

Funding Opportunities

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory (NHEERL)

Regional Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program Research Projects

This is the initial (Annual) announcement of this funding opportunity.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.512

RFA issued: January 20, 2005

Final date to submit technical questions: February 11, 2005

Proposals due: March 14, 2005

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REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA) FOR AWARD OF A PROJECT GRANT

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OVERVIEW INFORMATION

Description: The Regional Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (REMAP) supports research projects within each of EPA's Regions, which provide states and tribes with tools to collect and provide data that can be consolidated into the national effort to report on environmental resources. Projects are to be consistent with U.S. EPA's Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program's (EMAP) probabilistic design to assess the condition of the Nation's ecological resources. This solicitation calls for applications for one- to two-year Cooperative Agreements to support state, local, and tribal monitoring needs which are consistent with EMAP's nationwide goals.

Funding Agency: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Laboratory: National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory

Division: Mid-Continent Ecology Division

Funding Opportunity Title: Regional Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program Research Projects

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA/ORD/NHEERL/MED-FY2005-01-05

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.512 OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

RFA issued: January 20, 2005

Final date to submit technical questions: February 11, 2005

Proposals due: March 14, 2005

Anticipated Funding: The REMAP program anticipates a budget of up to \$1.92M. Individual Projects are funded for up to two years and are not to exceed \$192,000 per year per U.S. EPA Region. Depending on project budgets, up to two projects may be selected per region. Limited funds may be available for new projects in certain regions due to continuation of previously awarded projects.

Eligible Applicants: These awards are available to those entities that are eligible to receive federal assistance under the Clean Water Act which includes the States, their territories and possessions, and U.S. Tribal Nations (CFR part 31); Institutions of higher education, hospitals and other non-profit organizations (CFR part 30).

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FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Title: Regional Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program Research Projects

B. Background: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) is a long-term research program designed to statistically monitor the conditions of our Nation's ecological resources. REMAP, which is a component of EMAP, is a partnership between ORD, EPA's Regional Offices, other federal agencies, states, local governments, and U.S. tribal nations. It was developed to test the applicability of EMAP's probabilistic approach to answer questions about ecological conditions at regional and local levels. REMAP's goals are to:

1. Evaluate and improve probability based monitoring designs and tools for state and local use.
2. Assess the applicability of indicators at differing spatial scales.
3. Demonstrate the utility of probability based data for resolving issues of importance to EPA Regions and States.

REMAP funds research projects through a competitive process conducted at EPA Regional Offices to meet these goals while focusing on objectives that are consistent with current monitoring needs within U.S. EPA Regions.

C. Funding Priorities/Focus: The primary objectives of the solicited research are to assist the Regions, states, local governments, and tribes in incorporating the latest science on ecological monitoring into their environmental decision-making process. Research projects should address real regional environmental issues where monitoring results will influence decisions; address data gaps and advance the science of ecological monitoring. Projects must link research projects that are consistent with the U.S. EPA's strategic plan and research priorities. Areas of emphasis for this year's projects include approaches designed to advance integrated monitoring. These would include (but are not limited to):

1. Designs and tools for assessments of great/large rivers, wetlands, and lakes.
2. Integration of 305 (b) reports and other existing data sources with the 303(d) listing process.
3. Improved development of biological reference conditions for establishing biological criteria.
4. Approaches to demonstrate the effectiveness of restoration/remediation at the watershed level.

D. Outputs and Outcomes: The successful applicant must deliver products (outputs) which support efforts at meeting longer term environmental outcomes and are linked to EPA's Strategic Plan and EPA's long-term research goals for Ecosystem Protection (www.epa.gov/ocfopage/plan/plan.htm). The Strategic Plan goals relevant to this RFA are identified in 1.E.

The expected outcomes supported by this Assistance Agreement will be the strengthened ability to assess and compare risks to ecosystems, to protect or restore them, and to track progress in terms of ecological outcomes.

Expected Outputs delivered by this assistance agreement are to be consistent with EPA's long-term research goals for Ecosystem Protection. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Provide environmental managers and researchers with a better understanding of the links between human activities, natural dynamics, ecological stressors, and ecosystem condition.
2. Provide tools that managers and researchers can use to predict stressors on ecological resources.
3. Provide scientifically defensible methods for protecting and restoring ecosystem condition.

