

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 4

TITLE: 2022 SOUTH FLORIDA PROGRAM

ACTION: REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER (FON): EPA-I-R4-SFL-2022-01

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 66.484

RFA OPENS: July 14, 2022

RFA CLOSES: August 29, 2022

ANTICIPATED DATE OF SELECTION: November 2022

ANTICIPATED AWARD: January 1, 2023

The closing date and time for receipt of applications is 11:59pm Eastern Time (ET) on August 29, 2022, and application packages must be submitted electronically to the EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) to be considered for funding.

IMPORTANT: Ensure your organization is registered and received confirmation for System for Award Management ([SAM](https://www.sam.gov)) at [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov), Unique Entity Identity (UNI) number, and [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) systems. If you have not completed the registration and received confirmation for SAM and UNI number, then you may have difficulties applying through Grants.gov. Reference information is located within this RFA.

Application and Budget: If you are proposing cost share or in-kind contribution as part of your scope, your application (424) and budget (424A) must reflect federal requested amount and cost share or in-kind contribution amount for a grand total for the project.

CONTENTS BY SECTION

- I. Funding Opportunity Description**
- II. Award Information**
- III. Eligibility Information**
- IV. Application Submission Information**
- V. Application Evaluation and Review Information**
- VI. Award Administration Information**
- VII. Agency Contacts**
- VIII. Other Information (Appendices)**

Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. South Florida Program

The EPA South Florida Program provides competitive grants to address the immediate and emerging ecological pressures and threats to south Florida waters including fresh waters, estuaries, bays, and coral reef, central to South Florida's economic and ecological wellbeing. Aquatic ecosystems play a vital role supporting healthy and resilient estuaries, coastal, inland, and near-shore infrastructure by providing food, habitat, nutrient removal, water filtration, storm attenuation, carbon storage, shoreline stabilization, and other financial and tangible benefits.

This RFA solicits applications for the South Florida Program region that includes the 16-county area covered by South Florida Water Management District as well as the Florida Keys; Florida Reef Tract; Caloosahatchee Estuary; Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie Estuary; Florida Bay, and Biscayne Bay. Please refer to the map located in Appendix D.

This RFA is an open competition for applicants seeking funding for projects meeting water quality priorities and resource management goals. Award decisions will be evaluated based on RFA priorities; documentation of ecological urgency; connections to resource strategic management plans; demonstrated partnerships and collaborations; benefit and applicability to communities which are underserved or disproportionately at risk; the geographic area identified herein; relevance to resource management; science-based decision making; quantifiable improvements to water quality or aquatic ecosystems; innovative techniques to restore and improve aquatic ecosystems and water quality; and climate resilience evaluation or improvement.

This RFA supports the Special Studies/Research component for the South Florida Program. Special Studies are projects that provide information specific to management questions and concerns, inform policy, and provide understanding of south Florida aquatic ecosystems. Examples of eligible projects include: supporting monitoring, research, or innovative restoration efforts for key species (e.g. coral, seagrass, sponges, mangroves, etc); research, investigation, and demonstration projects to mitigate harmful algal blooms; residential canal pollution reduction demonstration projects; stormwater pollution reduction demonstration projects; water quality and benthic habitat monitoring; research, investigation and management activities to reduce contaminants of emerging concern such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products, or microplastics; identifying and understanding cause-effect relationships of pollutants in the environment; addressing specific management questions and concerns to sensitive ecosystems; applying innovative approaches, methods, or techniques for preventing, treating, and handling pollution from entering waterbodies; and investigating localized water quality impacts from potential pollution sources.

The South Florida Program competitive grants are supported by the 2022 Congressional explanation statement which provides the following: *“The agreement provides \$7,500,000 for the South Florida program. Within the funds provided, the Committees recommend at least \$1,750,000 to monitor coral health in South Florida; \$1,025,000 to enhance water quality and seagrass monitoring in the Caloosahatchee Estuary and Indian River Lagoon, especially with respect to assessing the impact of Lake Okeechobee discharges and harmful algal blooms; and \$1,025,000 to enhance water quality and seagrass monitoring in Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay, especially with respect to assessing the impact of Everglades Restoration projects and harmful algal blooms.”*

This year, Congress provided an additional \$3.2 million to the South Florida Program through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), in which Congress provided to states, tribes, local governments, and communities to protect and restore natural habitats with a focus on climate resilience. Implementation of IIJA funding opportunities prioritizes funding for communities which are underserved and disadvantaged. These communities tend to be disproportionately at risk from climate change impacts, water quality issues, and lack educational opportunities. The EPA recognizes the disproportionate impact of pollution and climate stress on communities with environmental justice concerns. The agency will prioritize partners protecting and restoring water quality using new or innovative approaches, methods, or technologies with green infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and resilient infrastructure less vulnerable to flooding and the effects of the changing climate in low-income and underserved communities.

This RFA supports the Special Studies/Research component for the EPA's South Florida Program. Special Studies are projects that provide information specific to management questions and concerns, inform policy, and provide understanding of south Florida aquatic ecosystems.-Applications specifically addressing priorities identified in Section B, *Scope of Work to Address the Priority Action Items*, within this area will receive additional consideration on the *Rationale and Relevance to Management* criterion during review.

The EPA strongly encourages applicants to identify partnerships that will support the priority or priorities addressed in their application. Please see Section V of this announcement for the evaluation criterion that addresses partnerships. As part of the application evaluation, the EPA will consider the mutual interests of each partner(s), how partnering with these entities will achieve the goals of this project, and whether partners are contributing monetary and/or in-kind for the project. All priority areas identified in this RFA (Section I.B) are applicable to both regular appropriations and IIJA funding.

Proposed projects benefitting underserved communities will be evaluated as per part V of this announcement.

The total amount of funding and number of awards depends on funding availability, the quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations. If additional funding becomes available, the EPA may select and award additional projects under this announcement. Unless pre-award costs are specifically approved by the EPA, recipients should not incur project costs, including non-federal match, until they receive an award document from the EPA. Project period will be two to five years. All priority areas identified in this RFA (Section I.B) are applicable to both regular appropriations and IIJA funding.

