

UTILIZING WETLAND PROGRAM PLANS & WETLAND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT GRANTS AS CATALYSTS FOR WETLAND PROGRAM CAPACITY BUILDING

EPA Region 7, State/Tribal ESTP
Virtual Meeting,

November 4, 2021



EPA'S CORE ELEMENTS FRAMEWORK

At the state and tribal level, wetland programs are found in many different agencies pursuing a range of goals that differ according to their specific priorities and the wide range of wetland types and functions in their jurisdiction.

While each state and tribe has their own wetland goals, there is a common set of program objectives that EPA believes comprise a comprehensive wetland program.

In 2009 EPA summarized these common objectives in the Core Elements of Effective State and Tribal Wetlands Programs, also called the Core Elements Framework (CEF)

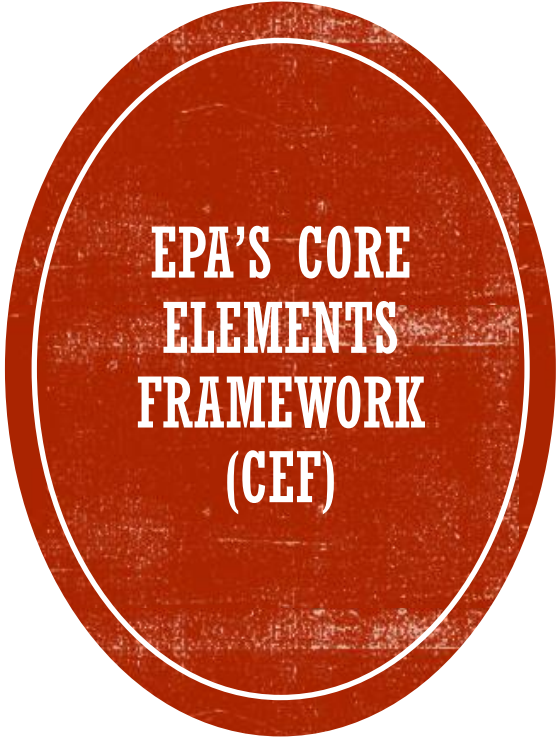
SPECIFICS OF WPDG: EPA'S CORE ELEMENTS FRAMEWORK

EPA's Core Elements Framework (CEF) is the foundation for WPDGs.

EPA has distilled a set of core elements, actions, and exemplified/suggested activities that comprise a comprehensive wetland program for States/Tribes or Local governments.

The CEF describes each of the 4 core elements that make up an effective state/tribal wetland program. These core elements are:

1. Monitoring and assessment.
2. Voluntary restoration and protection.
3. Regulatory approaches, including CWA 401 certification.
4. Wetland-specific water quality standards.



**EPA'S CORE
ELEMENTS
FRAMEWORK
(CEF)**

Outlines the core elements of a S/T wetland program, describes each Core Element, and provides a comprehensive menu of program-building activities for each Core Element.

Using the CEF, S/Ts can design their own roadmap (aka- WPP) towards development of a more comprehensive wetland program. States and tribes can implement the CEF depending on their individual program goals and available resources.

The CEF also encourages S/Ts to pursue a strategic approach to their wetland program development through development of Wetland Program Plans (WPPs)

WETLAND PROGRAM PLAN (WPP)- WHAT IS IT?

Narrative description of overall program goal(s) for time period of plan.

Actions/activities generally consistent with the Core Element Framework to be undertaken.

Implementation schedule for broader based actions and/or **more** specific activities (including overall timeline of 3-6 years).



BENEFITS OF HAVING A WPP

WPPs assist S/T program development by encouraging them to think strategically about what they are going to do over a period of several years to build their wetlands program.

WPPs facilitate discussion between EPA and S/T and help form a mutual understanding of the direction a S/T wetland program intends to take.

Can be a powerful communication tool for recruiting potential partners and funders.

WPPs allow EPA to be more effective in providing useful technical assistance.

Provides a living document for documenting Program progress, and description of future needs and endeavors for program leadership and new employees.