E. GPRA Goals, Objectives: The specific Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) Goals, Objectives and Sub-objectives that relate to this RFA include:

Goal 4: Healthy Communities and Ecosystems

Objective 4.4: Enhance Science and Research.— provide a sound scientific foundation for EPA's goal of protecting, sustaining, and restoring the health of people, communities, and ecosystems by conducting leading-edge research and developing a better understanding and characterization of environmental outcomes under Goal 4.

Sub-objective 4.4.2: Conduct Relevant Research.— conduct research that contributes to the overall health of people, communities, and ecosystems.

F. Statutory Authority for Award of Assistance: Research will be funded under the statutory authority of the Clean Water Act (P.L.92-500, as amended) Section 104(b)(3). Interested applicants must be eligible to receive Federal assistance under this Act and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 30 - General Regulation for Assistance, Part 31- Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Government, Part 34- New Restrictions on Lobbying, and Part 40 - Research and Demonstration Grants. The purpose is to commence research projects relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution.

II. Award Information

A. Amount and Range of Individual Award: Proposal budgets must total \$384,000 or less (exclusive of cost-sharing) and not more than \$192,000 per year, including all overhead and indirect costs at approved federal government rate.

B. Number of Awards: EPA expects to announce one-two successful recipients for each of seven U.S. EPA Regions during spring 2005. (Three Regions, 1, 4, and 6, have 2 year projects which were awarded in FY04 and will be funded for the 2nd year at \$192,000 each). EPA reserves the right to make some, partial and no awards.

C. Project Period: Project periods should be for up to two years. Funding for the 2nd year of a project is subject to availability of appropriations and successful performance by the recipient.

D. Supplemental Applications: Applications for supplemental awards of existing REMAP projects will be eligible to compete for this assistance opportunity.

E. Type of Award: The Agency anticipates the award of a Cooperative Agreement. However, in some instances, States, Tribes, and Local governments may not possess the ability to administer the project or have the personnel or infrastructure to implement the project or part of the project. In these cases, when a Federal Agency possesses unique capabilities to perform the work and agrees in advance to perform the project on behalf of the state, tribe or local government, an Interagency Agreement (IAG) can be awarded by EPA to the Federal Agency identified in the applicant's proposal. In the case of projects that will be financed through IAG's, the proposed project must still be submitted by an eligible applicant identified in III.A. and will be subject to the selection criteria in Section V.

F. Anticipated Federal Involvement: Upon selection of a proposal by the Regional office, a project officer from the Office of Research and Development is assigned to the project. Project officers work with the recipients in research design and work-plan development. It is the responsibility of the ORD Project Officer that research results are linked to EPA's strategic plan (www.epa.gov/ocfopage/plan/plan.htm). The ORD project officers assure proper review of work plans and reconciliation of reviewer comments. They provide oversight of the project, manage the funding of the project, and provide technical guidance throughout the project period. In some cases, regional personnel provide technical oversight and support to the project. Collaborate research efforts between the recipient and EPA are encouraged.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants: These awards are available to those entities that are eligible to receive federal assistance under the Clean Water Act which includes the States, their territories and possessions, and U.S. Tribal Nations (CFR part 31); institutions of higher education, hospitals, and other non-profit organizations (CFR part 30).

B. Cost Sharing Requirements: Institutional cost-share is not required. However, in-kind contributions, including: facilities, equipment, materials, professional services, or volunteer staff provided by non-Federal public agencies, organizations, or individuals may be prudent (see section 5.B.).

C. Other Eligibility Criteria: Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122. However, 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. Universities and educational institutions must be subject to OMB Circular A-21.

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a consortium and submit a single application for this assistance agreement. The consortium must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the assistance agreement and which eligible organization(s) will be sub-awardees of the recipient. Sub-awards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 40 CFR 30.2(ff). The recipient must administer the assistance agreement, is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds, and will be the point of contact for the consortium. As provided in 40 CFR 30.2(gg), sub-recipients are accountable to the recipient for proper use of EPA funding. Consortia may not include for-profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant.

Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 40 CFR Part 30. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify contractors or consultants in the proposal. Moreover, the fact a successful applicant has named a specific contractor or consultant in the proposal EPA approves does not relieve it of its obligations to comply with competitive procurement requirements or consultant compensation limitations. Applications will be reviewed for eligibility during the Administrative Review (see Section V). Initial proposals from ineligible applicants will be returned without further review.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Content and Form of Application Submission

The proposal package should contain the following:

1. Cover Sheet. The cover sheet must contain the following: the RFA title and identification number (CFDA 66.512); name and address of applicant; point of contact; telephone number; e-mail address for the applicant; applicant's DUNS number (see Section VIII), and the date of the submission. The cover sheet should also identify in which of the following U.S. EPA Regions the project is intended:

Region 1: NH, VT, ME, MA, RI, CT

Region 2: NY NJ (including US possessions, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands)

Region 3: PA, WV, VA, DE, MD, DC

Region 4: KY, TN, NC, SC, MS, AL, GA, FL

Region 5: MN, WI, MI, IL, IN, OH

Region 6: NM, TX, OK, AR, LA

Region 7: IA; NE; KS; MO
Region 8: MT, ND, SD, WY, UT, CO
Region 9: NV, CA, AZ, HI
Region 10: WA, OR, ID, AK

2. Proposal. The proposal should contain the following:
 - a. Project Description
 - a-1. Purpose
 - a-2. Rational/need, including consistency with Regional needs
 - b. Project Objectives (stated as questions or hypotheses to be tested)
 - c. Approach
 - c-1. General approach
 - c-2. Basic design of project
 - c-3. Specific measurements that will be collected
 - d. Time line and potential products (expected outcomes)
(All projects will require periodic progress reports at least annually, but project officers may request quarterly reports)
 - e. Participants
 - f. Budget
 - f-1. Estimated project cost
 - f-2. In-kind services, and other potential sources of support (note: REMAP projects can not be supplemented with other EPA grants, such as the 106a or 104b state grants)
3. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) and Budget Information (SF-424a):
The SF-424 and SF-424a must be submitted as part of your proposal. These forms may be downloaded from www.grants.gov or www.cfda.gov or Contact Jo Thompson at (218) 529-5198 to have these forms mailed to you. Information about applying for Federal Grants may be found at www.fedgrants.gov. Electronic application for REMAP grants is not available at this time.

B. Submission Dates and Times: Application packages must be received through regular or express mail delivery, email, or fax at the address below by 8 p.m., Central Standard Time, on or before March 14, 2005:

U.S. EPA Mid-Continent Ecology Division
Attn: Jo Thompson, National REMAP Coordinator
6201 Congdon Blvd.
Duluth, MN 55804
email: thompson.jo@epa.gov
Fax: (218) 529-5003

C. Funding Restrictions: No construction costs are allowed in this agreement. No foreign travel is allowed unless specifically agreed upon. No large capital equipment items, such as vehicles and boats, will be allowed for purchase under this agreement.

D. Amendments: Amendments will be posted on www.grants.gov and on the REMAP website www.epa.gov/emap/remap, and the due date for proposals will be extended if deemed appropriate.

E. Other Submission Requirements: None.

V. Application Review Information

A. Criteria: The criteria used to evaluate proposals include:

1. Administrative Review: The National Program Coordinator will review all proposals to ensure that the application package conforms to the requirements of this RFA and that applicants are eligible for federal assistance. EPA will reject any applications that are not eligible or that fail to conform to the requirements of this RFA. Initial proposals that are found administratively acceptable will be forwarded for relevancy and technical review to the U.S. EPA's Regional REMAP Coordinator for the Region where the research is to take place.
2. Relevance Review: Proposals that are found administratively acceptable will be subjected to a review for relevancy to EPA's mission to support advancement of environmental science. Regions may reject or accept a proposal for further technical rating based on relevancy. Proposals may be rejected if they are not consistent with the following:
 - a. Quality and content of the research proposal relevant to the objectives described in this solicitation (Section I.C.).
 - b. Goals and objectives stated in the proposal are relevant to monitoring and assessment needs within the Region for which the proposal is intended.
 - c. Proposed Research products are consistent with EPA's Strategic goals (Sections I.D. and I.E).
3. Technical Review: A panel of EPA personnel will review the proposals for technical merit against the following criteria:
 - a. Research questions, objectives, and methods are clearly stated; outputs are clearly identified. (15 points)
 - b. Project improves methods, addresses emerging issues, or develops new ecological indicators. (15 points)

- c. Extent to which the research proposal's goals and approach are linked to priority areas listed in Section I.C. (20)
- d. Project demonstrates that it can be successfully completed in the proposed project period (15).
- e. Project makes links to other states, tribes or federal agencies and builds partnerships that will improve ecological monitoring and assessment in the future. (10 points)
- f. Results of the proposed work are transferrable. They can be applied to other geographic areas or programs and/or there is an outreach and educational component. (10 points)
- g. The budget is clear and broken down into appropriate categories. It is appropriate for the proposed work. (15 points)
- h. The applicant clearly identifies a plan for tracking and measuring its progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes identified in section I of the announcement. (15 points)

B. Review and Selection Process:

Rating Factors: Proposals will be ranked according to scores received in the technical review. The maximum number of points each proposal will receive for the eight rating factors is 115.

