

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

Quenching Thirst: Water Equity in Coastal Colonias EPA Subaward Program

This project addresses water equity issues in coastal colonias through sustainable water management strategies, improving water quality, increasing access to safe and affordable drinking water, and promoting resilience in underserved communities.

Last Updated September 30th, 2024

Maximum Award Value	\$212,500
Online Meetings	October 10th, 2024, 7 pm October 25th, 2024, 7 pm November 1st, 2024, 7 pm
In-Person Meetings	Banquete Old JH Cafeteria: Oct 11 th 5 PM Petronila Elementary: Oct 18 th 6:30 PM
Pre-Proposal Due	November 18 th , 2024
Determinations on Pre-Proposals	December 9 th , 2024
Final Proposal Due	February 1 st , 2025
Contact	jessica.palitz@tamucc.edu

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1 - Program Description

1.1 Purpose and Background

The colonias communities of South Texas have long been an underserved population. Low-income households in Nueces County sit at a low point on the land and often face flooding that causes countless health and environmental concerns. Additionally, water usage inside homes is inequitable with either low quality water available at the tap or families facing unreliable access to city or well water.

TAMU-CC's Center for Water Supply Studies (CWSS) Quenching Thirst Subaward Program is a competitive subaward program for organizations to help colonias residents implement long-term sustainable water solutions that directly benefit their household and community. Support is available for the application process and a Selection Panel will determine a minimum of 8 projects to implement a self-sustained green solution that protects and restores the Gulf of Mexico watershed by reducing nutrient and other pollutant loads.

The goals of this program are to:

- Empower community-led initiatives to tackle water equity challenges in coastal colonias.
- Enhance water quality, ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water, and promote resilience in underserved communities.
- Utilize a Technical Assistance Program to support robust environmental justice practices, sustainable ecosystem, and community development.

1.2 Expected Activities

The selection process will prioritize projects that address, but are not limited to, the following areas:

1. Multi-Use Conservation/Restoration, Flood Mitigation, and Pollutant Reduction through integrated water harvesting and reuse methods: Proposals that outline methods to harvest and reuse rainwater, stormwater, greywater, and condensate to limit potential flooding, reduce pollutant loadings such as nutrient reduction and bacteria, arsenic, and other emerging contaminants to improve water quality, and promote sustainable water use.

2. Multi-Use Conservation/Restoration and Water Quality Improvements through community-led programs to reduce waste and improve soil health. Proposals that focus on methods for purifying groundwater, on-site wastewater, and bathing water using green energy solutions such as solar evaporation using greenhouses and composting, riparian buffer zones.

3. Education: The cause and effect of Multi-Use Conservation/Restoration, Flood Mitigation, Pollutant Reduction, and Water Purification can create a positive cycle of benefits that leads to more resilient communities. Projects may use education to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of environmental measures, help build community support for the proposed projects and increase their effectiveness and sustainability. Education cannot be the sole activity of the project.

1.3 Environmental Monitoring and Modeling

Subawardee groups will be required to provide water samples to analyze numerous chemical elements and compounds using approved standard procedures to ensure water quality meets the drinking standards or those for the different intended uses of recycled or reclaimed water. Samples will be analyzed by CWSS staff after quality assurance approval by EPA. The results will be provided to subawardees for deliberation of the success of the project. Further scientific investigations are not required by applicants. Yet, additional environmental monitoring should be considered as it may be beneficial to gather data on benefits of the proposal's environmental outcomes.

1.4 Overall Process and Timeline

Pre-proposal. Prior to pre-proposal submissions - defined as a brief paper written prior to a full proposal, all applicants will participate in the Technical Assistance Program. This includes lessons on timeline planning, proper reporting, budget controls, and communication and outreach. Individuals applying for subawardee funding will submit their brief pre-proposal notes, as detailed in Section 4, by **November 18th, 2024**. The final submission will be competitively reviewed by the Selection Panel and determinations on projects will be announced on **December 9th, 2024**. If you do not submit a pre-proposal, you cannot submit a full/proposal application.

Final Application Phase. Applicants selected to move forward will receive email notification that they are encouraged to continue the full application due by **Feb 1st, 2024**. Further feedback and guidance on proposals may be provided as needed. The selected idea in the pre-proposal must be the same as in the final proposal and from the same organization(s). This period is still a competitive process, and final proposals will undergo further review by the Selection Panel. Submitting a final proposal application does not guarantee funding.

Final Evaluations. Please allow for up to three weeks after final proposal submissions, **Feb 21st, 2025**, for final evaluations and feedback. The projects will begin after subaward agreements are signed.

Implementation of Project. February 2025 - December 2028 is dedicated to bringing life to the approved projects. Subawardees will implement each stage and facet of their plan, alongside the assistance of the CWSS. Project and financial reports are required quarterly according to the templates provided by the Project Coordinator. Costs incurred will be reimbursed quarterly after each report unless approved for advance funding.

Close. Beginning in January 2029 through March 2029, subawardees will finalize closing financial and project reports. Additionally, a conference will be held to celebrate the results and share findings.