BASICS OF WETLAND PROGRAM PLANS (WPPS)

- WPPs are encouraged, not mandated by EPA.
- WPPs are reviewed, commented on, and approved by EPA Regions, but do not receive a “score.”
- WPPs should be generally consistent with EPA’s CEF, but don’t have to cover all 4 of the Core Elements.
- S/T encouraged to talk to their EPA Region early on about content and process for WPPs.



WPP'S- THE BASICS

WPPs are submitted to the EPA Regions independently of WPDG applications.

WPPs should include all significant activities the S/T program intends to carry out over the ensuing 3-6 years, not just activities it hopes to fund through WPDGs.

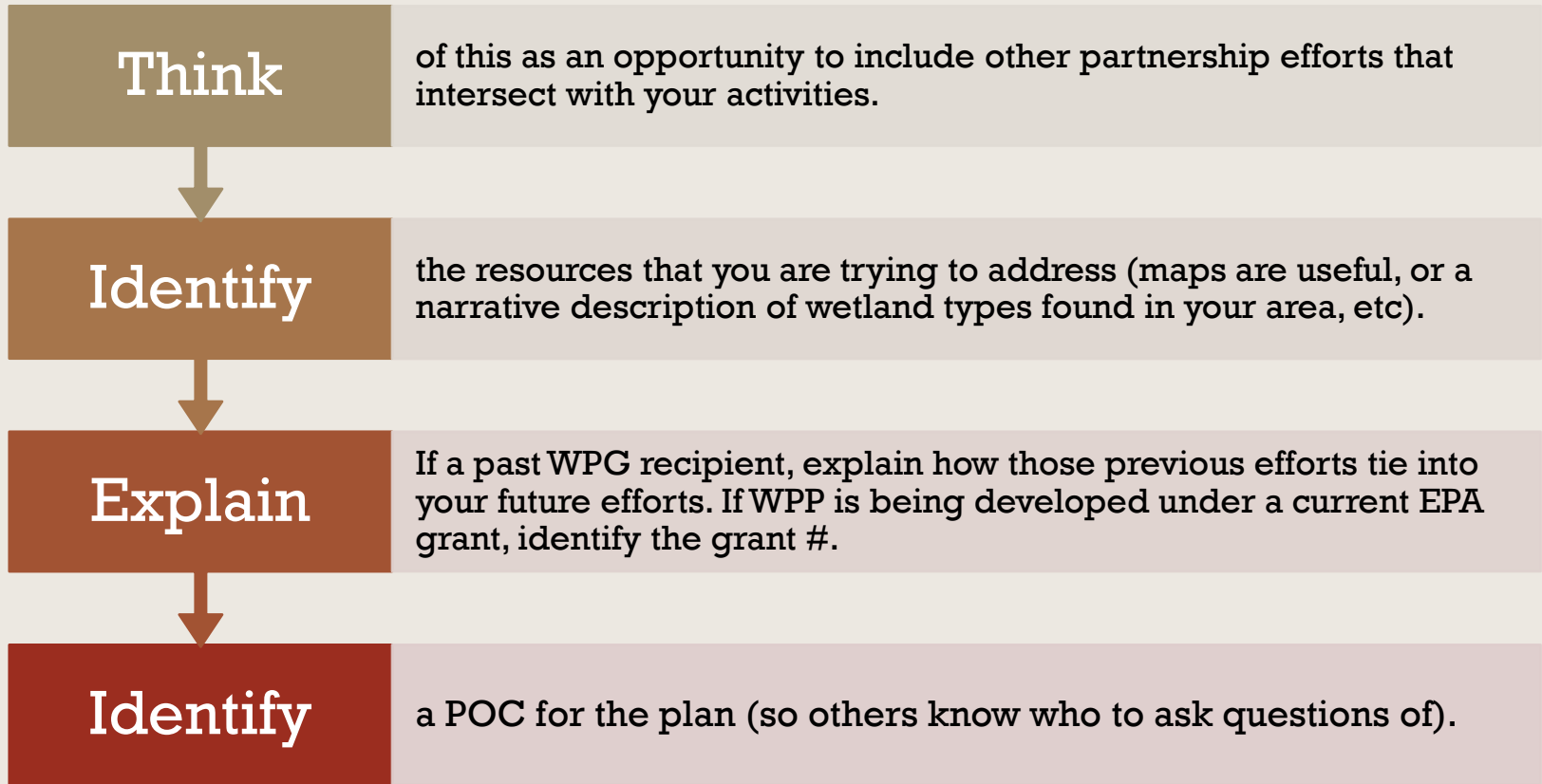
Any S/T with an approved WPP that is awarded a WPDG grant, should carry out activities articulated in their WPP.