B. Scope of Work to Address Priority Action Items

The EPA Region 4 anticipates awarding \$8,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) to approximately twenty applicants with funding ranging from a minimum of \$200,000 to a maximum of \$750,000 per application. Applicants may submit an application for one or more of the priorities areas below.

FY22 South Florida Program RFA Priorities:

Aquatic Habitat Restoration in South Florida [up to \$750,000 per project]

- Design on-the-ground habitat restoration to reestablish, rehabilitate, or enhance coral reef (including diadema and other benthic species), oyster reef, seagrass (submerged aquatic vegetation), sponge, mangrove, or other aquatic or wetland ecosystems. Demonstration (“test or prove”) of activities to improve water quality in south Florida, such as within residential canals or other aquatic systems, that may include restoration demonstration projects and design; reconnecting hydrology; pilot projects proving or testing feasibility or efficacy of innovative technologies; education and outreach program for canal homeowners and marinas; collecting bathymetric data for restoration; and monitoring to evaluate effectiveness of canal restoration techniques. Water quality results should be disseminated to the public as part of the outreach and education component. Innovative technologies or management practices identified must comply with all applicable regulations and water quality standards.
- Enhance seagrass monitoring networks to assess and quantify environmental impacts from land-based and upstream pollution; assess ecological conditions and functions; evaluate effectiveness of management actions; identify critical habitats threatened by water quality; evaluate potential sources of seagrass decline; and development of seagrass restoration activities and strategies.
- Identify and map habitat areas of particular concern for seagrass protection, restoration, and management required to support fisheries/marine mammal populations. Support the development of seagrass conservation and restoration plans.

Addressing Climate Resiliency through Nature Based Infrastructure [up to \$750,000 per project]

- Prepare for and adjust to current and projected impacts of climate change. Activities may include, but not be limited to, developing climate adaptation plans; identifying potential impacts of climate change; assessing vulnerability of aquatic ecosystems; advancing nature-based solutions; identifying adaptive measures such as green infrastructure; and identifying means to restore projects to maintain ecosystem function while providing storm attenuation and flood deterrence benefits.
- Assess vulnerability and propose projects to increase climate resiliency. Such projects may include adaptability planning, mapping ecosystem(s) carbon sequestration potential; investigating environmental stressors impacts on carbon sequestration; educating decision makers and the public regarding the importance and economic value of these threatened ecosystems; and evaluating flood potential of climate change with regards to impervious surfaces, reclamation of shorelines, and green infrastructure.
- Investigate opportunities to improve wastewater systems beyond advanced treatment standards and repurpose purified wastewater for beneficial use in south Florida. This may include an updated review of innovative wastewater treatment technologies or processes such as reverse osmosis, omni-processing and/or nanofiltration, pilot projects to test or prove the effectiveness of innovative technologies for removing pharmaceuticals and other contaminants of emerging concern, or feasibility studies on potable reuse of wastewater in south Florida.

Water Quality Monitoring and Modeling [up to \$400,000 per project]

- Develop new or apply currently accepted models to investigate the connectivity between inland waters and the loading of associated pollutants to Florida's coasts (e.g., stormwater, sewage overflows, river inputs.)
- Conduct alternative analyses or "mining" of the existing suite of water quality data and satellite imagery to determine if water quality improvements, hot-spots, or specific sources contributing to water quality degradation can be identified. Consider incorporating other monitoring tools, such as satellite imagery or forecast modeling, to provide additional information about regional trends.
- Enhance water quality to quantify environmental impacts from land-based and upstream pollution; detect harmful algal blooms; assess changes of ecological conditions and functions; evaluate effectiveness of management actions / best management practices; and determine causes of water quality decline.
- Evaluate nutrient loadings and transport into and from Lake Okeechobee and the surrounding watershed to freshwater and coastal ecosystems.
- Establish water quality monitoring transects within the halo zone to determine the optimal distance from shore for measuring the 'endpoint' of Key's land-based vs. regional water quality impacts to evaluate achievement of appropriate water quality targets and the effectiveness of water quality improvement activities.
- Identify transport and movement of nutrients (fertilizers) and pesticides to and between groundwater systems. Assess the amount, fate, and transport of pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides (including herbicides), etc. as they disperse into groundwater, surface water, or water supplies. For example, research and/or monitor shallow injection wells to determine if effluent is impacting nearby aquatic ecosystems.

Support Local Community-Based Projects to Protect Waterways and Aquatic Habitat [up to \$400,000 per project]

- Design and implement an education and outreach project that inspires individual action or coordination to protect and restore water quality and natural resources. Projects may include seasonal fertilizer reduction programs, boater education, education on washing vehicles/boats, boater pump-out education, marina best management practices, or any such focus area that will lead to environmental improvement.
- Establish educational grant programs to facilitate efforts to improve environmental literacy education with a priority focus on funding field trips for socially disadvantaged students in K-12 schools to facilitate access to publicly protected lands and natural resources.
- Develop environmental education programs to address land-based sources of pollution.
- Provide the information and tools necessary to improve watershed conditions, develop meaningful partnerships and build stewardship among community members.
- Educate and facilitate climate resilience in underserved communities who have been left behind as part of other efforts.

Florida Reef Tract Coral Health [up to \$400,000 per project]

- Develop innovative techniques to treat or mitigate the effects of coral diseases impacting the coral species on Florida's Coral Reef. Projects may include identifying and propagating coral species that have demonstrated resistance to coral disease; developing intervention techniques; or developing and demonstrating on the ground coral restoration techniques.
- Develop innovative approaches to coral reef restoration activities (such as structure, coral species diversity, invertebrates, and other reef associated species) including consideration of culture, genetics, diversity, and scaling up such approaches.
- Develop a water quality monitoring program at coral reef restoration sites. A program should: a) be designed to effectively capture both episodic events and seasonal changes in water quality at these restoration sites, and b) should at a minimum measure the same parameters as the existing water quality monitoring efforts conducted throughout Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to compare the water quality at these restoration sites (iconic reefs) to broader spatial and temporal patterns. The intent is not to overlap existing monitoring efforts.
- Develop innovative approaches to evaluate coral reef health, such as remote sensing or large-scale data analysis of current coral monitoring programs.

