

National Risk Management Research Laboratory Innovation and Research for Water Infrastructure for the 21st Century

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Amendment #1
FUNDING INSTRUMENT: Cooperative Agreement
NUMBER: EPA-ORD-NRMRL-CI-08-03-01
DATES:

OPENING DATE (RFA): March 21, 2008
ISSUANCE DATE (AMEND #1): May 6, 2008
CLOSING DATE (RFA): **May 27, 2008**

(The closing date has been revised from May 12, 2008 to May 27, 2008)

The closing date and time for postmark of applications or electronic receipt of applications is **May 27, 2008, at 4:30 p.m. EST**. All applications must be post marked or submitted thru www.grants.gov as described in Section IV., by the closing date and time to receive consideration. No late proposals will be accepted.

To allow efficient management of the competitive process, EPA requests submittal of an informal notice of an “Intent to Apply,” by **May 9, 2008**. Submission of “Intent to Apply” is optional; it is a process management tool that will allow EPA to better anticipate the total staff time required for efficient review, evaluation, and selection of submitted proposals.

TITLE: Innovation and Research for Water Infrastructure for the 21st Century

ACTION: Request for Applications (RFA)

CATEGORY OF FUNDING: Environment

NUMBER OF EXPECTED AWARDS: One

CEILING: \$ 10,000,000 -EPA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement, and it will be funded for up to \$2,500,000 per year for 4 years

CFDA: 66.511

COST SHARING OR MATCHING: Cost sharing is not required by statute or regulation; however, voluntary cost sharing will be evaluated in accordance with evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.

GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION: Not Applicable

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION: Programs under CFDA 66.511 are available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the United States, including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, and other public or private nonprofit institutions and in some cases, individuals or foreign entities who have demonstrated unusually high scientific ability. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive awards. Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122. However, nonprofit 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. Universities and educational institutions must be subject to OMB Circular A-21.

FEDERAL AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA),
National Risk Management Research Laboratory,
Water Supply and Water Resources Division,
Urban Watershed Management Branch.

DESCRIPTION: The general objective of this research effort is to produce, evaluate, and summarize performance, cost, and value data and information about innovative technologies (i.e., systems, devices, procedures) that will assist the user community to reduce the cost and improve the effectiveness of design, operation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement of aging/failing wastewater/stormwater/ drinking water conveyance and treatment infrastructure. Outputs are sought that can be producing their intended benefits for the user community within four years. The user community consists of utilities (primary client), technology and service providers, researchers and research funding organizations, and regulators.

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Application Materials

You may submit either a printed application or an electronic application (but not both) for this announcement. The printed application must be submitted to the address as specified in Section IV.C. To apply electronically, the electronic application package available through the <http://www.grants.gov/> web site must be used. If your organization is not currently registered with grants.gov, you need to allow approximately one week for completion of the registration process. This registration, and electronic submission of your application, must be performed by an appropriate representative of your organization.

Agency Contact Person for Electronic Access Problem

Diana Ruffini: (732) 321-6678 email: ruffini.diana@epa.gov

Link to Full Announcement

<http://www.epa.gov/nrmrl/tech/funding.html>

Amendment 1 is being issued to:

- 1) Extend the date for receipt of applications from May 12, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. EST to May 27, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. EST. Sections IV.4 C and D are hereby revised;**
- 2) Extend the date for “intent to reply,” to May 9, 2008, EST;**
- 3) Extend the date for receipt of questions, Section VIII from April 10, 2008 to May 9, 2008, EST;**
- 4) Respond to questions resulting from the RFA.**

In accordance with Number 4 above the following questions were received in response to the subject announcement. The responses denoted below are the Government’s Official Written Responses and shall take precedence over any other responses (answers) Written or Oral provided relative to this Request For Application (RFA).

QUESTIONS/RESPONSES:

1. Q: Is a university-based or non-profit research organization better suited than consulting firm? I’m with a for-profit consulting firm.

A: Yes. As provided for in Section III A of the RFA for profit consulting firms are not eligible to submit proposals under this RFA. Please note that any contracts between consulting firms and eligible applicants such as university based or non-profit research organizations are subject to the competitive procurement requirements of 40 CFR Part 30. Eligible applicants may not justify sole source contracts with consulting firms based on the fact that the firm played a role in preparing the proposal or by naming the firm as a "partner" in the application. Please see section IV. G. of the RFA for details.

2. Q: Is it possible for another Federal Agency like USGS (working in collaboration with State/Local governments and Universities) to be a co-applicant and recipient of part of the funding under this grant?