RECOMMENDED TOPICS FOR A WPP

- Brief history of Tribe and existing leadership structure
- Map of Historic or current Areas of Interest
- Description of existing programs (including related program like WQ, habitat, restoration, etc), structure and activities
- Past Grant activities (if applicable)
- Basic description of aquatic resources on reservation or areas of interests
- Threats and impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources
- Importance of aquatic resources to Tribe (historic or present uses)
- Partners and partnerships (existing or desired)
- Status of current programs and efforts



WRITING A WPP





Writing A WPP

Describe	your actions as specifically (but as simply) as possible.
Provide	references to other documents that support an action (or a link in your WPP).
Identify	your partners (briefly describe who is doing what).
Consider	how some of your proposed actions can support or build upon one another. Ex. Monitoring & Assessment and Restoration.



PUTTING IT DOWN ON PAPER!

Articulate your goals and objectives for each Program Core Element.

Actions should reflect how you plan to achieve those goals and objectives.

If you can associate a “who” with a particular action, then do so.

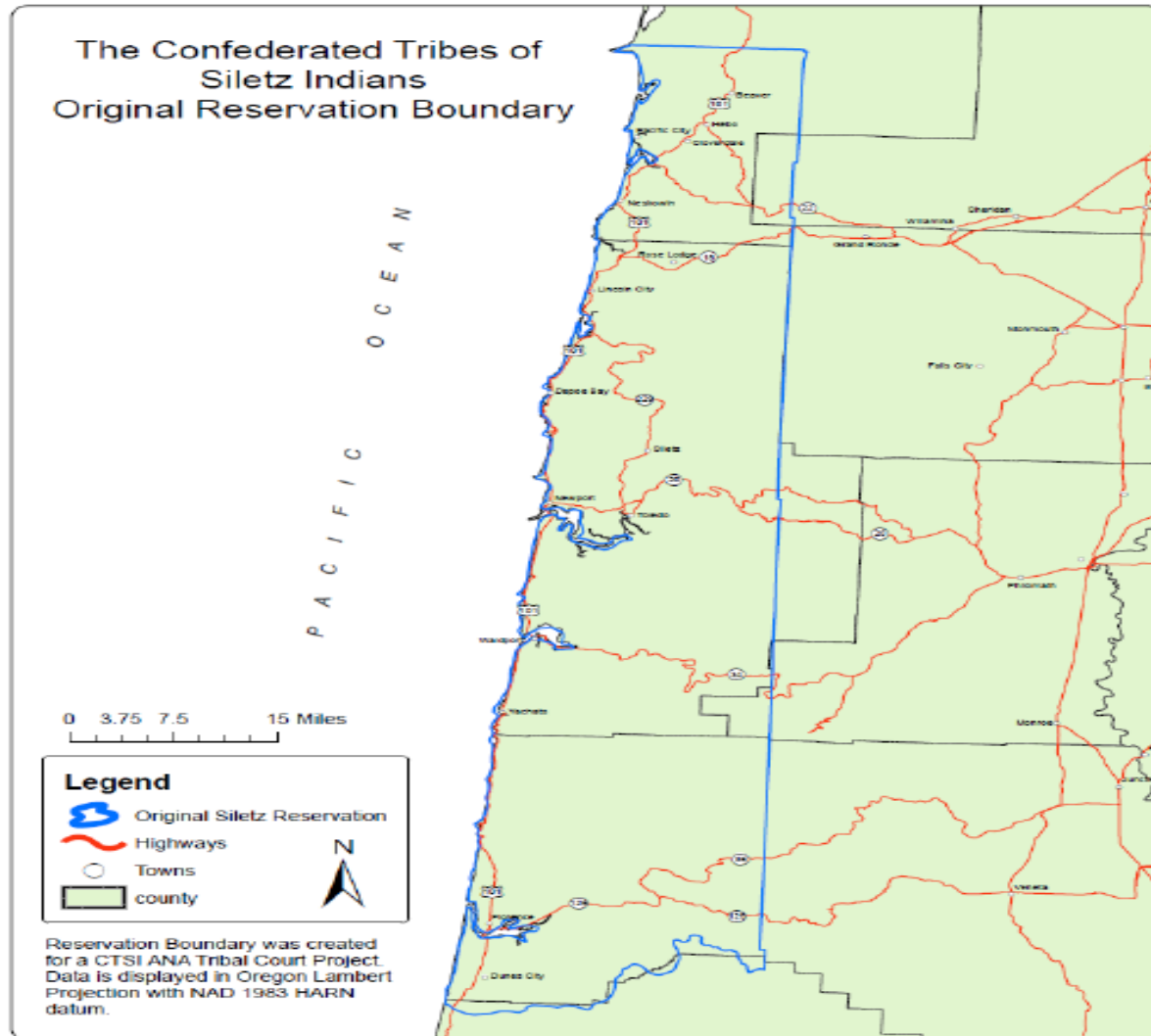
Consider engagement with other program partners/supporters in putting together a WPP, but not required.