Nutrient Management to Reduce Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) [up to \$400,000 per project]

- Supports research and development of tools and nutrient control technologies that help promote progress towards preventing, mitigating, and reducing HABs such as red tide or microcystins/cyanobacteria using current and new scientific approaches or technologies.
- Determine the effectiveness of existing nutrient treatment technologies, evaluate the scale-up of emerging nutrient treatment technologies; and develop new technologies, and management practices to control nutrients in their watersheds.
- Develop nutrient management strategies for HAB control and provide evaluations of such tools to resource managers.

Stormwater/Nutrient Pollutant Reduction Projects [Up to \$400,000 per project]

- Investigate stormwater and extreme weather impacts from roads, bridges, and impermeable surfaces that contribute to degraded water quality and ecological impacts.
- Identify and develop innovative best management practices, develop or demonstrate innovative green infrastructure;; analyze and quantify the volume and composition (e.g., nutrients, silt, emerging contaminants, marine debris, metals and oils, and other pollutants) of stormwater runoff; investigate the cost and effectiveness of stormwater regulations, treatment, and disposal methodologies for reducing nutrient, marine debris and stormwater pollutant loading
- Develop innovative programs for trash prevention and removal focusing on management activities to reduce trash from entering waterways; innovative trash removal programs; innovative debris removal from extreme storm events; (eg, after storm events); and educational/outreach campaigns and partnerships that modify behavioral practices to reduce trash in Florida's waterways.

C. The EPA Strategic Plan & Anticipated Outcomes, Outputs, and Performance Measures

Pursuant to Section 6a of the [EPA Order 5700.7A.1](#), “Environmental Results under the EPA Assistance Agreements”, the EPA must link proposed assistance agreements to the Agency’s Strategic Plan. The EPA also requires that grant applicants and recipients adequately describe environmental outputs and outcomes to be achieved under assistance agreements in accordance with this EPA Order.

1. Linkage to the EPA Strategic Plan: All applications and applications submitted for funding under this announcement must identify how they support the goals and objectives of the [EPA 2022–2026 Strategic Plan Goals](#).

Goal 5 Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities. *Provide clean and safe water for all communities and protect our nation’s waterbodies from degradation*

Objective 5.2: Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds

Goal 2 Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights. *Achieve tangible progress for historically overburdened and underserved communities and ensure the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in developing and implementing environmental laws, regulations, and policies.*

Objective 2.1: Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local levels.

2. Outputs: The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced over a period of time or by a specific date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period.

Examples of outputs for projects include:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of efforts to reduce or eliminate sources of pollution and to evaluate progress toward achieving and maintaining water quality and protecting and restoring coral reef habitat and other living resources.
- Characterization of sources and causes of water quality impairment within a watershed that will allow the development of management/action/restoration plan(s).
- Developing quantifiable metrics to evaluate progress towards restoring waters and aquatic habitat.
- Preparation and timely delivery of semi-annual (for IJA funded projects), annual, and draft/final project reports that document results of the special study project.
- Preparation and timely delivery and sharing of research findings through presentations and publications to benefit the scientific community and public.

Performance reports and a final report will also be a required output, as specified in Section VI(E) of this announcement, “Reporting Requirement”.

3. Outcomes: The term “outcome” means the result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be qualitative and environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but may be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. Projects to be funded with this announcement are expected to produce outcomes related to the outputs identified in the application and scope of work.

Examples of expected outcomes that may occur because of the technical/scientific information generated by the special studies projects associated with this announcement include:

- Increase knowledge of managers and elected officials concerning negative impacts of pollutants on water quality and living biological resources, which should lead to the development and implementation of action plans that will reduce pollutant loading and result in the conservation of natural resources.
- Improve water quality
- Restore seagrass, sponge, oyster, or mangroves habitats
- Restore and recover Florida’s Coral Reef
- Reduce pollutant loading to waters in the project area.

4. Performance Measures: The applicant should also develop performance measures expected to be achieved through the proposed activities and they should be described in the application. These performance measures will help gather insights and will be the mechanism to track progress concerning successful process and output and outcome strategies and will provide the basis for developing lessons to inform future recipients.

D. Minority Serving Institutions (MSI)

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

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

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)
2. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at [American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities](#)
3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#)
4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions](#); and

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

E. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for this action is the Clean Water Act (Section 104(b)(3)), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements for Water Quality and Watershed Management: Experiments, Studies, Surveys, Demonstrations, Research, Trainings, and Investigations. A demonstration project 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 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.

F. Additional Provisions For Applicants Incorporated Into The Solicitation

Additional provisions found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

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

Section II. Award Information

A. Funding Amount: The total estimated funding expected under this competitive announcement is approximately \$8,000,000 including both regular appropriations and IJJA funds. The funding will range from \$200,000 to a maximum of \$750,000 per grant award.

B. Partial Funding: In appropriate circumstances, the EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If the EPA decides to partially fund an application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the applications and application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award; therefore, maintaining the integrity of the competition and selection process.

C. Number of Awards: The EPA anticipates awarding approximately 20 assistance agreements under this announcement ranging in value from approximately \$200,000 to a maximum of \$750,000 per grant award, subject to the availability of funds, quality of evaluated applications, and other applicable considerations. The EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards under this announcement or to make fewer awards than expected.

The actual award amounts and number of projects awarded under each of the priorities described in Section I may differ from the estimated amounts for many reasons including the number of meritorious

applications received, agency priorities, and funding availability. In addition, the EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards under each priority or change the ratio of assistance agreements it awards among the priorities.

The anticipated award amounts and the relative allocations for the SFL priorities are approximations that are subject to change based upon a number of considerations including, but not limited to, the EPA's determination that different amounts or allocations would better advance protection and restoration of the south Florida ecosystems, funding availability, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

D. Project Period: The EPA recommends project start date begin January 1, 2023. Proposed project and budget periods can range from two to five years for this funding announcement.

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

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

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

F. FKNMS Projects: For projects selected within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS), there will be substantial involvement between the EPA Region 4, the FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP), and the recipient during performance of the activity with coordination and collaboration to achieve the goals under the WQPP program. The successful applicant will be expected to participate and present project updates at the FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program meetings. If necessary, include and identify travel funds in the budget to attend these meetings.

