

National Center for Innovation in Small Drinking Water Systems RFA

FAQs

How does this grant address early career Primary Investigators (PIs)?

This RFA provides no special consideration for early career PIs.

Is it allowable to pass through funds to consultants (or other for-profit organizations) with sub-awards?

Funding may be used to provide subgrants or subawards of financial assistance, which includes using subawards or subgrants to fund partnerships, provided the recipient complies with applicable requirements for subawards or subgrants. EPA OGD Solicitation Clause on Contracts and Subawards:

http://www.epa.gov/ogd/competition/solicitation_provisions.htm#Contracts_subawards

Successful applicants cannot use subgrants or 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.

Is it allowable to pass through greater than 40% of the budget and scope through sub-awards?

RFA Section IV.B.12.a

“Applicants may not use subagreements to transfer or delegate their responsibility for successful completion of their EPA assistance agreement. Therefore, EPA expects that subawards or subcontracts should not constitute more than 40% of the total direct cost of the total project budget. If a subaward/subcontract constitutes more than 40% of the total direct cost, additional justification may be required before award, discussing the need for the subaward/subcontract to accomplish the objectives of the research project. Please refer to [Contracts and Subawards](#) if your organization intends to identify specific contractors, including consultants, and subawardees in your proposal.”

How should the proposal show that it is not be merely a compilation of projects?

RFA Section V.A.2 (Peer Review Criteria for Overall Center)

1. Overall Center

Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which the overall Center addresses the following criteria (criteria 2.a-2.f are equal in importance).

- a. Interdisciplinary nature and relevance of the proposed activities, integration of the projects around an overarching theme, and development of research and demonstration which enables the application of sustainability principles and seeks sustainable solutions.
- b. The degree to which the research and demonstration is innovative.
- c. Capacity of the research projects collectively to result in a greater contribution to the overall goals of the Center than if each were pursued independently.
- d. Qualifications of the Principal Investigator(s) and other key personnel, including research training, demonstrated knowledge of pertinent literature, experience, publication records and experience. Complementary experience and capabilities should be clearly identified for each participant or cooperator. All key personnel must make a significant time commitment to the project.

- e. Demonstrated commitment to educating the next generation of scientists and engineers on the development and demonstration of: novel and sustainable drinking water treatment technologies that better enable small systems to control groups of contaminants to maintain compliance with applicable drinking water regulations; improved monitoring and sensing techniques; and modern information technology approaches.
- f. The number, capabilities, and relevance of partners and collaborating organizations.

Do all the PIs have to reside in the same location or from the same organization?

No. One of the peer review criteria listed in RFA Section IV.A.2.f is “The number, capabilities, and relevance of partners and collaborating organizations.”

Is it a requirement for a university to be a lead?

No. See RFA Section III.A. “Public nonprofit institutions/organizations (includes public institutions of higher education and hospitals) and private nonprofit institutions/organizations (includes private institutions of higher education and hospitals) located in the U.S., state and local governments, Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments, and U.S. territories or possessions are eligible to apply. Profit-making firms are not eligible to receive assistance agreements from the EPA under this program.”

Does EPA expect (or allow) centers to bring cost share or other supplemental funding from industry?

Cost share funding from industry is allowable but not required.

As stated in the RFA’s Summary of Program Requirements, Cost-sharing is not required. Section IV.B.12.a reiterates that “Please note that institutional cost-sharing is not required. However, if voluntary cost-sharing is proposed, a brief statement concerning cost-sharing should be added to the budget justification.”

Additionally, the RFA’s Summary of Program Requirements states, “Under this solicitation, the successful applicant will lead the Center. The successful applicant, with any of its subgrantees or partners, is strongly encouraged to work with small drinking water systems (end-users), state primacy agencies, other research institutions, and other stakeholders to facilitate the introduction of innovations to small systems nationwide. Although EPA cannot fund commercialization, applicants are strongly encouraged to leverage existing collaborative, regional (multi-state) water technology innovation and adoption efforts.”

Is there a limit for number of processes or projects to be discussed in the proposal ?

Stay within the scope of the RFA and please adhere to the strict section page limits listed in RFA Section IV.B.

How important are "broader impacts" to the EPA (as compared to NSF)?

EPA does not have a “broader impacts” section of the application. However, RFA Section I.D lists expected outputs and outcomes that should be considered while developing the proposal.

Are there expectations to team up with water utilities?

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Should we discuss any long-term visions for this Center’s continuance after EPA’s funding period?

Yes, as stated in the RFA: “Long-term plans for the continuance of the Center are encouraged. “