Don't think of WPPs as something you are doing just for EPA \$\$, consider other potential funding sources that could fund these actions

IDENTIFY TRIBAL BOUNDARIES OR AREAS OF INTEREST



Map 1. Original Coast Reservation boundary.



EXAMPLE FORMATS



Action (a) Identify program decisions relying on monitoring data and desired long-term environmental outcomes						
Proposed Activities	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Identify all programs' data needs, applications, and ongoing monitoring work	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Document comprehensive long-term goals for wetlands and key associated species		X	X	X	X	X
3. Identify how wetlands data can be used in watershed planning				X	X	X
Action (b) Define wetlands monitoring objectives and strategies						
Proposed Activities	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Work across Tribal Programs to define monitoring objectives and integrate efforts	X					
2. Examine other sources within and outside tribe for monitoring information		X				
3. Document the wetlands and key species monitoring strategy			X			
4. Determine classification scheme in order to logically group wetlands			X	X		
5. Describe site selection process			X			
6. Revise indicators/methods as needed			X	X	X	X

CORE ELEMENTS AND OBJECTIVES (C) = continuing/ongoing activity (N) = new activity	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
VOLUNTARY RESTORATION AND PROTECTION							
Objective 1: Prioritize wetland restoration and protection areas and actions, both on and off-reservation (C)	X	X	X				
Objective 2: Insure that all of the Tribes' land acquisition efforts fully incorporate assessments of wetland resources and wetland restoration potential in the early stages of acquisition (C)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Objective 3: Continue initiative (2019) to build inter-program capacity and commitment to respond to the growing threat from invasive plant plants (C)	X	X	X	X			
Objective 4: Enhance native vegetation species diversity and structural complexity in Tulalip wetlands and riparian corridors with an emphasis on increasing culturally significant and wildlife food and habitat species (C)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR WETLANDS							
Objective 1: Continue refinement of draft water quality and monitoring standards identified in <i>Water Quality Standards for Surface Waters of the Tulalip Tribes</i> (Tulalip Tribes 2014a). (C)	X	X	X				
Objective 2: Incorporate data collected in the Monitoring and Assessment Strategy (EPA 3-level) into narrative water quality standards for wetlands.							
Objective 3: Expand the number of water quality sampling locations in wetlands (N)		X	X				
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH (Sample of activities that will span all four Core Elements above)							
• Widely distribute information sheets developed in 2019 that provide landowners (tribal and non-tribal) with basic information on restoration and enhancement of disturbed wetlands and riparian areas (N)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Expand wetland-related training for tribal staff within the Natural Resources Dept. and in other departments such as Forestry, Planning, Treaty Rights, etc. (N)		X	X	X	X	X	X
• At least semiannually, submit a write-up on a wetland related topic (e.g., functions of a well-known wetland on the reservation) to a Tulalip media outlet such as the Tulalip weekly newspaper (<i>syacab</i>) and monthly employee newsletter (<i>The Hub</i>) (N)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Continue participation in natural resource-related education & activity programs such as "scientist-in-the-schools," Earth Day, and Hilibulb Cultural Center & Natural History Preserve events (C)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Appendix A – Tulalip Wetland Program Plan 2020-2026



EVALUATING YOUR WPP

WPP should be evaluated at least every three years to ensure that the plan is achieving the actions and activities as outlined.