G. Additional Awards: The EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this RFA, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after (or at the time) original selections are made.

Section III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Entities:

In accordance with Assistance Listing Number 66.484, applications will be accepted from States, local governments, territories, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S. (including the District of Columbia); public and private universities and colleges; hospitals; laboratories; public or private nonprofit institutions; and intertribal consortia.

Non-profit organizations consistent with the definition of *Nonprofit organization* at 2 CFR § 200.1, the term nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization. The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Note that 2 CFR 200.1 specifically excludes Institutions of Higher Education from the definition of non-profit organization because they are separately defined in the regulation.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status; such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are not eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

For-profit organizations are not an eligible entity for this funding opportunity. Additionally, 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.

B. Ineligible activities:

If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

C. Leveraging, Cost Sharing or Matching:

This RFA does not require leveraging, cost sharing or match, nor is any activity required as a condition of eligibility under this competition. However, under Section V of this announcement the EPA will evaluate applications based on this criterion.

1. Leveraging: Leveraging is generally when an applicant proposes to provide additional funds/resources or those from third party sources to support or complement the project they are awarded under the competition which are above and beyond the EPA grant funds awarded. Any leveraged funds/resources, and their source, must be identified in the

applications and application (See Section IV.B.10 of the announcement). Leveraged funds and resources may take various forms as noted below.

2. Voluntary cost share: Voluntary cost sharing is when an applicant voluntarily proposes to legally commit to provide costs or contributions to support the project when a cost share is not required. Voluntary cost sharing is considered leveraging. Applicants who propose to use a voluntary cost share must include the costs or contributions for the voluntary cost share in the project budget on the SF-424 and 424A. If an applicant proposes a voluntary cost share, the following apply:

- A voluntary cost share is subject to the match provisions in the grant regulations 2 CFR Part 200 as applicable.
- A voluntary costs share may only be met with eligible and allowable costs.
- The recipient may not use other sources of federal funds to meet a voluntary cost share unless the statute authorizing the other federal funding provides that the federal funds may be used to meet a cost share requirement on a federal grant.
- The recipient is legally obligated to meet any proposed voluntary cost share that is included in the approved project budget. If the proposed voluntary cost share does not materialize during grant performance, the EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR Part 200 as applicable.

3. Other leveraged funding/resources: Funding not identified as voluntary cost share may be met by funding from another federal grant, from an applicant's own resources, or resources from other third-party sources. This form of leveraging should not be included in the budget and the costs need not be eligible and allowable project costs under the EPA assistance agreement. While this form of leveraging should not be included in the budget, the grant application should include a statement indicating that the applicant is expected to produce the proposed leveraging consistent with the terms of the announcement and the applicant's application. If applicants propose to provide this form of leveraging, the EPA expects them to make the effort to secure the leveraged resources described in their applications. If the proposed leveraging does not materialize during grant performance, then the EPA may reconsider the legitimacy of the award and/or take other appropriate action as authorized by 2 CFR 200.

D. Threshold Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the time of application submission will result in elimination of the application from consideration for funding. Only applications from eligible entities (see Section III.A) which meet all criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration based on the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. Applications must address one or more of the Priority Action Items listed in Section I.B and describe the relevance to resource management in south Florida; however, the requested amount under this RFA should not exceed the allowable project amount as outlined in the priorities in Section I. B.
2. Applications must substantially comply with the application/applicant and submission information instructions and requirements set forth in Sections IV of this RFA or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the application, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
3. Applications must be submitted through the [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) website as stated in Section IV.C of this RFA (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV.C) on or before the application submission deadline published in Section IV of this RFA. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their application is timely submitted.
4. Applications received 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 associated with [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) or relevant [SAM.gov](https://www.SAM.gov) system issues. An applicant's timely failure to submit their application through [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) because they did not properly register in [SAM.gov](https://www.SAM.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) will not be considered an acceptable reason for the EPA to consider a late submission. Applicants should confirm receipt of their application with Ms. Jai'lynn Pennington as soon as possible after the submission deadline – failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.
5. Applicants may submit multiple applications under this announcement but each one must be for a different project. If an applicant submits more than one application for the same project, the EPA will review the first one received in [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) and any additional applications for the same project will be deemed ineligible.

Section IV. Application Submission Information

Applicants must explicitly address the following sections as part of their application package submittal.

A. Coalition Coverage

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

For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance

must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the [*Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements*](#) for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a “partner” or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.

B. Application Information

To simplify the review process, obtain the maximum degree of comparison, and provide a fair and equitable evaluation of applications, reviewers will rely on the content of the entire application for evaluation purposes. Therefore, it is important that all applications are complete and substantially comply with the standard format as described in detail in this Section. For completeness of your grant application, please refer to the Application Submission Checklist (Appendix A). In addition to the forms listed in Section IV.D., each application **must** consist of the following components below:

1. Application Cover Page (see Appendix B for a sample)
2. A one-page project application summary (single spaced)
3. Application (16-page maximum double spaced)

C. Format of Application

The application should be readable in PDF or MS Word and consolidated into a single file and include the information below in paragraphs 1-14. Please note that there is a page limit for the application. In addition to addressing the components listed below, applicants should ensure their application also addresses the evaluation criteria listed in Section V of this solicitation.

The application must be no more than sixteen (16) double-spaced 8.5 x 11-inch pages (a page is one side of paper). The page limit does not include 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 application as described below. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application. Additional pages beyond the 16-page limit will not be reviewed. If a single-spaced application is submitted, it will only be reviewed up to the equivalent of the 16-page double-spaced page limit for application applications **[eight (8) single-spaced pages are the equivalent of the 16-page double-spaced application page limit; any excess pages whether single or double spaced will not be reviewed]**.

Applications that do not substantially comply with the criteria above may be deemed ineligible.

1. Applications

a. Situation, Need, and Previous Efforts - Discuss notable gaps in knowledge or capabilities, why the proposed project should be performed, review significant work by yourself or by others in the proposed area of interest (include reference citations). Describe how this project relates to long term management strategy.

b. Objective(s) - State what is to be studied, measured, observed, or developed, and the anticipated results. State hypotheses, as relevant, that the proposed special study is designed to test.

c. Applications, Benefits, and Importance - Describe how the anticipated results, will contribute to expected benefits and their utility to the priority action items and/or resource managers.