A: No. Federal agencies are not listed as eligible applicants in Section III A of this RFA. EPA does not have statutory authority to award financial assistance to another federal agency. Further, as set forth in Section IV. G. of the RFA, EPA will award funds to one eligible applicant. If USGS has statutory authority to accept funds from a State/Local Government or University, it may collaborate with the eligible applicant on the proposal and accept funding from that applicant if it is successful in the competition. However, EPA will not provide funds directly to USGS or another federal agency under this RFA.

3. Q: Are we allowed to partner with Consultants, Vendors, and/or other Universities/research labs?

A: Please refer to Section IV.G. of the announcement. EPA has provided detailed guidance on this question there. Please note that referring to a commercial consultant or a vendor as a "partner" does not relieve your organization from its responsibilities to comply with competitive procurement requirements even if the consultant or vendor helped prepare your application.

4. Q: I am attaching a proposal for a modular water desalination/filtration plug and play, easy to use and assemble, system.

A: WE CANNOT ACCEPT AN EMAIL SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL. Section IV. of the announcement provides applicants with submission information for mailed hardcopies and electronic copies through grants.gov (ONLY). This submission does not follow proposal instructions and will be determined ineligible for award.

5. Q: Regarding the RFA for "Innovation and Research for Water Infrastructure for the 21st Century," it states that EPA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for up to \$2,500,000 per year for 4 years. Does this truly mean that only one (collaborative) proposal is anticipated to be funded to address the different water infrastructure areas described in the call, or will multiple proposals be funded?

A: Section II.C as follows: C. Number of Awards. EPA anticipates award of one cooperative agreement. In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding becomes available. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection date.

6. Q: We are a nonprofit 501C (3) corporation. There is an eligibility statement in the subject RFP that states "Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122." Although we are nonprofit organization, we are on the exclusion list under Appendix C to Part 230 of OMB Circular A-122. May we submit a proposal in response to the subject solicitation?

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply. Nonprofits identified in Appendix 3 of A-122 follow commercial accounting practices but they are still non profits.

7. Q: The announcement says only 1 award does this mean you'll only be awarding 1 big project for 10,000,000? My projects are fairly small dollar amounts does this matter? Can you help me find the application / and guidelines?

A: EPA cannot comment on whether your projects are **acceptable or non acceptable**. Please propose in a manner that you deem sufficient to demonstrate the objectives of the RFA. The technical evaluation panel will make the determination on the technical merit of the proposal.

8. Q: Would you accept a proposal that addresses only "advanced design and engineering concepts" and "treatment technologies for waste/water, water reuse and drinking water: innovative treatments for wastewater/stormwater and water reuse" (page 2) of the RFP but not including "drinking water treatment" on page 3 as well as not including "condition assessment (page 1) and "system rehabilitation" (page 2)? We would reduce the budget proportionately.

A: Section III.C.2, Relevance Eligibility Criteria, requires that proposals address the objectives in Section I.B in order to be eligible for award. Furthermore, the anticipated outputs and outcomes for the project are set forth in Section I.C and are reflective of the RFA's anticipated objectives. It is EPA's intent that the applicant (**or any proposed team/partnerships** as described in Section I.V.G) will propose in a manner that reflects demonstration of all the objectives of the RFA and propose outputs and outcomes it deems necessary to support its approach.

9. Q: The RFA states that "for profit organizations" can not be used, even as subs to nonprofit. This is an extremely limiting stipulation that virtually prevents any competition outside of a very few organizations. Is this a new requirement of cooperative agreements?

A: The RFA does not state that eligible applicants may not award subcontracts to for profit organizations. In Section IV G of the RFA, EPA provides advice to eligible applicants regarding the requirements in federal grant regulations for awarding subcontracts competitively and not using subawards of financial assistance to circumvent competitive procurement requirements. These are government wide requirements.

10. Q: 1. Can consulting companies partner with us at the university?

2. Can NYCDEP partner with us? Essentially, NYCDEP will provide access to their water and wastewater infrastructures and process data for us to carry the research?

3. Considering the significance of the RFP and scope of the project, it seems like the time of approximately 1 month to submit the proposal is too short. Are there agencies or universities that have already been short listed? Is there any possibility that the due date of RFP will be moved to allow more time? I am very interested and have started working on the proposal. You have mentioned in the RFP that you will answer questions till today. I will appreciate very much if you could allow us top contact you later also if there questions related to RFP.

A: 1. Please refer to Section IV.G. of the announcement. EPA has provided detailed guidance on this question there. Please note that referring to a commercial consultant or a vendor as a "partner" does not relieve your organization from its responsibilities to comply with competitive procurement requirements even if the consultant or vendor helped prepare your application.

