



<b>Summary of Project Costs:</b>		
DNR Underserved Farmer and Farm Communities subaward request: (min: \$75,000 - max: \$250,000)	\$	
<b><u>Local Funding (not required)*:</u></b>		
Cash Match:	(not required)	\$
In-Kind Match:	(not required)	\$
<b>Total Project Cost:</b>		\$
*Local funding is <i>NOT REQUIRED</i> by grant rules, however, leveraged contributions will be a component of application selection.		

<b>5. GRANT SOLICITATION TIMELINE</b>	
<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Subaward Solicitation announced for eligible Applicants	March 1, 2023
Subaward Pre-application due date	April 28, 2023
Pre-application evaluation by review team and selection of Full Applicants	May 1, 2023 - May 19, 2023
Notification of Successful Applicant and all Applicants of intent to award	No later than May 26, 2023
Full application / project proposal collaborative development	June 1, 2023 - May 30, 2023
Drafting of Contract, Environmental Protection Commission review, and execution of Contract (start of Contract)	No later than August 1, 2023
Term of Contract with the Successful Applicant (end of Contract)	End no later than June 30, 2027

## **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

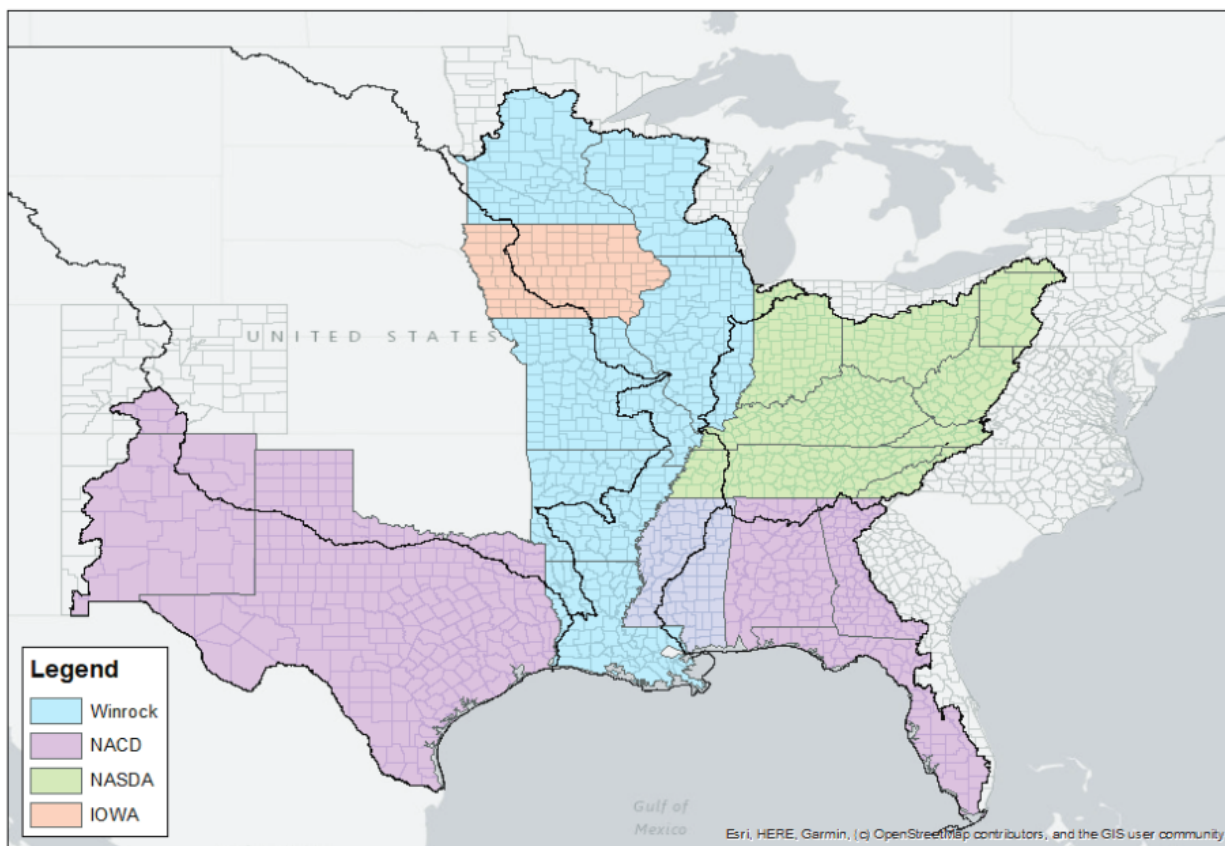
Within the Gulf of Mexico, excess nutrients entering via the Mississippi River watershed have resulted in a large hypoxic zone, commonly known as a “dead zone” and defined as an area of water with low dissolved oxygen. In addition to the problems associated with low dissolved oxygen, excess nutrients can cause harmful algal blooms (HAB) that can result in a decrease in aquatic life, disruptions to wildlife, and produce toxins that can harm humans and animals. The state of Iowa has an acknowledged role in contributing nutrient pollution to the Gulf, and has been working within the [Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy](#) framework since 2013, among other initiatives, to reduce nutrient runoff and nonpoint source pollution. Farmers and producers are often the first line of action in reducing nonpoint source pollution of nutrients across the agricultural landscape. They have developed innovative practices, leadership models, and share their knowledge with others to aid collaboration with government entities and begin to tackle this problem.

