

SNEP Pilot Watershed Initiative 2021 Request for Applications (RFA)
Frequently Asked Questions
(Last Updated 5-16-2021)

Submission Questions:

1. What time are applications due on May 28?

Applications are due by 11:59 P.M. (EST) on May, 28

2. Will informational webinar slides be shared either by email or on the SNEP website?

Slides will be posted on the SNEP website at www.epa.gov/snep under the "Funding" section shortly after the May 6 (12:30-14:00 EST) informational webinar. A recording of the webinar will also be posted; although, posting may take a week or two.

3. Do subcontractors have to submit an individual SF424 or is that cost included as a line item on the applicant's SF424?

See <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients> . (Line item on the 424)

4. If multiple universities are collaborating, are partner letters required from collaborators?

Partner letters are optional. If invited to submit full proposals, applicants will be evaluated based on the roles and contributions of partners and collaborators described in their project narrative. If project partners are not included, the applicant will be evaluated based on their ability to effectively perform and complete the project without such collaboration.

5. Is there a maximum number of pages for the Budget Description?

There is no page limit for the Budget Description submitted as part of the initial proposal. However, the narrative of the 424 included should be brief.

6. Are the budget pages (424s) included in the page limit?

No. Additionally, the Budget Description in the initial proposal is not included in the 4-page limit.

7. Are there requirements for biographical sketches and/or conflict of interest lists?

The RFA requires applicants to demonstrate qualifications related to their proposed projects by providing a list of key staff and briefly describing their expertise/qualifications and knowledge, as well as the roles of each partner and their involvement and how their resources will support the proposed project activities.

8. If a town applies for a grant - can some of the partners be co-awarded, so that the town does not have to administer funds? For another municipal entity in another state?

No. EPA awards the grant to the eligible entity that successfully competes for funding. That entity is accountable to EPA for successful completion of the project and financial administration. EPA does not "co-award" a single grant to multiple entities although the recipient may act as a pass-through entity for subawards to eligible project partners. Recipients for grants may hire contractors (e.g. consultants) to assist with financial administration provided the selection process complies with the Procurement Standards in 2 CFR Part 200. Also, recipients may enter into intergovernmental agreements under 2 CFR 200.318(e) with other units of government (e.g. a State) to use properly awarded contracts that are already in place to acquire shared services. Please refer to <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients> .

9. What is the SAM.gov database?

It is a database where applicants and contractors are required to register in order to transact any business with the U.S. government. It is separate from DUNS. Applicants should do due diligence to ensure they are registered in advance of submittal.

10. Does the budget description have a page limit? Any guidance on length?

No, but should be brief.

11. What does letter of commitment mean? Are they a financial commitment only?

Description of commitment and/or involvement in the project, not necessarily financial only.

12. Do the applicant and its subrecipients have to have DUNS and SAM numbers for the Initial submittal?

The Applicant must have a DUNS and SAM number in order to submit a proposal on Grants.gov. Subrecipients of successful applicants must obtain a DUNS number as provided in 2 CFR 200.331(a)(1). Contractors are not subrecipients and need not obtain a DUNS number on the basis of requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.

13. Can ineligible applicants be an AOR (authorized organization representative) of the applicant?

No. Only eligible applicants can apply and the DUNS they are using to apply MUST be assigned to the organization that is actually applying.

Eligibility Questions:

14. Can only one department/division in a local/county government unit receive an award?

Yes. This RFA limits awards under this announcement to one per applicant. Multiple departments of a local government are welcome to apply, but EPA considers the local government itself to be a single non-Federal entity eligible to receive an award. The local government will need to decide which department's application represents the official application for the unit of government if more than one application competes successfully.

15. Are project partners subject to the same eligibility requirements as applicants, e.g. no companies or individuals?

No. In some cases, recipients may refer to their contractors (particularly consultants) as "partners". See <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients> for more information on the difference between subrecipients (or partners) and contractors.