2. Methods and Approach

a. Description of Major Tasks – Clearly describe set of tasks that must be performed to accomplish the objective(s) and describe each task. State the tasks in the same order as the hypotheses they are designed to test. Experimental design must be described with statistical tests, if applicable, for hypotheses proposed. All projects collecting data will be required to submit a QA plan to the EPA for approval prior to collection of data.

b. Environmental Impact - State and explain any potential short-term impacts that your project will have on the environment, including the type and duration such as water quality and sample collection impacts.

3. Project Management

a. Administration - Describe the administrative responsibilities and authority of the Principal Investigator.

b. Roles and Responsibilities - Describe the team composition (including names and affiliations of key individuals) and the assignments of team members to major tasks. Provide specific estimates of the time each member will work on the project.

4. Support Requirements and Conditions

a. Permit or Cooperation Required - 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. If a permit(s) or clearances from any government agency or organization is required for execution of the project please provide the name of the agency, the method of obtaining the clearance or permit, and the time required or state "none".

b. Data or Facility Access - If access is required to data or facilities held by another organization, please identify the data or facility, the nature and type of access required, the methods of obtaining such access, and the effect of being denied access or state “none”.

5. Project Schedule

a. Milestone and Deliverable Schedule - Provide a project schedule to include all milestones and deliverables for each task under section 2 above. Describe what items of data are to be delivered. State the format in which data will be presented. Provide a monthly or quarterly schedule for all deliverables.

b. Project deliverables will vary by project; however, each project requires two types of reports from the principal investigator. Semi-annual performance reports and a Final Performance Report.

The principal investigator shall provide semi-annual performance reports to the Project Officer on March 30th and September 30th of each year. These reports will consist of updates on progress toward work objectives, justification, approach, results to date, any problems encountered, actions taken to resolve problems, discussion of remaining tasks, and expenditures to date. Principal investigators shall prepare a draft final report summarizing the objectives, methods, approach, results, and significance of the study. The draft final report will be reviewed by the Technical Officer and returned with comments. The principal investigator will address the comments and submit.

6. Environmental Results – Outputs, Outcomes, and Results (see Section I. C)

a. Outputs (project products) - List the outputs expected to be produced through the completion of the proposed project; Outcomes (project objectives) - List the outcomes of the project to be accomplished as a result of the project outputs; Describe how project products (outputs) and objectives (outcomes) support the EPA 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

b. Tracking Outputs and Outcomes - Describe your approach for measuring and tracking your progress toward achieving the expected project output(s) and project outcome(s).

7. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

a. Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe:

- (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements; and
- (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and

(iii) your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

b. 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 application 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.

8. Budget Summary

a. This section of the application must provide a detailed narrative and itemization, by cost category, of the proposed budget including total federal funds and leveraging, cost share or match contributions. This section must include a detailed and itemized list and description of how the funds will be used. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs within this section of the application.(See Appendix C)

Please provide information regarding how your indirect costs were derived based on your budget total (which categories used to derive indirect costs). Indirect costs for subawards is allowable up to \$25,000 total.

b . If your entity proposes to use undergrad, graduate, or doctoral students, and they are not deemed “employees” of your entity, please ensure you place the costs and details under the OTHER category as [Participant Support Costs](#).

If your entity proposes to use undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral students and they are deemed “employees” of your entity, please ensure you place the costs and details under the PERSONNEL category.

9. Distinguishing between Subawards v/s Contracts: Per 2 CFR 200.330 and the [EPA Subaward Policy for EPA Assistance Agreement Recipients GPI-16-01](#):

a. Subawards: Pass-through entities (subrecipients) make subawards to other organizations to carry out a portion of the Federal award under terms that establish a financial assistance relationship to accomplish a public purpose that is authorized under a federal program. Subrecipients only receive reimbursement for their actual direct or approved indirect costs such that they do not “profit” from the transaction and subrecipients are subject to the same Federal requirements as the pass-through entity. Subrecipients include Institutes of Higher Education and units of government or nonprofit organizations; units of government or intergovernmental agreements; and between nonprofit organizations for collaborative projects.

Subrecipients under Subawards are required to provide the awardee with performance reports, as outlined in the agreement, for the awardee to provide performance report to the awarding agency (the EPA).

b . Contracts: procurement contractors (including individual consultants) typically provide goods and services on commercial terms, operate in a competitive environment and a reasonable profit is allowable.

Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the procurement provisions of the regulations at 2 CFR Part 200. Applicants are not required to identify subrecipients and/or contractors (including consultants) in their application/application. However, if they do, the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application/application If the EPA selects your project for funding it does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements as appropriate. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the application solely based on the firm's role in preparing the application/application.

Successful applicants cannot use subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products from for-profit organizations to carry out its assistance agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subrecipient must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance found at 2 CFR 200.330, the definitions of subaward at 2 CFR 200.92 and subrecipient at 2 CFR 200.93, and [Appendix A to EPA's Subaward Policy](#). The EPA will not be a party to these transactions. Applicants acquiring commercial goods or services must comply with the competitive procurement standards in 2 CFR 200.317-326 and cannot use a subaward as the funding mechanism.

10. Voluntary leveraging, cost share or match (See Section III.B)

a. Demonstrate how you will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support the proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes but is not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate.

b. Describe the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how you will obtain the leveraged resources, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged resources will play to support the proposed project activities. Selected applicants are expected to abide by their proposed leveraging commitments during grant performance and the failure to do so may affect the award.

11. Partnership with other entities

- a . This solicitation does not require applicants to partner with other entities. However, the EPA allows or even encourages such partnering which is evaluated during the competitive evaluation process by including a partnership criterion in the evaluation. Partnerships are awarded points based on the application evaluation criteria described in Section V of this announcement.
- b . You must explain how this project meets the mutual interests of each partner(s), how their involvement addresses the common goals of South Florida Program priorities, how partnering with these entities will achieve the goals of this project, and whether partners are contributing monetary and/or in-kind for the project. Letters of support are strongly encouraged and must address the mutual interests and involvement in the project. Please attach your letters of support within the Attachments area. If you are addressing the partnership within the application/application only, then it must be included as part of the 16-page limit. Applicants that do not plan on partnering with other agencies or groups should demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such partnerships.

