



# Wetland Program Development Grants

OVERVIEW AND TRICKS AND TIPS

# Competitive Grants:

- ▶ 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.

# WPDG – Requests for Applications

- ▶ Regional and Tribal RFAs have two tracks
  - ▶ Track 1 or WPP Track – States, Tribes, and Territories with an approved Wetland Program Plan (WPP) and are carrying out projects described in the WPP or are developing/refining a WPP.
  - ▶ Track 2 or Non-WPP Track – States, Tribes, and Territories without a WPP or all other applicants.
- ▶ Each application can only be submitted under one of the two tracks but not both.
- ▶ An eligible applicant can submit one or more applications.
- ▶ The length of the grant and the amount is determined by the applicant but can not be longer than 4 years or larger than the ceiling listed in the RFA.

# Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs)

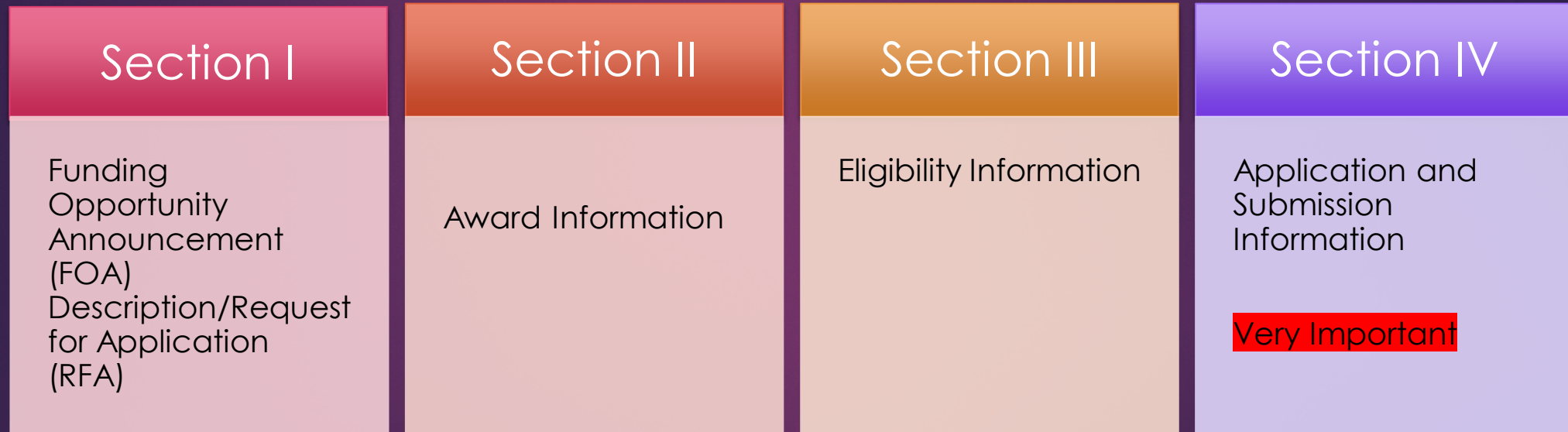
- ▶ To be eligible under this grant program all proposals must support the development or refinement of state/tribal/territory/local government wetland programs. (Tribal RFA to support tribal government wetland program development or refinement.)
- ▶ RFA priorities are program building activities from Core Elements of a Wetlands Program:
  - Regulation.
  - Monitoring.
  - Restoration and Protection.
  - Water Quality Standards for Wetlands.
- ▶ Each of these four core elements is comprised of several broad “actions” that if collectively carried out would complete that core element.
- ▶ In addition, each action is made up of several more specific “activities,” which are the actual steps a state/tribal/territory/local government could carry out to achieve each action.
- ▶ The four core elements, the set of development or refinement activities and the specific actions under the four core elements that are eligible under each RFA are listed at <https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities>.