The U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Gulf of Mexico Division is [partnering with four organizations](#) to launch competitive subaward programs in four different regions to work with organizations to aid historically underserved farmers and farm communities towards common goals of water quality, habitat resilience, and information exchange.

Each program is launching a request for applications with more details about program requirements. More details and a link to each are below:

- **Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR) will serve the state of Iowa. (THIS APPLICATION)**
- [National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation \(NASDA\)](#) will serve the Ohio-Tennessee Region (Gulf drainage portions of Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee).
- [National Association of Conservation Districts \(NACD\)](#) will serve conservation districts in the non-Mississippi River Gulf Drainage Region (Gulf drainage portions of New Mexico, Colorado, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi (shared with Wallace Center), and Texas)
- [Wallace Center at Winrock International](#) will serve the Upper and Lower Mississippi River Region (Gulf drainage portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi (shared with NACD), Louisiana)

Eligibility map:



The goals of this program are to:

- Work directly with [historically underserved farmers](#) on novel or innovative techniques, methods, or approaches that reduce non-point source pollution and increase the sustainability and resiliency of their operations;
- Leverage partnerships to increase knowledge sharing and collaboration within and among historically underserved communities;
- Collect and analyze data to demonstrate the results of funded projects;
- Disseminate results to communities to inform future conservation or management practices and expand adoption of the most cost-effective and sustainable approaches

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## ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

Applications will be accepted from governmental entities, including state agencies, interstate agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, institutions of higher learning (i.e., colleges and universities), and non-profit organizations (as defined at [2 CFR 200](#)) are eligible to apply for funding under this RFA.

Nonprofit organizations that are not exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code must submit other forms of documentation of nonprofit status; such as certificates of incorporation as nonprofit under state or tribal law. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that lobby are **not** eligible for EPA funding as provided in the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 2 U.S.C. 1611.

In addition to the eligible entities above, the Iowa DNR is emphasizing potential collaborations with the following types of entities:

- Other state agencies
- Local governmental entities
- Tribal governments
- Intergovernmental entities ([Code of Iowa Chapter 28E](#) entities including Watershed Management Authorities)
- Nonprofit agricultural or rural community focused organizations
- Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) organizations
- Beginning farmer or US Military Veteran farmer groups
- Universities and colleges

To best meet the needs of Iowa's underserved farmers and farm communities, the DNR is emphasizing the importance of partnerships between eligible applicants and relevant local groups. Developing partnerships and strengthening collaborations are also EPA priorities for this program. DNR strongly encourages local partnerships with producer groups, minority serving institutions (e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, and Predominantly Black Institutions) and other institutions of higher learning, and non-profits (e.g., 501(c)(3)).

## ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Aligned with the goals of the EPA grant program, Iowa's program is seeking partners with interests in three key areas of water management: **nonpoint source water pollution reduction, flood reduction and resiliency building, and source water protection (drinking water protection)**. Additional emphasis on the co-benefits of conservation practice implementation are also encouraged, including increased wildlife habitat and quality of life for Iowans, particularly those in underserved and rural communities. Education, outreach, and social assessment work is also an allowable area of focus as long as the intent is to inform or otherwise engage target populations, including underserved farmers and members of underserved communities.

With the Iowa DNR's guidance and technical assistance, subawardees will be tasked with load reduction and runoff reduction reporting if applicable. Goals for any project should align with the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, Iowa Nonpoint Source Management Plan, and Iowa Stormwater Management Manual goals: 41 percent reduction in nitrate loads, 29 percent reduction in phosphorus loads, and a watershed runoff coefficient of 50 percent or less for large (6 inch over 24 hour) storms.

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For direct implementation of best management practices (BMP), design standards common to watershed and stormwater management projects in the state are expected to be followed and more information and technical guidance will be provided in the project phase when relevant.

## **INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

The following are **ineligible** activities:

- Projects that do not comply with Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3), which authorizes the award of assistance agreements to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of pollution.
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order; or specified as a required mitigation measure under a state, local, or federal permit for a specific project; however, grant funding may be used to enhance or expand such projects beyond minimum requirements for compliance.
- Work involving only routine maintenance of storm water infrastructure and other facilities
- Projects which fall under the existing planning responsibilities of an individual state or local government (e.g., development of TMDLs or MS4 permits)
- Solely “gray infrastructure” projects (e.g., installation of sewer lines)
- Construction activities that are not a part of a demonstration project. This includes, but is not limited to, preliminary planning to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of a facility; engineering, architectural, legal, fiscal, and economic investigations and studies; surveys, designs, plans, working drawings, specifications, procedures, and other actions necessary to the construction of a facility; the erection, acquisition, alteration, remodeling, improvement, or extension of a facility; and the inspection and supervision of the construction of a facility.

Additionally, the following items cannot be purchased under the potential resultant grants:

- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by DNR or EPA, including any grantee expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed activities
- Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations or related expenses
- Previous obligations and/or bad debts
- Expenses related to overtly religious purposes
- Expenses intended to influence the outcome of elections or other political processes
- Fines and/or penalties
- Creation of endowments
- Alcoholic beverages
- Real property (land or structures)
- Leases
- Accountable personal property, including capitalized and sensitive personal property

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## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The DNR is seeking to engage in a collaborative phase of final project development with each of the selected partners. To that end, a narrative “pre-application” will be collected and reviewed by an interagency panel for completeness, applicability, and suitability to the goals of the EPA grant to Iowa and the goals of the State of Iowa relevant to application’s content.

Applicants will develop narrative pre-applications that contain but are not limited to:

- Form responses to pages 1 and 2 of this solicitation (not included in page count limit)
- An expansion of the project summary completed for page 1 of the solicitation to further explain the following:
  - Issue or challenge the proposed project will address
  - Overall project goals and objectives and how they fit with the goals of this subaward
  - Potential impact of the proposed project
  - Definition of the targeted population(s) including any methods or determinations that will be used to define eligibility of individual end beneficiaries of the project
- Outline of prior institutional experience, collaborative history, or other description of the applicants capacity or proposed methods to build capacity to work with underserved farmers or farm communities
- Outline of prior institutional experience performing any of the proposed strategies of the project
- Trackable metrics that could be used to evaluate progress and successes of the proposed project
- Any additional partners engaged by the proposed project to assist with any of the above or other portions of the proposed project
- Outline of experience working with the state or other granting entity on a subaward basis, including links or references to completed projects, reports, or assessments

In all cases, applicants shall clearly explain the rationale for the proposed approaches chosen. Pre-applications should not exceed 5 pages of 11 point standard font, and any supplemental materials, maps, tables or figures in addition to the core application should be linked or attached as separate files and referenced within the proposal, but are not to be used in lieu of responses to the proposal requirements detailed above.