16. Can a project be funded to assist with permit compliance?

Maybe. Although projects with compliance components may be eligible, projects that address and result from the settlement of enforcement violations or ongoing non-compliance issues are likely not eligible for funding under the terms of the settlement agreements that resolve these violations or issues. In addition, EPA's Supplemental Environmental Projects policy prohibits the use of federal funding for these types of projects.

17. Can salaries be funded through the grant?

Yes. As long as the project expenses align with the project tasks, reasonable salaries are considered an eligible expense subject to the requirements of 2 CFR 200.430 and 200.431

Match Questions:

18. What percentage matching is required?

A minimum non-federal match of 20 percent of the federal share is required under this RFA.

19. When does the match have to occur?

Prior to the end of the project period.

20. Can volunteer effort be used as match, such as volunteer water quality monitoring?

Yes, time spent by volunteers may be used as cost share provided the requirements of 2 CFR 200.306(b) and (e) are met.

Evaluation Criteria Questions:

21. Do you lose points if you don't have partners?

Points will not be deducted for those projects without partners, but applicants that do not include partners in their project will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without collaboration.

Partners and Contractors

22. Can an organization be considered a partner even if they are not getting any funding from the grant?

Yes, as long as they have involvement in the project. Partners can also contribute funding.

23. What does EPA mean by “partner”?

The term “partner” refers to a mutually understood, documented relationship between an applicant and one or more third parties to collaboratively carry out a proposed project. A partner may contribute funds or in-kind resources to the joint effort and/or EPA funds may be used to finance the partner’s activities. Any financial transactions between an applicant and a partner that involve EPA funds, however, must comply with the requirements in the UGG governing procurement contracts, subawards, or participant support costs depending on the nature of the relationship. Also, contributions of funds or in-kind resources that an applicant intends to use to meet a cost share on an EPA grant must comply with the UGG as well.

24. If a consultant was selected competitively for an On-Call Contract and the grant was for a project that is a continuation of the existing project that the consultant was selected for, then could the grantee continue with that consultant without an additional competitive solicitation?

Yes, if an applicant or municipality has selected a contractor/consultant competitively under local law, the scope of the contract includes the services to be delivered with grant funds, and the price is reasonable. The UGG prohibits noncompetitive contracts to consultants on retainers. See <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients> for clarification.

25. If using a consultant - does the applicant have to go out and competitively bid for one?

Yes, unless the circumstances in Question 24 regarding a previously competed consultant contract are present.

Other:

26. Can the non-profit be a 501(c) (6) or does it need to be a 501(c) (3)?

Organizations that are recognized as non-profit organizations under state law are eligible. Note, however, that non-profit organizations described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply for this funding.

27. Can applicants without a negotiated indirect cost rate use a 10% de minimus rate?

Yes.

28. Can subcontractors be sole sourced or is a bidding process required once the grant is awarded to the applicant?

With very few exceptions successful applicants must award procurement contracts competitively. See <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients>.

29. What is the expected number of applicants to be selected for award?

Up to four.

30. Does the Quality Assurance Project Plan have to be submitted as part of proposal?

No, Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) or steps for their development are submitted as part of the work plan. The applicant should include the development of a QAPP, if necessary, in their proposal and/or budget.

31. Is there any other platform for more questions if they come up?

Send an email SECoastalNE@epa.gov or use the "contact us" function on the SNEP website.

32. When is the deadline for submitting questions?

Questions may be submitted up until 4/28/2021 11:59 EST.

33. Can these grant funds be used to pay for capacity or a person's salary? Are there limits to the amount that can go towards this?

These funds can be used to pay for capacity or a person's time/salary? There aren't any limits on the amount that can go towards this; however, the applicant should note that on-the-ground implementation projects are an important part of this grant and as such the applicant should be able to demonstrate how the capacity/person will directly lead to implementation projects. Please see this quote from section I.B of the RFA "Although we expect that the majority of award and leveraged funds will go to implementation projects, funding may also be used as appropriate for permitting/financial streamlining efforts, funding coordinator or other critical staff position, or project administration".