2. Your organization may "partner" with NYCDEP but any transfers of funds between your university and NYCDEP must comply with the regulations described in Section IV.G. of the RFA. It is likely that transactions between your university and NYCDEP will meet the requirements for a subaward or subgrant of financial assistance. Please note, however, that the university must administer that transaction in accordance with federal grant regulations applicable to subgrants.

3. The time allotted for responses is commensurate with historical projects of similar scope and complexity. EPA is extending the date of receipt of proposal to May 27, 2008, at 4:30 p.m., EST due to the level of questions received.

11. Q: Since this RFP covers a huge area, may I only respond to the Stormwater Management portion? or do I need to cover everything you mentioned?

A: See response to Question 8.

12. Q: You note that "profit making firms are not eligible to receive awards". Are profit making firms eligible to be subcontractors to an eligible organization submitting under this RFA?

A: Yes, provided the transaction complies with the competitive procurement requirements in 40 CFR Part 30. Please see Section IV G of the RFA.

13. Q: 1. The project scope is quite broad and will certainly require a team approach. Would the EPA prefer that each proposer assemble a complete team to address the full scope of the RFA?

2. As an alternative, will the EPA allow individual proposers address only a portion of the RFA, with the expectation that the EPA will assemble a complete team from the submitted proposals?

A: 1. Yes, please see Section IV G of the RFA. EPA will award financial assistance under this RFA to only one eligible applicant. Note that any "team" your organization assembles must be comprised of eligible subawardees or consultants or vendors selected in compliance with the competitive procurement requirements of 40 CFR Part 30.

2. No. Please see Section IV G of the RFA, and EPA's response to Question 8.

14. Q: 1. If we team with a group as a sub and the team wins the cooperative agreement, is the academic group able to write task orders to us directly for specific work?

2. Does any work that goes outside the non-for-profit organization (academic group) have to go through a competitive proposal process? The last sentence of the second paragraph on P. 17 of the RFA ("Please note that applicants may not award sole-source contracts to consulting...") is what prompted our question.

A: 1. No. Transactions between recipients and commercial consulting firms or other commercial vendors must comply with the competitive procurement requirements in 40 CFR Part 30. Simply naming a consultant or vendor as a member of a "team" does not justify sole source transactions for services that are readily available in the commercial market place. Please see Section IV G of the RFA.

2. Yes

15. Q: Does EPA really mean that the 20 page project description is inclusive of the list of cited references? I would have thought references would fall outside of the page limits... but the RFP seems to indicate otherwise, so I wanted to double-check.

A. Yes, the 20-page limit includes references.

16. Q: 1. Is there a required amount of the grant that must be applied towards research/study as compared to actual design and capital improvements?

2. Could the grant be awarded to a Town, and then they rely on university researchers to perform studies (bench-scale and pilot scale), with hired consultants to perform the design, and eventually use whatever funds could remain towards building the actual product?

3. Should our budget be broken down into media type and infrastructure components?

A. 1. It is the applicant's responsibility to develop a proposal and associated budget that is responsive to the RFA inclusive of any voluntary cost share it proposes. As indicated in the RFA objective statement, this cooperative agreement is intended to support "a research effort to produce, evaluate, and summarize performance, cost, and value data and information about innovative technologies (i.e., systems, devices, procedures)...."

2. Municipal governments are eligible applicants per Section III A of the RFA. Please see Section IV.G for detailed guidance on financial transactions between an eligible applicant and other organizations and consultants. Note the requirements for documenting that proposed transactions comply with applicable EPA grant regulations if subawardees or subcontractors are named as members of a "team" in a proposal. Funds can only be applied to work that is integral to accomplishing the research project objectives. See also the response to the question immediately above.

3. Section IV.A2 discusses how the project budget should be set forth. There is no requirement to break the budget down by media type and infrastructure components.

17. Q: 1. Given the uniqueness of our expertise, experience, and facilities, would EPA entertain a proposal for partial funding (as mentioned on the top of page 6 of the proposal)?

2. In the bullet two (page 2). System Rehabilitation – it says wastewater/storm water system or sub-system. I would like to have some clarification on sub-system, is that mean service lines, manhole, hydrant, etc. Our proposal should focus on main lines (collection and distribution systems) or it should also consider service lines, laterals, manholes, hydrants, etc.

A. 1. See response to Question 8. However, while proposals must meet the objectives of the RFA, EPA, in appropriate circumstances, reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects.

2. Regarding system rehabilitation, service lines, laterals, manholes, and hydrants are within the scope of this RFA. In-home plumbing is not within the scope of the RFA.

18. Q: I am wondering if consultants who are also Co-PI's on the work can be guaranteed a role on the project team, if it is funded.

