in a successful and timely manner. (5 points)

	iv. Staff experience/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the project. (5 points)
9) Partnerships (10 points)	Under this criterion, proposals will be evaluated based on how well the applicant has demonstrated appropriate and necessary partnerships as described in Section IV.C.3.B.9, Partnership Information.
10) Past Performance (10 points)	Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their: i. past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C of the announcement (4 points), ii. history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.C of the announcement including whether they submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements, (3 points) and iii. the extent and quality to which they 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 (3 points). Note: In evaluating applicants under these criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant 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 proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (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.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

All proposals received by the submission deadline will first be screened by EPA staff against the threshold criteria in Section III of the announcement. Proposals that do not pass the threshold review will not be evaluated further or considered for funding.

A panel or panels of EPA staff will review eligible proposals for each track based on the appropriate Track One and Track Two evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A above, assign scores to each proposal, and develop a ranked list of the proposals in each Track (i.e., Track One and Two) based on the evaluation scores received. The ranking list for each Track will be provided to the Selection Official who makes final funding decisions. Final funding decisions will then be made by the Selection Official based on the evaluation conducted by the review panel(s) and may also take into account the following factors:

1. Geographic distribution of funds;
2. Diversity of projects;

3. Availability of funds;
4. The distribution of awards between Track One and Track Two; and
5. The similarity of the project to other projects already being funded by the EPA.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

Following EPA's evaluation of the applications, all applicants, including those who are not selected for funding, will be notified by e-mail regarding their status. A final application will be requested from eligible applicants whose proposal has been preliminarily selected for award. The applicant will be provided with instructions and a due date for submittal of the final application package. This letter is not an authorization to begin performance. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the proposal or the project contact listed in the proposal. This notification, which informs the applicant that its proposal 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 Regional Grant Management Office. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants 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 grants 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, which must be approved by the EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. After EPA receives your full application, they will review and may have questions that require additional details to be added, including clarifications to your workplan. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

The EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final grant amount and workplan prior to award, as appropriate and consistent with Agency policy, including the EPA's Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1). An approvable final workplan is required to include:

1. Workplan components to be funded under the assistance agreement;
2. Estimated work years and the estimated funding amounts for each workplan component;
3. Workplan commitments for each workplan component and a timeframe for their accomplishment;
4. Performance evaluation process and reporting schedule in accordance with 40 CFR §35.115;
5. Roles and responsibilities of the recipient and the EPA (for cooperative agreements only) in carrying out the workplan commitments;
6. Grant awardees will be expected to provide to the EPA project location information for any grant-funded project. The type of locational information (statewide, 8-digit hydrologic unit code, 12-digit hydrologic unit code, county, municipality, tribal land boundary, local wetland with borders defined by lat/long points, etc.) will be determined by consultation with the EPA, and will be determined based on the geographic scale and intent of the project; and
7. In consultation with the EPA, grant awardees will be expected to provide to the EPA a breakdown of federal funds that will be spent by "project category" (i.e. the type of effort(s) that is being conducted). Project Categories can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/grantpcd.html>.

In addition, successful applicants and their partners will be required to certify that they have not been Debarred or Suspended from participation in federal assistance awards in accordance with 40 CFR Part 32.

A list of the successful proposals will be posted at:

http://www.epa.gov/region4/water/wetlands/wetlands_grants.html,

and on the Wetland Grant Database (<http://iaspub.epa.gov/wgd-public>). Additional information about this announcement, including information concerning deadline extensions or other modifications, can be found at

http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/wetlands/grantguidelines/index.cfm and www.grants.gov.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

This award is subject to the requirements of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; Title 2 CFR, Parts 200 and 1500. 2 CFR 1500.1, Adoption of 2 CFR 200, states that the Environmental Protection Agency adopts the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards to Non-Federal Entities (subparts A through F of 2 CFR 200), as supplemented by this part, as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) policies and procedures for financial assistance administration. This part satisfies the requirements of 2 CFR 200.110(a) and gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance as supplemented by this part. EPA also has programmatic regulations located in 40 CFR Chapter 1 Subchapter B.

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 at a minimum annually and are due 30 days after the reporting period. The final report is due 90 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, EPA will work closely with the recipient to incorporate appropriate performance measures and reporting requirements in the workplan consistent with 2 CFR § 200.328, Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance, and 40 CFR Part 45. This includes any problems, issues or difficulties encountered that may affect the quality requirements of the project. The recipient must indicate what if any corrective actions were taken. Award recipients will be required to submit the final report electronically and in hard copy and should include, in addition, a 1-2 page project summary. If travel assistance is provided to selected attendees to attend wetland meetings/training workshops, the recipient will be required to provide a report on how participating non-federal attendees benefited from the workshops.

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 <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/resolution.htm>. Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement.

E. 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, and administrative capability can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm.

These, and the other provisions that can be found at the website link, are important, and applicants must review them when preparing proposals 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.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Geryl Ricks; ricks.geryl@epa.gov; (404) 562-9837. (*Note: Geryl Ricks will be unavailable from April 20-25, 2015 of the RFP period. If circumstances warrant, please call or email Diana Woods at (404) 562-9404; woods.diana@epa.gov during this period.*)

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL

QA/QC requirements may be applicable to these assistance agreements (see 2 CFR 1500.11). 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. Applicants should allow sufficient time and resources for this process. EPA can assist applicants in determining whether QA/QC is required for the proposed project. If QA/QC is required for the project, the applicant is encouraged to work with the EPA QA/QC staff to determine the appropriate QA/QC practices for the project. Contact the Agency Contact (See Section VII for Agency Contact information) for referral to an EPA QA/QC staff.

If water quality data is generated, either directly or by subaward, the successful applicant must ensure all water quality data is transmitted into the Agency's Storage and Retrieval (STORET) Data Warehouse annually or by project completion using either WQX or WQXweb in accordance with an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan. Water quality data that are appropriate for STORET include physical, chemical, and biological sample results for water, sediment and fish tissue. The data include toxicity data, microbiological data, and the metrics and indices generated from biological and habitat data. The Water Quality Exchange (WQX) is the water data schema associated with the EPA, State and Tribal Exchange Network. Using the WQX schema partners map their database structure to the WQX/STORET structure. WQXweb is a web-based tool to convert data into the STORET format for smaller data generators that are not direct partners on the Exchange Network. More information about WQX, WQXweb, and the STORET Warehouse, including tutorials, can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/storet/wqx/>.

B. INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Pursuant to Executive Order 13112 (<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/>), the recipient of EPA funds and all subcontractors shall monitor the project to ensure it does not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive species. If invasive species are detected or populations

promoted in any way, the recipient will respond rapidly to control populations in an environmentally sound manner, as approved by the EPA Project Officer.

C. WETLANDS MAPPING STANDARD

A "National Wetland Mapping Standard" has been developed by a work group of the Federal Geospatial Data Committee. This work group has provided a national standard for wetland mapping which must be used in all mapping projects that are funded through the federal government. Non-federally funded wetland mapping projects are encouraged to comply with the standard. All geospatial data created must be consistent with Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) endorsed standards. Information on these standards may be found at www.fgdc.gov . All geospatial wetlands mapping must comply with the FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standard which can be found at: http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/projects/FGDC-standards-projects/wetlands-mapping/2009-08%20FGDC%20Wetlands%20Mapping%20Standard_final.pdf . To facilitate accurate data production and inclusion into the National Wetlands Database it is recommended that you visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's, National Wetlands Inventory, Contributed Data page at: <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Contributed-Data.html> or contact them at Wetlands_Team@fws.gov .