34. Can you clarify what is meant by "Funding under this award may not be used towards projects funded by other awards (e.g. CWA 320 awards), but could instead be used to build upon projects, studies, or plans funded by other awards"?

Funds acquired through this RFA cannot be used to complete projects that have already received a grant for their completion. However, funds under this RFA can be used to take existing projects a step further. Such projects can also be used as leverage.

35. Can I apply for a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement concurrently while applying for the grant?

Yes, you can apply for a negotiated rate while also applying for the SNEP grant. If selected to receive the grant you just wouldn't be able to drawdown funds related to indirect costs until that rate is approved. All IDC rates are negotiated with EPA Head Quarters; please take look at this link for pertinent information: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/indirect-cost-rate-proposal-information>.

36. Does the project need to be 5 years, or can it be shorter in length? If so, can the grantee receive all their funds at once or does EPA need to fund the same amount yearly, spanning the life of the project?

Proposed projects can be shorter than five years. However, under this RFA EPA can only award up to \$150,000/year to each grantee (contingent on SNEP receiving funds from Congressional appropriations). As such EPA couldn't award a lump amount up front but would need to incrementally fund the award over time.

37. Does the watershed have to be smaller than HUC-12, or will HUC-12 watersheds be considered?

Watersheds up to the size of a HUC12 will be considered but please note that the applicant must demonstrate how the size of their selected watershed is amenable to accomplishing the goals of the RFA.

38. How much is SNEP tied to choosing only 1 project per watershed, if there are multiple very competitive projects in one watershed?

SNEP aims to select a project in each of the four main sub-areas of the SNEP region. However, please refer to section V.C which explains the selection procedure.

39. Can you clarify when a project period may be 7 years, if the funding is for 5 years? Could that start of the project be delayed a year, could there be a gap year somewhere, or can unused funds be carried over to extend project term?

SNEP can commit to funding a project up to \$150,000 for the first year and intends, dependent upon Congressional allocations, to fund each project with \$150,000 each year for another four years. The grantee will have seven years from the initiation of award complete projects and expend all funds received from EPA. How those funds are used is up to the grantee in their proposal. The project cannot last more than seven years in any case.

40. Should projects address just 1, or address multiple of the 4 priority challenges (on pg6 of the proposal)?

A project can address just one or up to all four goals.

41. In Section 1.B. (pg 5), the RFA notes that "...EPA intends to award cooperative agreements to eligible entities to plan and execute collaborative restoration efforts..." but later notes (top of pg 9) "...we expect that the majority of award and leveraged funds will go to implementation projects,..." – does this mean most funding might go towards implementation of already identified projects, or can it fund some planning needed to select and implement the best restoration action?

Funding can go towards planning as long as those plans will be executed within the duration of grant period. The second quote was more meant to clarify that a coordinator position could be funded but that the bulk of the funds should go to implementation (including planning) work.

- 42. Can you provide more details on what the “Proposed Pilot Watershed Plan” required to be submitted in the proposal narrative (Appendix B) should include? Should the proposal lay out a year by year plan of what projects we will implement and when, or can planning and prioritizing projects be part of the proposed plan?**

This should lay out what the applicant hopes to accomplish over the project period in terms of actions to accomplish the project goals. Whether that is described on a year by year basis or as an overall description of the project goals and implementation activities is up to the applicant.

- 43. In Section V. Application Review Information, B) Evaluation Criteria (pg 25): under criterion ‘Tracking and Measuring of Environmental and Programmatic Results’, part e. states ‘Assess effectiveness of its approach for the proposed tasks, including the incorporation of standardized monitoring, measuring, and reporting.’ – does this mean the proposal should include the pre-, during, and post- project environmental monitoring methods (that are to be funded separately by EPA) or just that the proposal lends itself to standardized monitoring for x reasons? This might be hard to answer if we don’t the EPA monitoring parameters/methods intended?**

EPA intends to conduct environmental monitoring in the Pilot Watersheds, likely through a contract, outside of the scope of this RFA. The grantee will be expected to work with EPA and the contractor to devise an appropriate monitoring plan. Under this criterion the grantee should focus more on using the results of EPA’s monitoring, when available, and internal programmatic measures (i.e. has a permit been finalized on time) to measure progress and adjust as needed.