Additionally, each application should be accompanied by a simple budget with the following categories:

- Personnel and fringe benefits
- Travel and training
- Education and outreach or media costs (“I&E”) (if separate from/supplemental to the core goals of the proposal)
- Supplies and equipment\*
- Contractual (e.g. consultants or other service providers)
- Other (this includes direct financial assistance to farmers in the form of cost share)
- Overhead/indirects\*\*

Include a separate line total of all requested budget items as well as a separate summary of any local funds or in-kind proposed for the project. Match in the form of cash or in-kind is *not required* for this application, however, utilization of match may effectively indicate stronger partnerships and may be factored into the selection of awardees.

\*Equipment and supplies purchases are classified specifically under EPA rules related to “Uniform Grant Guidance” (UGG) and the passthrough agency (Iowa DNR) will provide assistance to ensure compliance with these rules.

\*\*If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, please use that rate. Otherwise, subawards are capped at a 10% de minimis rate.

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## PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW

The DNR will work with partners from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Iowa Economic Development Authority to score and rank the pre-applications for potential awards. An additional non-scoring consultation from DNR-selected lead agencies will be sought to bolster review if technical aspects merit their inclusion,. Those partners may include the Iowa Flood Center, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, or other, similar experts. These consultations will be included at the review panel’s sole discretion, but transparency will be provided to the potential applicant in the event of the inclusion of further consultation.

The review committee will work within the following rubric to score applications and to best determine the ability of the potential subawardee to meet full grant requirements via the collaborative final project development process:

Proposal Review Criteria	Points
<b>Technical Approach</b> Clarity, feasibility (including cost feasibility), appropriateness, and impact of proposed technical approach for addressing the primary goals of the subaward program, including links to nutrient reduction, flood resilience, or source water protection outcomes that match one or multiple State of Iowa initiatives.	40
<b>Past Performance</b> Level of previous collaboration with or programmatic focus on historically underserved farmers and farm communities, ability to demonstrate previous conservation success in the grant focus areas, and any demonstrations of broader partnership capacity with other, relevant entities.	30
<b>Communications Strategy</b> Proposed approach to document, communicate, and disseminate project outcomes to partners and focus area residents (general public), including the underserved, to best demonstrate the innovative and novel practices used to achieve project objectives.	20
<b>Organizational Capacity</b> Extent of applicant’s capacity to address compliance with DNR or EPA policies and federal subaward practices, e.g. reporting and metric tracking.	10
<b>Overall Rating (out of 100 points)</b>	100

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## NOTICES

**Disqualification** - The Iowa DNR may reject outright and not evaluate an Application for reasons including without limitation:

- The Applicant fails to deliver the Application by the due date and time.
- The Applicant fails to deliver a budget proposal.
- The Application is not compliant with the requirements of the Solicitation.
- The Application limits the rights of the Iowa DNR.
- The Applicant fails to timely respond to the Iowa DNR's request for information, documents, or references.
- The Applicant fails to include any signature, certification, authorization, stipulation, disclosure, or guarantee requested in the full application phase of this Solicitation.
- The Applicant presents the information requested by this Solicitation in a format inconsistent with the instructions of the Solicitation or otherwise fails to comply with the requirements of this Solicitation.
- The Applicant provides misleading, inaccurate, or unbalanced responses.
- The Iowa DNR determines that the content is in any way misleading or inaccurate through a verification process.
- There is insufficient evidence (including evidence submitted by the Applicant and evidence obtained by the Evaluation Committee from other sources) to satisfy the Iowa DNR or any member of the Evaluation Committee that the Applicant is properly qualified to satisfy the requirements of the Solicitation.