12. Information Transfer

- a . Describe the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods development. Examples include: Presentations of results at appropriate forums, conducting webinars or other outreach targeted to relevant audiences, share results on a website and share the website address with relevant organizations

13. Literature Cited

- a. References used in the application narrative (not to exceed one page)

14. Underserved Communities and Climate as Factors

- a. The EPA will prioritize projects and provide benefit to communities which are underserved and disproportionately at risk from climate change, polluted waterways, and emerging contaminants. The agency will prioritize Tribal, community organizations and leaders, local governments, and non-governmental organizations protecting and restoring water quality with green infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and resilient infrastructure to address future flooding and the effects of the changing climate. Applicants are encouraged, as appropriate, to include data from EPA's [EJSCREEN](#) tool (or other EJ-focused geospatial mapping tools) as part of their application to help characterize and describe the affected communities/populations and areas and address the environmental justice criterion in Section V. Data from other sources (e.g. studies, census, and third-party reports) should also be included to give a more complete picture of the impacted communities and populations. Instructions, resources, and tutorials on how to use EJSCREEN are included at the hyperlink above.
- b. The EPA will also prioritize projects that include nature-based solutions; community resiliency to climate or pollutants; and the protection and restoration of aquatic habitats including but not limited

to coral reef, oysters, sponge, mangrove, and seagrass communities where they relate directly to increasing resiliency in the face of change.

15. Attachments (are not included as part of the 16-page application/application limit)

a. Not to exceed 13 total pages, attachments may be used to provide biographies and qualifications, technical backup material to the text, details of computation, and other pertinent information. Techniques or methodologies, if critical to the successful completion of the research, should be discussed in detail within the application text (16-page limit). Do not attach copies of any journal articles or other applications to your submittal.

b. Letters of Support - Attach all letters of support from partners describing the nature of support and any active involvement with the project.

c. Biographies and Qualifications - Provide a brief biography for each team member that highlights education, experience, and publications related to the proposed project. Curriculum vitae must not exceed one- page single space per person.

NOTE: Applications that do not follow the required format may be deemed ineligible and not reviewed.

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

Applicants, except as noted below, must apply electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.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](https://www.grants.gov), the applicant must contact OMS-ARM-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.

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

1. Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
2. Organization Name and Unique Entity Identifier (e.g., UEI)
3. Organization's Contact Information (email address and phone number)
4. Explanation of how they lack the technical capability to apply electronically through Grants.gov because of 1) limited internet access or 2) no internet access which prevents them from being able to upload the required application materials through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

The EPA will only consider alternate submission exception requests based on the two reasons stated above and will timely respond to the request -- all other requests will be denied. If an alternate submission method is approved, the applicant will receive documentation of this approval and further instructions on how to apply under this announcement. Applicants will be required to submit the documentation of approval with any initial application submitted under the alternative method. In addition, any submittal through an alternative method must comply with all applicable requirements and deadlines in the announcement including the submission deadline and requirements regarding

application content and page limits (although the documentation of approval of an alternate submission method will not count against any page limits).

If an exception is granted, it is valid for submissions to the 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, it is valid for any competitive or non-competitive application submission to the EPA through December 31).

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 with a submission deadline of January 15 of the following year, the applicant would need a new exception to submit through alternative methods beginning January 1 the following year. 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.

Application 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 [Grants.gov](https://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 Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. UEI number) and a current registration with SAM and the process of obtaining both could take a month or more. Applicants must ensure that all registration requirements are met 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 UEI number assignment is FREE.

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

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

You may also be able to access the application package for this announcement by searching for the opportunity on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and then click on "Search Grants" at the top of the page and enter the Funding Opportunity Number, **EPA-I R4-SFL-2022-01**, or the ASSISTANCE LISTING number **66.484**, in the appropriate field and click the Search button.

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

Application Submission Deadline: Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to the EPA through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than August 29, 2022 at 11:59 PM ET. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit.

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

Application Materials

The following forms and documents are required under this announcement:

Mandatory Documents:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form-424)
2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (Standard Form-424A)
3. EPA Key Contacts Standard Form 5700-54
4. EPA Standard Form 4700-4 – Pre-award Compliance Review Report
5. Narrative Application (Project Narrative Attachment Form)-prepared as described in Section IV. B. of this announcement

Optional Documents:

6. Other Attachments, if applicable
 - a. Biographies and Letters of Support, if applicable
 - b. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable
 - c. Lobbying Form, if applicable

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be time and date stamped electronically. If you have not received a confirmation of receipt from the EPA (not from grants.gov) within 30 days of the application deadline, please contact Steve Blackburn, at blackburn.steven@epa.gov or Jai'lynn Pennington at pennington.jailynn@epa.gov. Failure to do so may result in your application not being reviewed.

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 enough 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 Grants.gov by the deadline date and time, follow the guidance below. The Agency will decide concerning acceptance of each late submission on a case-by-case basis. All emails, as described below, are to be sent to Jai'lynn Pennington at pennington.jailynn@epa.gov with the FON in the subject line. If you are unable to email, contact Steve Blackburn at 404-562-9397. Be aware that the EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to transmit due to Grants.gov or relevant <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/> 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 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 Jai'lynn Pennington at pennington.jailynn@epa.gov.
 - 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, and you have already attempted to resolve the issue by contacting Grants.gov, send an email message to Jai'lynn Pennington at

pennington.jailynn@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 and it is too late to reapply, promptly send an email to Jai'lynn Pennington at pennington.jailynn@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.

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

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.

D. Application Submission Deadline:

Your organization's AOR must submit your complete application package electronically to the EPA through Grants.gov no later than 11:59pm EST on August 29, 2022. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application process and allow for unexpected errors that may require you to resubmit. Please submit *all* application materials described required by Grants.gov and this RFA. 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.