Other Factors: If technical review points are similar for top-ranking proposals, the proposal that is most relevant to monitoring and assessment needs within the region for which the proposal is intended will be selected for award. The amount of cost sharing proposed (if any) will not result in additional points for any applicant but will be considered in the evaluation of the reasonableness and realism of the overall budget.

Evaluation Process: EPA Regions will make a selection of the applicants for award based upon the rankings of the Technical Review and the other factors discussed above. The regions will submit selected proposals, with the application forms and documentation of the relevancy and technical review, to the National REMAP Coordinator and the Regional REMAP Coordinator will notify all applicants of the selection decision within their regions.

Rejection Factors: Applications will be rejected because they fail to comply with the administrative requirements of the RFA (Section III.), they are found to lack relevancy, they are judged technically unacceptable, or they are not deemed suitable for award due to other factors (if identified).

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates: Regions will select proposals for recommended funding by March 30, 2005. Applicants will be notified of selection by the Regions when they receive confirmation of the selection by the National Coordinator. It is anticipated that this would occur on or about April 10, 2005. However, the requirements described in VI.A. and VI.B. must be met before actual notice of awards can be made.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Pre-award Requirements. The selection of a project by a Region does not guarantee award of a project. Upon Selection, an ORD Project Officer (PO) will be assigned to the project (see section 2.F.). Proposals must be developed into acceptable work (research) plans. The ORD Project Officer will assist in this process, addressing areas of weakness in the proposal (as identified by the EPA technical review), recommending experts to conduct a peer review of the completed work plan, reconciling comments from the reviewers and negotiating recommended changes to the work plan. The Project Officer will assist the applicant by assembling a complete funding package in accordance with the guidance provided by EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment (www.epa.gov/ogd), along with a decision memo from the PO's Division Director. The National REMAP Coordinator and MED Extramural Management specialist will review the package for completeness. If the funding package is complete, the MED Division Director, who is the decision official, will recommend funding. The package will then be forwarded to the Grants Administration Division. It is recommended that funding packages be submitted to MED no later than September 10, 2005.

B. Award Notices: Notice of award will be made in writing by an official in the EPA Grants Administration Division. Preliminary selection by the Region or recommendation by the decision official does not guarantee an award will be made. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer can bind the government to the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of EPA should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with an EPA Program Official. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the EPA Grants Award Official does so at their own risk.

EPA will promptly notify in writing (postal or email) those applicants whose proposal is rejected. An unsuccessful applicant may request a debriefing to better understand the evaluated strengths and weaknesses of its proposal and the reason for rejection if other than technical merit.

C. Regulations and OMB Coverage: Grants and agreements with institutions of higher education, hospitals, and other non-profit organizations are subject to 40 CFR Parts 30 and 40 and OMB Circular A-122 for nonprofits and A-21 for institutions of higher learning. Grants and agreements with state, local, and tribal governments are subject to 40 CFR Parts 31 and 40 and OMB Circular A-87.

D. Programmatic Terms and Conditions will be negotiated with the selected recipient covering the following requirements: It is required that projects be performed by qualified personnel. All proposals must identify any person who will assist in carrying out the project. The authorized representative of the recipient whose proposal is selected for an award is responsible for accepting the cooperative agreement from EPA and ensuring that all cooperative agreement conditions are satisfied. Recipients are responsible for the successful completion of the project and for complying with all reporting requirements of the cooperative agreement.

Award recipients may begin incurring allowable costs on the start date identified in the EPA cooperative agreement. Activities must be completed and funds spent within the time frames specified in the award agreement. EPA funds may be used only for the purposes set forth in the cooperative agreement and must conform to Federal cost principles contained in OMB Circular A—87; A—122; and A—21, as appropriate. Ineligible costs will be reduced from the final cooperative agreement award.

Work plans and resultant work generated under this solicitation will be subject to peer review, at EPA's expense, and must comply with all EPA quality-assurance requirements. A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is required for all monitoring projects and must be approved prior to the collection or use of environmental data (EPA Order 5360.1A2). Instructions for preparing a QAPP can be found in *EPA QA/G-5, Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans*, available at <http://www.epa.gov/quality/qs-docs/g5-final.pdf>. An acceptable QAPP shall be due within 60 days following acceptance of the award.

