

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 7
EPA-R7WWPD-03-004**

Notice of Request for Initial Proposals for Projects to be Funded From the Water Quality Cooperative Agreements allocation (CFDA 66.463 - Water Quality Cooperative Agreements). These proposals support developing, implementing, and demonstrating innovative approaches relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution.

SUMMARY

EPA is soliciting initial proposals to implement Region 7's water quality cooperative agreements program through application of comprehensive watershed approaches to water quality issues. In FY03, Region 7 will continue to support a broad vision of watershed protection, including a collaborative approach to protecting and restoring water quality in priority watersheds. Emphasis will be placed on projects that focus on watersheds and community based approaches, ranging from statewide targeting schemes to local watershed-based projects. These may include, but are not limited to, monitoring and assessment strategies and/or implementation; development of comprehensive watershed management plans, including innovative storm water management approaches and smart growth applications; studies related to emerging issues such as pharmaceuticals in ambient waters; innovative approaches to addressing water quality effects related to animal agriculture; and development and execution of TMDL implementation plans. Projects supporting the Regional Priority Themes of agriculture, sensitive populations, and critical ecosystems will also be favored.

1. Amount of Funding Available

EPA Region 7 plans to award a varied number of grants or cooperative agreements. Funding available to the Region is approximately \$634,000.

The number of awards will depend on individual proposal cost; the final aggregate amount of federal funding for all Initial Proposals; and the total amount of federal funding available.

Should additional funding become available for award the Agency may award additional grants based on this solicitation and in accordance with the final selection process, without further notice or competition.

2. Right to Reject all Initial Proposals

The Agency reserves the right to reject all initial proposals and make no awards.

3. Matching/Cost Share Requirements

A minimum match of 5% of the total project cost is required.

4. Project Period Time frame

Project duration should not exceed three years.

5. Eligible Applicants

Assistance under this program is generally available to States (environmental, health, agriculture, or other relevant departments), territories, Native American Tribes, and possessions of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, Inter-Tribal Coalitions or Consortia, public and private universities

and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, other public or private nonprofit institutions (community based or volunteer organizations), individuals who submit applications proposing projects with significant technical merit and relevance to EPA's mission. Implementation of all projects must occur within the four states of EPA Region 7: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, or Nebraska.

Applicants who have an existing agreement under this program are eligible to compete with proposals for new awards.

6. Proposal Submittal - Due Dates

All initial proposals should be e- mailed, mailed or delivered to:

Environmental Protection Agency
Attention: Julie Elfving, WWPD/GPCB
901 N. 5th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

E-mail elfving.julie@epa.gov

EPA will consider all initial proposals which are post-marked by the U.S. Postal Service, hand-delivered, or electronically delivered to the Agency, or include official delivery service documentation indicating EPA acceptance from a delivery service, **to arrive at EPA** on or before the deadline 5 p.m., Central Time, May 21, 2003. Hardcopy submittals are preferred. Initial proposals received after the due date will not be considered for funding.

7. Statutory Authority and Applicable Regulations

Water Quality Cooperative Agreement projects are authorized under the Clean Water Act, Section 104.

These projects are subject to EPA's General Grant Regulations: 40 CFR Part 30 "Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Nonprofit Organizations"; 40 CFR Part 31 "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments"; and 40 CFR Part 35 "State and Local Assistance".

8. Allowable Costs

EPA grant funds may only be used for the purposes set forth in the grant agreement, and must be consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Grant funds may not be used for matching funds for other Federal grants, lobbying, or intervention in Federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. In addition, Federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal government or any other government entity. All costs identified in the budget must conform to applicable Federal Cost Principles contained in OMB Circular A-87 "Cost Principles for State, Local, and Tribal Governments"; A-122 "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; and A-21 "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions". Ineligible costs will be reduced from final grant award.

9. Federal Requirements

An applicant whose proposal is selected for federal funding must complete additional forms prior to award (see 40 CFR 30.12 and 31.10). EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final grant amount and work plan content prior to award. In addition, successful applicants will be required to certify that they have not been Debarred or Suspended from participation in federal assistance awards in accordance with 40 CFR Part 32.

10. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants must comply with the Intergovernmental Review Process and/or consultation provisions of Section 204, Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, if applicable, which are contained in 40 CFR Part 29. This program is eligible for coverage under E.O. 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." An applicant should consult the office or official designated as the single point of contact in his or her State for more information on the process the State requires to be followed in applying for assistance if the State has selected the program for review. Further information regarding this requirement will be provided if your proposal is selected for funding.

11. Pre-application Assistance

None planned.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

12. Purpose of This Request Is for Initial Proposals

EPA is soliciting initial proposals to implement Region 7's water quality cooperative agreements program through application of comprehensive watershed approaches to water quality issues. In FY03, Region 7 will continue to support a broad vision of watershed protection, including a collaborative approach to protecting and restoring water quality in priority watersheds. Emphasis will be placed on projects that focus on watersheds and community based approaches, ranging from statewide targeting schemes to local watershed-based projects. These may include, but are not limited to, monitoring and assessment strategies and/or implementation; development of comprehensive watershed management plans, including innovative storm water management approaches and smart growth applications; studies related to emerging issues such as pharmaceuticals in ambient waters; innovative approaches to addressing water quality effects related to animal agriculture; and development and execution of TMDL implementation plans. Projects supporting the Regional Priority Themes of agriculture, sensitive populations, and critical ecosystems will also be favored.

13. High Priority Areas for Consideration

EPA will provide priority consideration to projects that are focused on the following areas. Addressing more than one area will result in higher weight in the evaluation process. Proposals should specify the basis for the area of special consideration. Proposed projects should involve surveys, studies, investigations, or demonstrations that involve one or more of the following:

High priority watersheds - including waters identified in state non point source management programs, unified watershed assessments, or other targeting schemes. Provide watershed name and HUC designation.

303d-listed waters - name the water and the reason for listing

Outstanding Natural Resource Waters - contained in state/tribal water quality standards, or other special emphasis waters (specify)

Regional metropolitan areas - name the watershed(s) under consideration

Missouri or Mississippi River - with a focus on nutrients, monitoring, and/or assessment; name the watershed(s) under consideration

Agriculture- including but not limited to animal waste management, nutrient management, sustainable agriculture practices, integrated crop management, and environmental management systems.

Sensitive Populations - with a focus on children, the elderly, or those with compromised

immune systems. Identify the specific population, its sensitivity, and the specific watershed issue that is related to that sensitivity.

Critical Ecosystems- specify the basis for the area being considered a critical ecosystem

14. Request for Proposal Format and Contents

Initial proposals should be limited to five pages (not including Standard Form SF-424, and SF-424A and Cover Page). Page size should be 8 1/2 x 11 inches with New Times Roman font size of 12 points or larger. Full application packages should not be submitted at this time. Failure to meet the format and content criteria will eliminate the initial proposal from consideration. The following format should be used for all initial proposals submitted:

- G Completed Page 1 of Standard Form SF-424*, Application for Federal Assistance. (Not counted in page limit)
- G Completed Page 2 of Standard Form SF-424A*, Budget Information-Section B (See Allowable Cost). (Not counted in page limit)
- G Detailed itemization of the amounts budgeted by individual Object Class Categories (see Allowable Cost). (Not counted in page limit.)
- G Statement regarding whether this proposal is a continuation of a previously funded project (if so, please provide the assistance number and status of the current grant/cooperative agreement).
- G Cover Page including: Project Title; Name of Applicant; Project Contact; Regional Priority(ies) Addressed; Geographic Location; Total project cost and dollars requested.. (Not counted in page limit)
- G Project narrative containing: Brief description of environmental issue of concern. Project Goals and Objectives (describe in measurable terms the environmental issue to be addressed); Project Tasks (outline the steps you will take to meet the project goals); Schedule (when you expect to complete significant steps and milestones). Describe how the project will address: innovative approaches; one or more of the high priority areas of concern; state, local, and/or other stakeholder participation; and/or opportunities for leveraging other sources of funding. Project Results/Evaluation (describe how you will measure and evaluate the results of your project, (Follow outline in Section 16.)
- G Brief description of staffing and funding resources available to implement the proposed project including the number of workers and staff qualifications (no resumes are required).
- G Brief description of the applicant organization, experience related to the area of interest, and the organization's infrastructure as it relates to its ability to implement the proposed project
- G Support letters should specifically indicate how the supporting organization will assist the project. (Not counted in page limit).