Program evaluation can include review and comment from other related programs and divisions within the Tribe or State. The evaluation process should include the following considerations:

- Has program funding been adequate to support the accomplishment of program goals and objectives?
 - What additional sources of funding should be pursued?
- Do the goals, objectives, milestones, or schedule need revision?
- What is the state of the State or Tribe's wetlands?
 - Are the conditions or quantity of wetlands changing?
- Are there activities on the landscape contributing to a decline in wetland condition?
- Has any specific wetland/aquatic restoration occurred? If so, what, where, and how much total acreage?
 - Was it effective?
- Are the current regulatory protections effective?

WPP'S & WPG'S – TYING THEM TOGETHER



Only program development activities articulated within a WPP can be funded through WPDGs (i.e., implementation activities cannot be funded).

WPDG proposals to develop WPPs or carry out the activities in an approved WPP are placed in a separate “track” in the WPDG RFA, and do not compete against non-WPP proposals.

However, more money relative to the number of proposals will be available in the WPP track (Track One) of the WPDG RFA.

WPDGS & WPPS

Most EPA Regions in their WPDG RFA's distinguish submission of applications for consideration in either a Track 1 and Track 2 category*

- Track 1 – Proposals that include development/refinement or include activities included in an EPA approved WPP.
 - Some EPA Region (including R10) set aside a greater portion (up to 60%) of their available WPDG funding to support projects in this category.
- Track 2 – Proposals not related to a WPP, but must address at least one Core Element
 - A smaller portion (40%) of WPDG funds is set aside for non-WPP related proposals.

* Applicants must select which Track they are submitting their application for consideration (either Track 1 or Track 2).

**EPA WETLAND
PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT
GRANTS
(WPDG)**

SPECIFICS OF WPDGS

WPDGs are 2 to 5-year grants awarded to States, Tribes and local governments. These grants provide states, tribes, local governments, interstate agencies, and intertribal consortia an opportunity to develop and refine their comprehensive wetland/aquatic resource programs. These programs are meant to:

- Develop the capacity of state/tribal/local governments to increase the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and restoring wetland acreage and improving wetland condition.
- Projects propose to address one or more of the four “Core Elements” identified by EPA to achieve this goal.

FIRST,
A BASIC
TRUTH!

- Understand that federal grant funding can be **very, very** competitive. The number of requests for funding is always much greater than the funds available. For most EPA Regions, the amount of funding requested each grant cycle is usually 2 to 3 Xs as much \$ as we have available to award.
- This can mean that sometimes even a strong application may not be approved for funding.
- But don't be discouraged. With a little good old-fashioned effort, planning and persistence, you should eventually be able to secure funding for your project!

COMPETITIVE GRANTS:

THE BASICS

- Most competitive grant opportunities are announced for at least 45 days.
- In the case of EPA's Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs), opportunities are available both at the National Level and at the Regional level through published Request for Applications (RFA).
- These RFAs are published in Grants.gov as a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA).
- EPA also sends out notification of funding opportunities through other means such as direct emails, newsletters, and EPA's National website, etc.
- WPDG competitive grants require submission of a complete Grant Application in order to apply.
- All applications to competitive grants are required to be submitted through Grants.gov

COMPETITIVE GRANTS:

THE BASICS

- Agencies develop criteria that are used to evaluate potential proposals for each competitive grant.
- These criteria, in addition to other administrative requirements spelled out in each RFA, are used to evaluate each proposal.
- A review panel is usually convened to review all proposal (or depending on the number of proposals submitted, a sub-set of proposals). There are no less than 3 reviewers assigned to each proposal.
- Reviewers score each proposal based on the criteria identified in the RFA that have a range of scores assigned to them.
- However, scores are not the only basis used for making funding decisions by agencies. Other factors like equity of funding, locality, etc. can come into play.