- 44. For this RFA, is investigation and identification of sewage connections a fundable activity under the grant?**

Yes, as long as the investigation/identification of illicit sewage connections is somehow connected to addressing on or more of the four identified priority environmental challenges (see page 6 of the RFA).

Questions Received During 5/6/2021 Webinar:

- 45. If only \$100,000 is used in year 1, can \$50,000 be rolled over into year 2?**

Yes. Please be as specific as possible about funding over the life of the project but especially the first year. Please plan ahead.

- 46. In the RFA it is mentioned that the watershed should be smaller than a HUC-12; is a HUC-12 acceptable?**

Yes, a HUC-12 would be acceptable given the variability in size of HUC-12s, especially in our region. As noted in the RFA the applicant must justify the size of their selected watershed in terms of what’s realistic to be accomplished within their plan.

- 47. Is there a definitive map/GIS data for HUC-12 watersheds applicants should refer to?**

No. The grantee can present a suggested watershed map and as long as they can justify the extent, that is acceptable. The USGS National Hydrography Dataset or datasets from state GIS may be good resources to consult.

- 48. Do applications need to provide detailed work plans and budgets for all five years?**

The more detailed the better, but since things change over time later years are going to necessarily be less detailed. The first year, however, should be detailed.

- 49. Is there a preference for watersheds that have shared districts between several towns? Could we do multiple mitigation efforts over the 7 years?**

There is no preference to watersheds that have multiple jurisdictions in them. Funding can be used for multiple projects over the course of the project period if properly described in the grantees work plan.

50. Should proposals include post-implementation monitoring? If proposals include other monitoring of HABS, nutrients etc. will a Quality Assurance Project Plan be required?

EPA will be funding a contract for monitoring during and after the life of the grant (as funding and success of the grants dictate). If the grantee would like to pursue their own monitoring a QAPP would be required.

51. For SNEP metrics listed in Appendix D, do we need a QAPP for these?

No.

52. Federal grants are switching from DUNS numbers to sam.gov ID numbers. Do we need this new ID to submit an application?

DUNS numbers are supposed to be phased out soon but for now both numbers are needed.

53. Could these grants help support ongoing HABS monitoring programs as part of a watershed program with implementation of nutrient and HAB reduction goals?

Yes, if you already have a monitoring and implementation program in place to reduce HABS, following through on that could be eligible.

54. Would conservation moorings for eelgrass restoration be eligible?

Yes, as long as you can link it to one or more of the four key environmental challenges.

55. Would efforts to add to a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, i.e. planning actives, be eligible?

Yes, planning activities are eligible.

56. Are sewerage activities considered eligible if it has been determined that this is necessary to achieve nutrient reduction targets?

Yes, sewerage would be considered eligible. However, please note that applications will be evaluated based on keeping within the funding, scope, and timeline set forth in the RFA. Please see section V for scoring criteria specifics.

57. Are dredging activities to help reduce nutrient levels eligible?

Yes, dredging would be considered eligible. However, please note that applications will be evaluated based on keeping within the funding, scope, and timeline set forth in the RFA. Please see section V for scoring criteria specifics.

58. Is land acquisition eligible?

Yes, land acquisition would be eligible. Please note that the applicant would need to work with EPA carefully to ensure compliance with, among other things, 2 CFR [§200.311 Real property](#), the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, 42 U.S.C. 4601 *et seq.*, and DOT's implementing regulations at 49 CFR Part 24. In addition, the cost must be reasonable under the basic considerations in the cost principles at 2 CFR 200.404.