A. Not necessarily. The eligible applicant must select consultant in a manner that complies with the competitive procurement requirements of 40 CFR Part 30 or Part 31, as applicable. This competitive selection process must take place before the applicant submits its proposal for the consultant to be named as a PI to be guaranteed a role on the project team that involves compensation with EPA grant funds.

19. Q: My question to the EPA is whether the research needed to bring this innovation from concept to an operating proof of concept is a project that could be funded by the EPA under this announcement? Based on my initial reading of the material posted on <http://www.grants.gov/>, I would say that such project(s) probably would most likely qualify for funding. Your definitive response is much appreciated.

A. A technology development project is neither inherently fundable nor unfundable under this RFA. The applicant must determine whether they can adequately address the RFA objectives and other requirements. Proof-of-concept is cited in the question as the end product, however, the applicant should carefully consider whether its proposal is likely to address the “Outputs are sought that can be producing their intended benefits for the user community within four years” component of the RFA objective (I.B.).

20. Q: Can consulting engineers be PI's, and therefore be guaranteed work on the agreement, if it is awarded?

A. Not necessarily. EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of proposed subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractors during the proposal/application evaluation process unless the applicant complies with the requirements in Section IV.G. 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 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as appropriate. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. This competitive selection process must take place before the applicant submits its proposal for the consulting engineer

named as a PI to be guaranteed a role on the project team that involves compensation with EPA grant funds.

21. Q: Are subcontracts to private sector consulting firms allowable under this RFP?

A. Yes. However, subcontracts with commercial consulting firms must comply with Section IV.G. of the RFA . Subcontracts must be competed in accordance with the procurement provisions of the regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31 before EPA will consider the firms' qualifications.

22. Q: Can an individual researcher be a part of different proposal teams? The individual researcher and his/her organization would not be the primary contractor. The individual researcher and his/her organization might even present different research topics to different primary applicants.

A: Yes. However, each applicant that includes the individual researcher and his/her organization on its proposal team must be able to demonstrate that it complied with the competitive procurement requirements of 40 CFR Part 30 or Part 31, as applicable if the individual researcher is a consultant or is employed by a commercial vendor. If the individual researcher is with a governmental unit, a university or a non-profit organization, the applicant must be able to demonstrate any financial transactions between the individual researcher and his/her organization are proper subawards or subgrants under 40 CFR Part 30 or Part 31 . Please refer to Section IV.G. of the announcement.

23. Q: Are there any restrictions on partnering with a Canadian university?

A. Yes. Although an applicant may make a subaward to a Canadian or other foreign university, the research funded under that subaward must focus on water infrastructure issues affecting facilities and communities in the United States. The research EPA will fund under this RFA is intended to further the domestic research priorities set forth in Innovation and Research for Water Infrastructure in the 21st Century (U.S. EPA, 2007). Under this RFA, the Agency did not invoke its authority under Section 102(2)(F) of the National Environmental Policy Act to fund research relating to environmental conditions outside of the United States. Please refer to Section IV.G. of the announcement for details on partnering arrangements.

24. Q: If our agency were to apply and be selected, what is the anticipated time frame for receiving a grant agreement? Look forward to hearing from you.

A. The estimated project period is located in Section II.D.

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25. Q: I want to make sure that the consultants (for reimbursement) on this project cannot be from profit-making organizations.

A: No, the successful applicant may hire consultants from for profit organizations for this project as long as it follows the competitive procurement procedures at 40 CFR Part 30 or Part 31. Please refer to Section IV.G. of the announcement for details. Please note, however, that a consultant's role in preparing a project proposal does not justify a sole source contract with the consultant or his or her firm.

26. Q: We are preparing the required certificates and disclosures for the above proposal and find that you require completed SF LLL form. We feel that it is only required once a project is completed and requesting clarification on this matter.

A: Applicants need to submit the SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities) form with the application package, the Litigation and Lobbying form would be due at the end however, this is no longer required.

27. Q: I was writing to inquire as to how I need to set up the budget for a grant submission to EPA due on May 12th. Do you need the budget broken down into Media Type & Infrastructure Component Research Area outlined on page 5 of the guidelines, or does it need to be broken down into annual totals on the SF424A? Also, I would like some examples of what is usually included in section ix. Of the proposal “ix. Supporting Documentation As applicable, supporting documentation, obtained from user organizations in support of RFA objectives and activities, and the applicant’s technical proposal.

A: Section IV.A2 discusses how the project budget should be set forth. There is no requirement to break the budget down by media type and infrastructure components. With regards to supporting documentation, applicants should provide whatever supporting documentation they deem necessary to support their application.