REVIEW THE RFA:

KEY THINGS TO NOTE

- Identify any deadlines for application submission and the process for application submissions.
- Note any page restrictions for applications.
- Identify allowable and non-allowable activities that can be covered by federal funds (e.g., WPDGs can fund planning activities, but not implementation of wetland programs).
- Look at the submission requirements (build in time for the submission, not just the application) of Grants.gov.
- Make sure that your designated person w/ a Grants.gov account will be available to submit the application on time.
- Look at the scoring criteria. Note the criteria that affect scoring the most, to help guide your proposal development.

DECIDING TO APPLY?

Writing a grant application is a formidable task that can take many hours. Before you begin, be sure you can answer “yes” to the following questions:

- Have I read the RFA completely and carefully? Do I understand it?
- Is my organization eligible to apply, based on the eligibility criteria described in the RFA?
- Does my organization have the technical expertise, personnel, and financial capacity to successfully implement the project goals and expectations? Does my organization’s mission align with the goals presented in the RFA?
- Do all stakeholders and leaders in my organization support applying for this grant?
- Is my organization prepared to do what it takes to successfully implement the project within the budget we propose? Consider the administrative requirements that come with federal funding, such as match requirements, required reporting, auditing and fiscal management responsibilities, providing outreach and tech transfer, etc.

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DEVELOPING AN APPLICATION



WRITING A STRONG PROPOSAL

Important to have specific project goals and objectives that are clearly defined:

include the need for the activity that the grant will support as well as your organization's track record in fulfilling such needs;

clearly showing how you plan to achieve the purpose of the grant program and, if possible, supporting info/data;

describe the knowledge, staffing, and fiscal capacity that your organization has in order to carry out the proposed project and meet the goals of the grant program; and

Include a budget using a realistic plan that aligns to the proposed goals and objectives. Include a narrative that justifies the costs.

Be concise and precise in describing your proposed grant activities. Remember, applications must adhere to the page limits stated in the RFA.



WRITING A STRONG PROPOSAL

The project narrative is one of the most important parts of your grant application. It's your opportunity to tell the grantor and reviewers your story. Use your data and words to paint a picture of how your program and your community could benefit from the outcomes of this project. How would this project help to build up your program to improve or protect aquatic resources on your landscape?

You will need to support the narrative with specific information about your proposed approach and methods to achieve your project outcomes; include a project timeline shown in a milestone schedule with specific tasks and sub-tasks; and provide a detailed budget that explains all project costs,

Before you turn in your application, consider having few other people review it. It is surprising how easily we can skip over the simplest grammar and spelling mistakes.



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SUBMITTING TO GRANTS.GOV

- You must have a registered account to use Grants.gov!!
- Complete your application, including all required forms, assurances, and certifications. When complete, save the application to your computer.
- Be sure to click the **Check for Errors** button, which will validate your application and activate the **Save and Submit** button.
- Save and Submit only after you have double-checked your application for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with the page limit. After you click **Save and Submit**, you will enter your Grants.gov username and password. Assuming you are registered with Grants.gov, you can click the **Sign and Submit** button to authenticate and submit your application.
- Watch your E-mail. You will receive a series of e-mails from Grants.gov that will help you track your application. You can get the same information by logging into your account at Grants.gov.

THINK BEFORE YOU SEND:

- Your submission is final once you hit send in Grant.gov. You can't make edits or append any documents after submission. But you can resubmit your application if needed to correct omissions or mistakes.
- Make every effort to submit your application at least 48–72 hours before the application deadline.
- Check your proposal for spelling, correct calculations, adherence to page limitations and font and file-type requirements.
- Use the checklist provided in the RFA or create your own, but make sure that all required documents are included in the application package. Be sure that application elements are in the order specified in the RFA.
- Review the content and be sure you have addressed all the criteria that will be used to score your application.

UNDERSTANDING THE REVIEW PROCESS

- Every eligible grant application receives a comprehensive review, conducted by a panel of independent subject matter experts.
- Each application is reviewed by at least 3 reviewers, who separately score the application according to review criteria spelled out in the RFA. A panel chairperson, or moderator, oversees each review panel and process.
- After all applications are reviewed, reviewers meet to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each application and arrive at a consensus score.
- For each application, the panel develops a summary report that describes the application's strengths and weaknesses which is presented to the Grant Official for grant decision-making.