**Nonmaterial Variances** - The Iowa DNR reserves the right to waive or permit cure of nonmaterial variances in the Application if they judge it to be in its best interest to do so. Nonmaterial variances include minor informalities that do not affect responsiveness, that are merely a matter of form or format, that do not change the relative standing or otherwise prejudice other Applicants, that do not change the meaning or scope of the Solicitation, or that do not reflect a material change in the requirements of the Solicitation. In the event the Iowa DNR waives or permits cure of nonmaterial variances, such waiver or cure will not modify the Solicitation requirements or excuse the Applicant from full compliance with Solicitation specifications or other contract requirements if the Applicant is ultimately selected. The determination of materiality is in the sole discretion of the Iowa DNR.

**Application Clarification Process** - The Iowa DNR reserves the right to contact an Applicant at any time after the submission of Applications for the purpose of clarifying an Application or to ensure mutual understanding. This contact may include written questions, interviews, site visits, a review of past performance if the Applicant has provided goods and/or services to the State or any other political subdivision wherever located, or requests for corrective pages in the Application. An individual authorized to legally bind the Applicant shall sign responses to any request for clarification. Responses shall be submitted to the Issuing Officer within the time specified in Iowa DNR's request. Failure to comply with requests for additional information may result in rejection of the Application as non-compliant.

**Reference Checks** - The Iowa DNR reserves the right to contact any reference to assist in the evaluation of the Application, to verify the information contained in the Application and to discuss the Applicant's qualifications and the qualifications of any subcontractor identified in the Application.

**Information from Other Sources** - The Iowa DNR reserves the right to obtain and consider information from other sources concerning an Applicant, such as the Applicant's capability and performance under other contracts, the qualifications of any subcontractor identified in the Application, the Applicant's financial stability, past or pending litigation, and other publicly available information.

**Release of Claims** - By submitting an Application, the Applicant agrees that it will not bring any claim or cause of action against the Iowa DNR or the State based on any misunderstanding concerning the information provided herein or concerning the Iowa DNR's failure, negligent or otherwise, to provide the Applicant with pertinent information as intended by this Solicitation.

**Evaluation of Applications Submitted** - Applications that are timely submitted and are not subject to disqualification will be reviewed in accordance with the review portion of the Solicitation. The Iowa DNR and Evaluation Committee will not



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necessarily select the Applicant(s) offering the lowest cost Application. Instead, the Iowa DNR intends to select the Applicant(s) the Evaluation Committee believes will demonstrate best suitability to the grant objectives and best supply value to the Iowa DNR.

**Notice of Selection and Acceptance Period** - The Iowa DNR will send a notice of intent to negotiate subaward contracts to all Applicants submitting a timely Application. It is the intent of Iowa DNR that negotiation and execution of the contract(s) shall be completed as described on Page 2 of this Solicitation. If the apparent successful Applicant(s) fails to negotiate and deliver an executed contract by that date, then Iowa DNR may extend the negotiation period, or cancel the selection and negotiate a contract(s) with any remaining Applicant(s) that the Iowa DNR believes will provide the best value to the Iowa DNR.

**Definition of Contract** - The full execution of a written contract shall constitute the making of a contract for the subaward goods and services requested by the Solicitation, and no Applicant shall acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to any contract for goods and/or services until a separate written contract, with terms and conditions acceptable to the Iowa DNR, has been fully executed by the successful Applicant(s) and Iowa DNR. By submitting an Application, each Applicant acknowledges that selection of an Applicant shall not create any contract or other obligation until a separate written contract has been executed as described above.

**No Minimum Guaranteed** - No guarantee is made that an Applicant(s) will be selected or any contract(s) will be executed as a result of this Solicitation. Iowa DNR will exercise its right to determine and accept all portions of any apparent successful Application, or Iowa DNR may choose to reject all Applications.