## 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!



## Wetland Program Development Grant Request for Application



# The RFA: continued

## Section V

- Application Review Information
- Lists criteria that reviewers will use to evaluate and score applications, information on the review and award selection process, and anticipated announcement and award dates.

## Section VI

- Award Administration Information
- Provides information on award notices, administrative and national policy requirements, and post-award reporting requirements.

## Section VII

- Agency Contacts
- Provides a program office contact and a grants management contact.

## Section VIII

- Other Information
- Includes additional information such as helpful websites and an application checklist.

## Attachments

- Look at what is allowed and what isn't as an attachment to an application.

# 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.



# Project Narrative

- ▶ The Project Narrative should include a Cover Page (included in the page limit) which includes the following information:
  1. Project Title (the project title should reflect the main project outcome/objective and should be 15 words or less).
  2. Indicate whether the applicant is in Track One: WPP or Track Two: Non-WPP.
  3. Track One: WPP Applicants: indicate if they will develop a Wetland Program Plan (optional: also list actions described in the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities-0>) or identify one or more grant-eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved Wetland Program Plan. Track Two: Non-WPP Applicants: list core element(s), and one or more action(s) under a core element(s) described in the CEF at <http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-program-development-grants-eligible-activities-0> they plan to complete. A tribal college and university or intertribal consortium applicant can reference one or more grant eligible action(s) from an EPA-approved Tribal Wetland Program.
  4. Name of applicant.
  5. Key personnel and contact information (i.e., email address and phone number).
  6. Geographic Location - tribe (with the name of the state that the tribe is located in) and, if applicable, the 8- or 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code(s) with watershed name(s) if the project is not tribal nationwide. If the project is local in scale, provide the name of the city or county, state, and zip code.
  7. Total project cost, federal dollars requested and non-federal cost share/match (if the application will be placed in a Performance Partnership Grant (PPG) please indicate that as well).
  8. Abstract/project summary. The abstract should begin with one or two sentences describing the main objective of the application. It should also include a listing of the main tasks to be accomplished, and a description of the final product(s). The entire abstract should be 250 words or less.
  
- ▶ Should include sections for the Review Criteria described in the following slides.

## Criteria: Project Need (15 pts)

- ▶ Describe the need for the project as it pertains to developing or refining a state/tribal/local government wetland program(s). The description should include:
  - ▶ The threats affecting your wetlands/streams/aquatic resources.
  - ▶ The need for the actions that are proposed.
  - ▶ How the deliverables developed under the grant will lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands.
  - ▶ Describe specific aspects of your geographic area and specific adverse issues your wetlands face and how this issue will be addressed by the development of a WPP or through the core element(s)/action(s) you have described in the application.

## Criteria: Project Tasks (20 Pts)

- ▶ Describe the steps you will take to meet your project product/output(s) and objective(s).
- ▶ Describe the projects tasks or components and the anticipated products/outputs associated with each task.
- ▶ Include a description of the roles and responsibilities of your organization and other potential partners.
- ▶ If development of a methodology is part of the proposed project, then describe the planned development steps need to develop and use the method.

## Criteria: Milestones (10 PTs)

- ▶ Provide a milestone schedule that covers each year of the entire project/budget period.
- ▶ Include a breakout of the project tasks into phases with associated tasks and products/outputs.
- ▶ Include the anticipated dates for the start and completion of each task.
- ▶ Try to provide interim milestone dates for achieving each workplan component.
- ▶ Also consider an approach to ensure that your awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.



## Criteria: Budget (5 pts)

- ▶ A detailed budget that includes the estimated funding amounts for each project task is needed. EPA provides an example detailed budget in the RFA.  
<https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02>
- ▶ Provide a description of proposed cost for each of the budget categories found in Form SF 424A (i.e., personnel, travel, contractual, other). Identify funding by budget category for each year of funding request.
- ▶ Explain if and how non-federal partners will contribute to the required cost share/match.
- ▶ This is an opportunity to provide a narrative description of the budget, including other costs and contracts.
- ▶ Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for the EPA to determine whether the costs for each component/task are reasonable and allowable, including the use of the cost share/match funds.