1.5 Selection Panel

Panelists are to be announced. If you are interested in being on the selection panel, please contact Jessica.palitz@tamucc.edu

2 - Award Information

2.1 Anticipated Number of Awards to be Issued

The Quenching Thirst grant subaward program can issue a minimum of 8 sub-grants through this Request for Applications.

2.2 Estimated Amount of Awards

The maximum award amount for each project is \$212,500. \$1,700,000 will be awarded in total. Currently there is no minimum award amount.

2.3 Anticipated Start Date and Duration of Awards

Pre-proposals encouraged to submit full proposals by the Selection Panel will be notified of the determination on **December 9th 2024**. Subawardees will then begin completing a final proposal application due on **February 1st, 2025**. Awards will be given in the following weeks for projects to begin shortly thereafter. The award amount should cover the entirety of the proposal as outlined in the submitted plans to be completed no later than March 2029.

2.4 Type of Awards to be Issued

The Center for Water Supply studies will assess the financial capacity level of each applicant to determine subaward mechanisms in consultation with the applicant during the negotiation process, based on nature of the award activity, and estimated total cost of the award. Some awards may be reimbursement based, with reimbursements remitted to subrecipients within 30 days after submitted invoices. Subrecipients will be able to request advances as needed.

3 - Eligibility Information

3.1 Eligible Applicants

Eligible entities	Not eligible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agencies • Interstate agencies • Indian tribes and tribal organizations • Local governments • Public Schools • 501 (c)(3) Non-profit organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign organizations and governments • Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying • “For-profit” organizations

To be minimally eligible for funding, applicants must comply with the following conditions:

- Participate in the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) to increase tools and knowledge necessary for success.
- Be legally registered or otherwise authorized to conduct business in the United States.
- Agree to be subject to a pre-award assessment to examine that the applicant has sound management in the form of financial, administrative, and technical policies and procedures.
- Provide a Unique Entity ID (UEI) at the time of award (Feb 1st). If the applicant already has a UEI number, it should be included in their application. Otherwise, applicants will be expected to get a UEI number before an award is issued. UEI numbers can be obtained online at <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>. If you do not already have a UEI, please

begin this process by the time you submit your pre-proposal as it can sometimes take weeks to secure a UEI.

3.2 Eligible Geographies

Applications within Nueces, Jim Wells, or San Patricio County and within 60 miles of the Gulf of Mexico coastline will be considered. Projects should focus on aiding colonia communities, defined as a type of unincorporated, low-income area consisting of peri-urban subdivisions of substandard housing, often lacking in basic services such as potable water, electricity, paved roads, proper drainage, and waste management.

4 - Instruction to Applications and Submission Information

4.1 Meetings with Technical Assistance Programming

Meetings will be held and recorded on the dates below. All applicants are required to attend at least one meeting as per TAP requirements. Recordings will be made available on the CWSS website along with a Frequently Asked Q&A page.

<p>Details:</p> <p>All potential applicants are required to attend at least one pre-application meeting to learn more about this RFA, how to apply, and to better understand the collective impact approach of the program. Meetings will also include Technical Assistance Programming. There are three pre-application webinars planned (all will be recorded) and two in-person meetings.</p>	<p><u>Online - October 10th, 2024, 7 pm</u> (Overview, Q&A, TAP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to the program - Metrics and environmental impact goals - Subawardee support and expectations overview - Guidance on how to apply for this RFA - Questions and answers related to this RFA - Technical Assistance Programming
	<p>In-person at Banquete Old JH Cafeteria 4334 Fourth St., Banquete, TX 78339 October 11th, 2024, 5 pm (Overview, Q&A, TAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to the program - Metrics and environmental impact goals

<p>All times are CST.</p> <p>Meetings will be held in English and can be translated by request.</p> <p>Contact jessica.palitza@tamucc.edu for more info.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subawardee support and expectations overview - Guidance on how to apply for this RFA - Questions and answers related to this RFA - Technical Assistance Programming
	<p>In-person at Petronila Elementary 2391 County Road 67, Robstown, TX 78380 October 18th, 2024, 6:30 pm (Overview, Q&A, TAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to the program - Metrics and environmental impact goals - Subawardee support and expectations overview - Guidance on how to apply for this RFA - Questions and answers related to this RFA - Technical Assistance Programming
	<p>Online - October 25th, 2024, 7 pm (Overview, Q&A, TAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to the program - Metrics and environmental impact goals - Subawardee support and expectations overview - Guidance on how to apply for this RFA - Questions and answers related to this RFA - Technical Assistance Programming
	<p>Online - November 1st, 2024, 7 pm (Q&A)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questions and answers related to this RFA

4.2 Pre-proposal & Budget

Applicants will develop their applications based on their understanding of the program’s needs, their prior experience and their determination of the approaches that would be feasible and successful. In all cases, applicants shall clearly explain the rationale for the proposed approaches chosen.