**EPA WETLAND
PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT
GRANTS
(WPDG)**

REVIEW CRITERIA: WPDG SPECIFIC

EPA's RFA for WPDGs includes these criteria that will be used to evaluate and score applications. Applications are scored by assigning a maximum of 100 points across the following criteria categories specific to WPDGs:

- Project Need (15 Points)
- Regional Priority (there may or may not be a Regional Priority identified in a Regional RFA) (5 Points)
- Project Tasks (15 Points)
- Milestones (10 Points)
- Budget (5 Points)
- Transfer of Results (10 Points)
- Environmental Results (15 Points) (outputs/outcomes/tracking)
- Programmatic Capability/Technical Experience/Qualifications (7 Points)
- Partnerships (10 Points)
- Past Performance (8 Points)

1. Project Title: Wetland and Water Resources Planning Tools for Local Resource Managers

2. Track: Two

3. Core Elements: 1) Monitoring & Assessment; 3) Regulatory Approaches; and 4) Wetland-specific Water Quality Standards.

4. Actions: 1) *Analyze monitoring data to evaluate wetland extent and condition/function or to inform decision making (M&A); 3) Perform public education and outreach about wetland protection, regulated waters and activities and authorization process (Regulatory); 4) Incorporate water quality standards into monitoring and assessment program (WWQS).*

EX: ADDRESSING THE CORE ELEMENTS

Project Objective	Task Number	Tasks by Objective	Task Outputs/Milestones	Schedule	Project Leader Hc	IDFG Admin Super Match Hours	IDFG Staff Match F	IDFG Paid Staff Hc	ITD Staff Match H	ITD Paid Staff Hc	Total Hours by Task Objective	Work Years FT
Foundational and Administrative Tasks including Hire Project	1	Agencies evaluation of infrastructure, data interoperability; explore possibility of contract with Infrastructure and process evaluation		11/1/30 - 12/30/19	0	10	5	0	10	0	25	
	2	Develop agreement on governance of information between IDFG and ITD	Agreement in place	11/30/19 - 2/28/20	40	40	10	0	30	0	120	
	3	IDFG/ITD Joint Meetings and coordination per Agreement	interagency meetings quarterly	ongoing	40	20	20	0	20	0	100	
	4	ITD and IDFG write position description	position description	10/1/19 - 10/15/19	0	10	0	0	0	0	10	
			Agreement establishing position, payment grade,	10/15/19 - 11/30/19	0	10	0	0	0	0	10	
		write agreement with project contractor	invoicing	11/30/19 - 12/30/19	0	10	0	0	0	0	10	
	6	Advertise position	List of interested candidates	1/1/20 - 1/15/20	0	20	10	0	0	0	30	
	7	Interview and Hire Project Leader/Coordinator	Project Leader/Coordinator	1/15/20 - 1/30/20	34	20	0	0	0	0	54	
	8	Orientation	Roles and Responsibilities	7/1/21 - 9/30/21	100	5	5	0	10	0	120	
	9	Incorporate goals, actions, and activities into final updated WPP and submit final report to EPA.	Final 2021 WPP update and strategy for building, adopting, and using wetland/stream predictive impact tool			214	145	50	0	70	0	479
Evaluate 2015 WPP progress	1	identify measures of 2015 plan	list of measures	2/1/20 - 2/14/20	20	5	0	0	0	0	25	
	2	for IDFG managed lands, identify contacts for surveying relevant IDFG staff	list of IDFG contacts to be involved	2/1/20 - 2/14/20	40	5	0	0	0	0	45	
	3	Compose survey/questions to fulfill plan measures	list of questions for survey/poll	2/14/20 - 3/1/20	60	10	0	0	0	0	70	
		update and summary reports		3/1/20 - 3/30/20	70	10	20	0	0	0	100	
				2/14/20 - 3/1/20	80	10	0	0	0	0	90	