## Criteria: Transfer of Results (10 Pts)

- ▶ Describe your plans for how to **actively transfer** your project results (outputs/outcomes), lessons learned, and/or methods used to other tribes, or states and local governments so that the others can better develop their wetland programs.
- ▶ Transfer of results can be within a state/tribe/territory and can include other agencies, states, tribes, and territories or the public.
- ▶ Examples of ways to share the results of your project may include:
  - ▶ Presentations of results at forums typically attended by representatives from state/tribes/local government wetland programs.
  - ▶ Submitting map data to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for incorporation within the publicly available Wetlands Mapper;  
<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.html>.
  - ▶ Presenting at a webinar or providing other outreach to state/tribes/local governments at relevant conferences.
  - ▶ Share results on a website and sharing that website address with other relevant organizations.

## Criteria: Environmental Results (15 pts)

- ▶ These should be linked to EPA's Strategic Plan - Describe how the objective of the project (outcomes) and products (outputs) contribute to meet the EPA's most current Strategic Plan. Description should include how the project will be a step towards the goal of restoring and protecting wetland resources.
- ▶ Outputs (products/deliverables)- List and describe the outputs expected to be achieved through the completion of the proposed project.
- ▶ Outcomes (objectives/environmental improvements) – List and describe the short and long-term outcomes (aka: environmental improvements) expected to be achieved as a result of the project outputs.

## Criteria: Programmatic Capability/ Technical Qualifications (7 pts)

- ▶ **Organizational Experience:** Provide a brief description of your organizational experience related to the proposed project, and your infrastructure and readiness and ability to implement the proposed project in a successful and timely manner.
- ▶ **Staff experience/qualifications:** Provide a list of key staff, briefly describing their expertise/qualifications and knowledge relevant to the proposed project. Describe your organization's resources, or the ability to obtain them (through hiring, contracting, and/or other) to successfully achieve the goals of the project.



## Criteria: Partnerships (10 pts)

- ▶ List proposed partner entities, and describe their roles, and if they will participate as subgrantees.
- ▶ Describe the agencies/organizations who will partner with you as appropriate and necessary to successfully conduct the project, to help accomplish outputs/products and to achieve the objectives/outcomes for improving state/tribal/local wetland protection programs.
- ▶ Provide a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of specific partners in the project's components/tasks, and how these partnerships will contribute to developing a state/tribal/local government's wetland program.
- ▶ If you are in the process of engaging a partner, you should describe how your plans to engage that partner and establish a working relationship to successfully complete the project.

## Criteria: Past Performance (8 Pts)

- ▶ Submit a list of federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements that you have managed within the last three years\*\* (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably EPA agreements) and:
- ▶ Describe whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements.
- ▶ Describe your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements, including whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements.
- ▶ Describe the extent and quality to which you adequately and timely reported on progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether you adequately reported why not.
- ▶ \*\* If you do not have any past grants or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (4 pts).

# Common Mistakes

- ▶ 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) or indicating that the project will be added to a PPG.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Missing the submission due date to submit application.
- ▶ Incomplete grant application (missing forms, etc).

# Helpful Hints

- ▶ The number one reason why grant applications are denied is: **failure to follow directions.**
- ▶ Read the current RFA very carefully.
- ▶ There are deadlines for submitting questions that are identified in the RFA; read the grant application guidelines to make sure you can still make the call or e-mail the contact within that deadline.
- ▶ Call the funding source for assistance if you have questions about any portion of the application. Asking a funder for help won't hurt your chances of getting a grant. In fact, doing so may even help because you're filling out forms in the best possible way.
- ▶ If the window has passed, look at the agency's website for a link to frequently asked questions (FAQs). Others have probably asked the same questions you have, and the agency may have posted the answer for the general public



# 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 HIT 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, font and file-type requirements, and included all sections.
- ▶ 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.