Section V. Application Evaluation and Review Information

A. Merit Evaluation

Only eligible entities whose applications meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.B. below. All eligible applications will be evaluated by reviewers using the following criteria to receive a score up to a total of 100 points:

B. Applications will be evaluated by reviewers using the following criteria:

1. Rationale and Relevance to Management (15 points)

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on: The extent and quality to which the proposed project addresses one or more of the Priority Action Items listed in Section I, and degree to which the application's approach to addressing one of the Priority Action Items or a

management actions item that produces results/outputs that can be applied to identifying and solving problems within the South Florida ecosystem.

2. Scientific Merit **(15 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well the project advances the state of science and knowledge within South Florida ecosystems to assist the management decision making process. Components of the scientific merit review includes background of the project, statement of the purpose, significance of the study, research question and design, methodology, hypotheses, project assumptions/limitations and anticipated findings.

3. Feasibility **(10 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the ability of the project to be successfully completed within the time frames discussed in this announcement by providing a clearly articulated milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire grant period. This includes a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks interim milestones, deliverables and final products including the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task

4. Environmental Results: Outputs, Outcomes and Tracking **(10 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the application demonstrates the anticipated outputs and outcomes, and how the outcomes are linked to the [EPA's 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan](#). The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for tracking progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes.

5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance Criteria **(10 points total)**

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

- a. past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in the narrative application as described in Section IV of this announcement. **(3 points per this sub-category)**
- b. history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV of the announcement including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not **(3 points per this sub-category)**
- c. organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources

or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. **(4 points per this sub-category)**

- d. staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

Note: In evaluating applicants under items a. and b. of this 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 application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items a and b above. A neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

6. Budget **(5 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which the applicant presents a detailed budget reasonable, cost-effectiveness and adequate to carry out proposed project and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable. Applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

7. Leverage **(10 Points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent the project will leverage additional funds/resources beyond the grant funds awarded to support proposed project activities and how these funds/resources will be used to contribute to the performance and success of the proposed project. This includes but is not limited to funds and other resources leveraged from businesses, labor organizations, non-profit organizations, education and training providers, and/or Federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as appropriate. Applicants will also be evaluated based on the amount and type of leveraged resources to be provided, how they will obtain the leveraged resources, Reasonableness of costs and the value of in-kind contributions, the likelihood the leveraging will materialize during grant performance, the strength of the leveraging commitment, and the role the leveraged funds/resources will play to support the proposed project activities

8. Partnerships **(10 points)**

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on partnerships with other governmental or non-governmental agencies or groups. This will include the mutual interests of each partner(s), how their involvement addresses the common goals of South FL Priority Action Items, how partnering with these entities will achieve the goals of this project, and whether partners are contributing monetary and/or in-kind for the project. Partnerships can include letters of support. Applicants that do not plan on partnering with other agencies or groups will be

evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how they will be able to effectively perform and complete the project without such partnerships.

9. Information Transfer (5 points)

Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate the applicant's plan for active transfer of project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods developed to appropriate stakeholders.

10. Underserved/Disadvantaged Communities (5 points)

Applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate how the project will address the disproportionate and adverse (see below) human health, environmental, climate-related and other cumulative impacts, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the underserved communities. As part of this evaluation, applications will be evaluated based on: how the project benefits the underserved communities including those that have experienced a lack of resources or other impediments to addressing the impacts identified above that affect their community and the extent to which the project addresses engagement with these communities, especially local residents in these communities who will be affected by the project, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, project planning, and performance of the project.

Disproportionate and adverse environmental, human health, climate-related and other cumulative impacts, as well the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts, may result when greater pollution burdens and/or consequences, and the impact of them, are more likely to affect or have affect the underserved communities. The impacts may result from various factors including but not limited to being a function of historical trends and policy decisions.

Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts as referenced above include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards (due to causes such as age, chronic medical conditions, lack of health care access, limited access to quality nutrition, or susceptibility to climate effects); unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status (for example, subsistence fishing or farming); cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes (due to causes such as lack of or ineffective language access programs, lack of programs to make processes accessible to persons with disabilities, inability to access traditional communication channels, or limited capacity to access technical and legal resources); and degraded physical infrastructure

11. Climate Resiliency (5 points)

Under this criterion, the EPA will recognize projects that include nature-based solutions, community resiliency, vulnerability assessments, or the protection and restoration of aquatic habitats to improve climate resilience.

C. Review and Selection Process

The eligible applications will be reviewed by a panel of the EPA staff using the criteria in Section V. B. and given a numerical score. The panel will provide a final numerical score to the EPA South Florida Program Coordinator and management based on the cumulative average of all the individual panel members' scores per application. The South Florida Program Coordinator will provide recommendations, based on cumulative scores and funding available, to the EPA Water Division management for approval.

Final funding decisions will be made by the Water Division Director and Approving Official based on the rankings and recommendations of the EPA panel' scores and ranking. In making the final selections, the Approving Official may also consider programmatic priorities. It is anticipated that federal assistance agreements will be awarded during the second quarter of FY 2023 with project and budget periods to begin on January 1, 2023.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

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

A. Award Notice

If a application is selected for funding, the EPA anticipates notification to successful applicants will be made via electronic mail or letter within 120 days of this RFA closing date. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the application or the project contact listed in the application. This notification of selection, which informs the applicant that a application has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin work. The official notification of an award will be made by the Region 4 Grants Management Office through an official Award Document.

Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer 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 document, signed by the EPA Region 4 grants officer, is the authorized document and will be provided through electronic format to the principal contact. The successful applicant may need to prepare and submit additional documents and forms (e.g. application), which must be approved by the EPA, before the grant can officially be awarded. The time between notification of selection and award of a grant can take up to 90 days or longer.

Unsuccessful Applicants:

The EPA anticipates notification to unsuccessful applicant(s) will be made via electronic or postal mail within 15 days of final selection and management approval. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the grant application, Standard Form 424.

B. 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 [Dispute Resolution Procedures](#). Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting the person listed in Section VII of the announcement.)

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirement

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. Applicants selected for funding may be required to provide a copy of their application to their Point of Contact (POC) for review, pursuant to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. This review is not required with the Initial Application and not all applicants require such a review.

A listing of POCs.