PROJECT MILESTONE EXAMPLE

Table 1 Proposed Project Budget with State Match and Total Federal Funds

Task	Description	Product/Objective	Start	End	Federal Funds	State Match
A-1	Revisit SPGP BA scope and formatting	Outreach strategy and schedule	4/20	6/20	\$33,333	\$20,000
A-2	Revise Sections 1-5 of the SPGP BA	Revised text and supported information to revise Tables and Figures	5/20	8/20	\$33,333	\$20,000
A-3	Meetings with state and federal partners, as needed	Process, schedule, meetings, materials	5/20	11/20	\$33,333	\$20,000
Phase I—Estimated Subtotal Federal Funds					\$100,000	
						\$60,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST					\$160,000	

LINKAGE TO EPA'S STRATEGIC PLAN



- *Link to EPA Strategic Plan: Goal 1 Core Mission: Deliver real results to provide Americans with clean air, land, and water, and ensure chemical safety. Objective 1.2 Provide for Clean and Safe Water - Ensure waters are clean through improved water infrastructure and, in partnership with states and tribes, sustainably manage programs to support drinking water, aquatic ecosystems, and recreational, economic, and subsistence activities*
- Through this project, the applicant will provide real results to provide Americans with clean water. The proposed outreach opportunities and classwork will help ensure that contractors and applicants are educated on why clean water is important, how their work may affect others, and how they can play a part in supporting drinking water, aquatic ecosystems, and recreational, economic, and subsistence activities. The more educated the general public is, the better we can all take care of our waterbodies and find a balance between in-water work and development and the environment.



EXAMPLE OUTPUT/OUTCOMES

For outputs, the 401 WQC program will continue to develop the certification program to include compliance and enforcement, but the program realizes that one of the keys is education and outreach. One of the outputs is continued program development. Another output will be the final report which will discuss the effectiveness of the training/courses by tracking who has taken the training and if those contractors/applicants are more likely to be following all conditions of the 401 WQC.

The primary outcome of this proposal will be the behavioral changes the program expects to see following the state-wide trainings and classwork. The applicant expects to see a significant increase in understanding why rules and regulations are in place, why wetlands are important for water quality, and expects to see the awareness of 401 WQC conditions increase. This behavioral change will in turn lead to environmental changes, which will likely lead to more wetland protections during and after construction of projects



PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP GRANTS: PPGS

- WPDGs can be added to existing (or new) PPGs.
- Indicate whether funds will be added to a PPG (cost share/match has now been reduced to 0% in which a tribe or intertribal consortia receives a PPG).
- Tribes must indicate in their application submission if they anticipate including this project, if selected for funding, into an already existing PPG or if they intend to create a new PPG that would include this wetland project.



FUNDING DECISIONS: CONSIDERATIONS

Final funding decisions are made by the EPA Regional Selection Official (usually an Office Director) based on the evaluations conducted by the review panel and may also consider the following factors:

- 1 . Geographic distribution of funds,
2. Diversity of projects,
3. Availability of funds,
4. The distribution of awards between Track 1 Track 2,
5. The similarity of a project to other projects already being funded by EPA.

GRANT DECISIONS: PROCESS



- Grant decisions are usually made within 3 to 6 months of submission of the RFA.
- If you get notice of funding, there may be additional requests from EPA for modifications of a submitted application including the budget and the project workplan. You may also be offered less funding than originally requested.
- If you have been turned down for funding, request feedback – ask for guidance on why your application was turned down & what you can do to strengthen your future submissions.
- Other times, you may be requested to apply again for the next grant cycle with the additional information EPA has suggested.
- Regardless of what is said, it is always a good idea to open-up the lines of communication with any possible funder.

THE TRIPS: COMMON MISTAKES MADE

- Recycling an older grant proposal w/o bothering to update it.
- Forgetting to address the required 25% match (either in the budget or the narrative).
- Including ineligible costs (paying for construction, purchase of vehicles, etc).
- Exceeding the page limit (yes, that requirement is real)!
- Not providing clear information on budget expenses.
- Not getting prior approval from Tribal Council prior to submitting application (as receiving an award may require commitment of fiscal resources- aka. match, additional employees, etc).
- Missing the submission due date to submit application.
- Incomplete grant application (missing forms, etc).



QUESTIONS?