Award recipients must agree to make methods, models, and data resulting from this agreement accessible to the public and to EPA.

E. Reporting

Progress Reports: The selected recipient will be required to submit progress reports at least annually, but some Project Officers may require quarterly reports, with the first report due (90) days after the cooperative agreement is awarded to the recipient. The reports are to summarize technical progress, difficulties encountered, and planned activities for the next year (quarter).

Final Report: The grantee will be required to submit a final report within no later than 60 days of the completion of the period of performance. The final report will include detailed maps, tables, charts and any other graphical displays needed to illustrate key findings. The schedule for the development of the final report should allow for a 30-day review period by EPA (which would include experts from outside EPA) and sufficient time to allow the recipient to address any comments and issues identified by this review.

F. Disputes: Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20051800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2005/05-1371.htm>.

Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting Jo Thompson at (218) 529-5198.

VII. Agency Contact:

The primary agency contact for this RFA is:
 Jo Thompson, National REMAP Coordinator
 U.S. EPA, Mid-Continent Ecology Division
 6201 Congdon Blvd
 Duluth, Minnesota 55804
 Telephone: 218-529-5198
 Telefax: 218-529-5003
 E-mail: thompson.jo@epa.gov

Regional Coordinators:

<u>Hilary Snook</u>	<u>Region 1</u>	<u>Snook.Hilary@epa.gov</u>	<u>(617) 918-8670</u>
<u>Darvene Adams</u>	<u>Region 2</u>	<u>Adams.Darvene@epa.gov</u>	<u>(732) 321-6700</u>
<u>Ronald Landy</u>	<u>Region 3</u>	<u>Landy.Ronald@epa.gov</u>	<u>(410) 305-2757</u>
<u>Peter Kalla</u>	<u>Region 4</u>	<u>Kalla.Peter@epa.gov</u>	<u>(706) 355-8705</u>
<u>Arthur Lubin</u>	<u>Region 5</u>	<u>Lubin.Arthur@epa.gov</u>	<u>(312) 886-6226</u>
<u>Charlie Howell</u>	<u>Region 6</u>	<u>Howell.Charlie@epa.gov</u>	<u>(214) 665-8354</u>
<u>Lyle Cowles</u>	<u>Region 7</u>	<u>Cowles.Lyle@epa.gov</u>	<u>(913) 551-7081</u>
<u>Tom Johnson</u>	<u>Region 8</u>	<u>Johnson.Tom@epa.gov</u>	<u>(303) 312-6226</u>
<u>Robert K. Hall</u>	<u>Region 9</u>	<u>Hall.Robert@epa.gov</u>	<u>(775) 784-4413</u>
<u>Gretchen Hayslip</u>	<u>Region 10</u>	<u>Hayslip.Gretchen@epa.gov</u>	<u>(206) 553-1685</u>

VIII. Other Information

Questions: Questions should be submitted in writing by the Principal Investigator to the National REMAP Coordinator or one of the Regional Coordinators listed above. Do not attempt to seek information regarding this RFA from any other sources, as the information provided may be erroneous. Answers that are such that they may provide an advantage in the application process will be posted on the REMAP website (www.epa.gov/emap/remap).

Confidential Information: Clearly mark information considered to be confidential. EPA will make final confidentially decisions in accordance with Agency regulations (40 CFR, Part 2, Subpart B). As noted above, work plans for research and demonstration projects will be provided to at least two non-EPA consultants for review. All reviewers will be required to sign confidentiality agreements certifying they will keep all deliberations confidential. They will not copy any portions of any material provided by EPA for review, and they will return all materials to EPA upon request. If you are unwilling to allow non-EPA consultants review your proposal, please advise us of your decision in a cover letter to your proposal.

DUNS Number: Applicants are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements. OMB has determined that there is a need for improved statistical reporting of Federal grants and cooperative agreements. Use of the DUNS number government wide will provide a means to identify entities receiving those awards and their business relationships. The DUNS number will supplement other identifiers required by statute or regulation, such as tax identification numbers. The identifier will be used for tracking purposes and to validate address and point-of-contact information.

A DUNS number is required whether an applicant is submitting a paper application or using the government-wide electronic portal (<http://www.grants.gov>). *Note: Electronic application for REMAP proposals is not available at this time.* Organizations can receive a DUNS number, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or through <http://www.dnb.com>. This usually takes up to 30 business days. The organization can request expedited (1-day) processing for a fee of \$40.