D. Reporting Requirements

Per 2 CFR 200.328 Monitoring and Reporting requirements, grantees will be required to submit semi-annual performance reports on March 30th and September 30th until the grant expiration. The performance reports shall consist of updates on progress toward work objectives, justification, approach, results to date, any problems encountered, actions taken to resolve problems, discussion of remaining tasks, and expenditures to date.

Recipients of federal assistance agreements will be required to submit a draft final report that summarizes the objectives, methods, approach, results, and significance of each project or study. The draft final report will be reviewed by the EPA project officer and technical officer and returned with comments. The recipient of the federal assistance agreement will address the comments and submit a final report to the EPA project officer with revisions. The final report will be due within 120 days of the project and budget period end date.

E. Quality Assurance/Quality Control

Recipients of federal assistance agreements will be required to develop and submit a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and [Quality Assurance Project Plan](#) (QAPP) combination to the EPA project officer. Approval of the QMP/QAPP is required before work can begin or any data can be collected. Through the plan, the recipient explicitly commits to incorporating procedures that will reduce and maintain random and systematic errors within specified tolerable limits. In addition, the

recipient of a federal assistance agreement will document quality control procedures and evaluate the quality of the data being produced. Plans should include or refer to a description of safety, training and equipment maintenance. Data quality objectives will be developed to ensure the utility of data for the applications. The QMP/QAPP will be prepared according to the format prescribed in the "EPA requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans for Environmental Data Operations, EPA OA/R-5". The recipient should develop the QMP/QAPP in close coordination with the EPA Region 4 QA/QC Officer and the EPA technical officer. If requested, the EPA will provide a QMP/QAPP on file with Region 4 to assist recipients. If collection of data is included in the application, please allow time for QAPP development, up to three months, and include QAPP preparation within the milestone schedule.

F. Data Management

Each recipient of a federal assistance agreement for monitoring and special studies projects will work with the designated data management entity to define data entry conventions and issues. All original and ancillary data produced under the monitoring and special studies programs will be generated, processed, stored and archived in a manner that provides detailed documentation of the procedures used during all stages of data collection, reduction, processing, analysis, and storage. Federally funded monitoring data must be submitted to the [EPA Water Quality Exchange \(WQX\)](#) and the [Florida Watershed Information Network \(WIN\)](#) if applicable.

G. Publications

Recipients of federal assistance agreements for special studies are expected to submit manuscripts on the funded projects to appropriate scientific journals within one year of the completion of the final report. Recipients of federal assistance agreements for monitoring projects are expected to submit manuscripts to appropriate scientific journals at an appropriate time during and/or after the completion of the project. The appropriate time for submission of manuscripts will be negotiated with the EPA project officer. Authors are expected to cite support from the specific sponsor of their project or study in all publications resulting wholly or partially from sponsored activities. For example, an appropriate acknowledgment would be as follows:

This project/study was funded by a federal assistance agreement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to assistance Number EPA-I R4-SFL-2022-01.

Reprints of any abstract, article or other publication that result from this sponsored project/study should be sent to the EPA project officer.

H. Public Relations

Official press releases on the special studies projects may be prepared by the EPA Region 4 and/or FKNMS staff to be used by all recipients of federal assistance agreements for distribution to the news media. Principal investigators are not prohibited from discussing their projects with news media; however, principal investigators should notify the EPA project officer of any contacts with the news media regarding special studies projects funded via federal assistance agreements.

I. Combining Applications into One Award

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

Section VII. Agency Contact

If you have any questions concerning this RFA for federal funding and/or applications requirements, please contact Ms. Jai'lynn Pennington at pennington.jailynn@epa.gov and Mr. Steven Blackburn at blackburn.steven@epa.gov.

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APPENDIX A
APPLICATION SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Please note that this is to be used at the applicant's convenience in preparing their application. It is **not required** to be submitted.

Respondent: _____

- _____ 1. Application Checklist
- _____ 2. Application Cover Page along with one-page summary
- _____ 3. Application (16-page double spaced maximum), with all required elements as outlined in Section IV.

Mandatory Documents:

- 1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- 2. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- 3. EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54
- 4. EPA Form 4700-4 – Pre-award Compliance Review Report
- 5. Narrative Application (Project Narrative Attachment Form) - prepared as described in Section IV. A and B of this RFA

Optional Documents: the following are not required per Grants.gov; however, are required for the EPA to process a selected applicant for award.

- 6. Other Attachments Form, if applicable
 - a. Bios and Letters of Support, if applicable
 - b. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable
 - c. Lobbying Form, if applicable

APPENDIX B
APPLICATION COVER PAGE SAMPLE
EPA-I R4-SFL-2022-01

A cover page is required as part of the application package and **is not included** in the 16-page application limit. This is an example of a cover page.

An application submitted for projects for the South Florida Program:

Project Title:

Principal Investigator(s):

Date Submitted: _____ Proposed Start Date: _____

Total Federal Funding Request: _____

We, the undersigned, certify that, in the event this application is accepted whole or in part, our signatures on this application constitute intended acceptance of and compliance with applicable policy, rules, and regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ENDORSEMENTS:

Submitted by:
Principal Investigator

Approved by:
Institutional Representative

Signature

Signature

Typed Name

Typed Name

Title

Title

Address

Address

Phone Fax

Phone Fax

E-mail

E-mail

For Administrative Detail, Please Contact:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone

Fax

E-mail

APPENDIX C

BUDGET SUMMARY INFORMATION

Budget Summary

This section of the application is a detailed description of the budget found in the SF-424A and must include a detailed discussion of how the EPA funds will be used. Applicants must **itemize and provide details** for all costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs.

If the project budget includes leveraging, cost-share, or match the Budget Summary and table within the narrative application must include a detailed description. If the EPA accepts an offer for a voluntary cost-share, applicants must meet their sharing commitment as a legal condition of receiving the EPA funding. If the proposed cost-share is to be provided by a third-party, a letter of commitment is required. Any form of cost-share or match included in the Budget Detail must also be included on the SF424 and SF-424A forms. Please see Section III. B. of this RFA for more detailed information.

For more guidance on preparing a budget, applicants should refer to the Interim General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants and Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance, as described in RAIN-2019-G02.

APPENDIX D
Map Illustrating the Boundaries of the South Florida Program