*Standard Form 424 may be obtained from the following website:

www.epa.gov/Region07/economics/index.htm or by contacting the R7 Competition Advocate at the number/address in this announcement.

15. Preliminary Eligibility Screening Requirements

To be eligible for consideration, applicants **must meet** all of the following criteria. Failure to meet the following criteria will result in the automatic disqualification of the proposal for funding consideration:

1. Be an applicant who is eligible to receive funding under this announcement;
2. The proposal must address one or more of the areas of emphasis outlined in section 13.

3. The proposal must meet all format and content requirements contained in this notice; and
4. The proposal must comply with the directions for submittal contained in this notice.

16. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

All initial proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria and weights:

1. Proposal describes an identified water quality issue and the importance of that issue to meeting federal, state, tribal, local and community requirements, expectations, and needs. The proposal has clearly stated, measurable, goals and objectives. Proposal describes how meeting the goals and objectives will address the environmental issue(s) and what products, deliverables, environmental results, and measurable outcomes will be accomplished. A schedule or timeline is included. (30 pts);
2. Project demonstrates a watershed approach (such as watershed monitoring and/or assessment, development of a comprehensive watershed management plan, implementation of innovative measures contained within existing comprehensive watershed management plan); (15 pts);
3. Project addresses high priority area(s) for consideration described above. (15 pts);
4. Project presents innovative approaches or solutions. Proposal demonstrates potential for replicability or transferability to other communities, locations, sectors. (10 pts);
5. Partnerships in place to accomplish the project. Examples of commitment and experience of applicant and/or partnership that support the ability to conduct the proposed project. How the partnership functions and how it will carry out the work of the proposed project (15 pts);
6. Description of the financial needs of the proposed project, identify funds/resources that have been committed or will be committed, and describe how this grant will stimulate the availability of other funding sources (10 pts); and
7. Ability to manage this grant or describe the system in place to hire the requisite experience. (5 pts).

17. Evaluation Process

All proposals will be reviewed, evaluated and ranked by a selected panel of EPA reviewers based on the above evaluation criteria. Applicants will be screened to ensure that they meet all eligibility criteria and will be disqualified if they do not meet the criteria.

18. Selection Process

Final selection of initial proposals also may be influenced by other factors such as geographic distribution, project diversity, watershed size, cost, and applicant's grant/cooperative agreement performance record with previous EPA assistance awards.

19. Selection Official

Final selection of initial proposals will be made by the Region 7 Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division Director.

20. Notification

The Region 7 EPA office will mail acknowledgments to applicants upon receipt of the proposal. Once initial proposals have been reviewed, evaluated, and ranked, applicants will be notified regarding the outcome of the competition.

A listing of successful proposals will be posted on the Region 7 EPA website address www.epa.gov/region07/economics at the conclusion of the competition. This website may also contain information about this announcement including information concerning deadline extensions or other modifications.

21. Dispute Resolution Process

Procedures at 40 CFR 30.63 and 40 CFR 31.70 apply.

22. Confidential Business Information

Applicants should clearly mark information contained in their proposal which they consider confidential business information. EPA reserves the right to make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with Agency regulations at 40 CFR, Subpart B. If no such claim accompanies the proposal when it is received by the EPA, it may be made available to the public by EPA without further notice to the applicant.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

- Julie Elfving, at elfving.julie@epa.gov Telephone 913-551-7475; fax 913-551-8723, or
- Karen Sherrill, Region 7 Competition Advocate at sherrill.karen@epa.gov Telephone (913)551-7461; Fax (913)551-7467