A Pre-proposal Template is provided as Appendix A. You may use your own format if the same information is shown, and it meets submission guidelines in Section 4.4. The following information is required in all proposals:

- Project title, organization name, UEI if registered, entity type, and any proposed partners
- The water challenge and proposed solution in your community, including the specific practices you plan to implement (see Section 1.2)
- A description of the geography and community you will serve, including estimate of number of low-income families served
- A summary of your personal or organization’s history of and approach to working with underserved communities, including organizational leadership and community involvement.
- A summary of your personal or organization’s capacity to meet expectations with EPA policies and federal subaward practices (see Appendix C). Please note that organizations will not be assessed on having compliant policies and practices currently, but rather on capacity to develop or maintain those policies and practices, e.g., sufficient staffing
- A **detailed** budget with the categories (optional template provided as Appendix B):
 - Personnel
 - Fringe
 - Travel
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Consultants/Contractors
 - Incentives/participant support costs
 - Other
 - Overhead/indirect. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, please use that rate. Otherwise, subawards are capped at a 10% de minimis rate

- Total requested budget

When designing your budget, consider:

- On-going monitoring and reporting of the funded activities will be the applicant's responsibility. Subawardees will need to plan for quarterly programmatic and financial reporting, monthly invoicing, and twice-yearly meetings with other subawardees and the CWSS.
- Travel to a one-day end-of-project event should be included, in addition to any other trip (mileage, etc.) needed for proposed work.
- Budget for outreach and communications activities is encouraged.
- Examples of other eligible expenses:
 - Staff or consultant time
 - Field days or events
 - Supplies or equipment that are reasonable and necessary to your approach, like water quality monitoring equipment

4.3 No Cost Matching

Matching any cost of the proposed project is not required and will not benefit your application.

4.4 Submission Guidelines

All inquiries, submissions, and correspondence related to this RFA should be sent via email to jessica.palitz@tamucc.edu. All relevant Frequently Asked Questions will be shared on the CWSS website.

Pre-proposals must be in English, limited to 4 pages in Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri, size 12 font, single-spaced. All submissions must be received by the specified date and time listed on the cover page.

Incomplete or late submissions may be labeled as such and could be disqualified from review or consideration for funding. However, CWSS reserves the right to evaluate

incomplete or late submissions if deemed beneficial. Late or incomplete applications risk exclusion from the review process.

If your pre-proposal advances to the final application phase, additional documentation will be required or developed. This could include an implementation plan, an evaluation plan, an organizational capacity matrix, audit reports or financial statements, and a communications strategy.

Electronic submissions are considered received upon server receipt. Please refrain from sending files in ZIP format. CWSS will acknowledge receipt of submissions within 3 business days.

5 - Application Evaluation and Review Process

5.1 Merit Review

The criteria outlined below have been customized to align with the requirements of this RFA. 100 points are allocated across all aspects of the pre-proposal. The relative importance of each criterion is indicated by its approximate point weight.

During the evaluation process, the CWSS and Selection Panel will assess the overall quality and feasibility of the pre-proposal, in addition to specific criteria pertinent to each component detailed below. Applicants should be aware that these criteria: (1) establish the benchmark for evaluating all applications, and (2) highlight key areas that applicants should address in their submissions. When making final funding decisions, CWSS may also consider programmatic priorities, funding availability, and geographical diversity of funds.

Pre-proposal Review Criteria	Points
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<p>Human health and environmental impact</p> <p>Prioritize proposals with a small or no carbon footprint while maximizing environmental benefits by primarily creating and cleaning water resources, in addition to potential auxiliary benefits.</p>	20
<p>Target communities</p> <p>The selected projects will be within EJ communities with characteristics of rural poverty like a colonia, defined as a type of unincorporated, low-income area consisting of peri-urban subdivisions of substandard housing, often lacking in basic services.</p>	20
<p>Government regulations and water quality</p> <p>Consider government regulations that may prevent the construction of the preferred “water solution” or slow down the process, as well as the quality of water and intended use.</p>	15
<p>Cost-effectiveness and self-sustainability</p> <p>The panel will evaluate proposals based on how cost-effective and self-sustaining the various clean water solutions are. The projects selected must be affordable for the communities, and they must be able to maintain clean water solutions.</p>	15
<p>Reassessing systems and maintenance plans</p> <p>The proposals must have a plan for reassessing the systems for maximum benefits and maintenance plans to ensure the long-term sustainability of the projects.</p>	15
<p>Educational component</p> <p>Proposals should include an educational component involving schools and/or the community to ensure successful project implementation and long-term sustainability and consider certifications.</p>	15

Overall Rating (out of 100 points)	100
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5.2 Review Process

Pre-proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the Selection Panel using the criteria above. The panel will be made up of project advisors representing the project communities and/or specializing in related fields. Panelists will be subject to a conflict-of-interest policy and recusal process for applicants they have a relationship with.

Budgets will not be scored separately but will be reviewed and evaluated for reasonableness and effectiveness based on the scope of activities being proposed.

Applicants will be given their pre-proposal score with feedback by December 9th, 2024. If selected to continue the application process, the submitted full proposal will be reevaluated and given an updated determination by February 21st, 2025.

6 - Other Terms and Conditions

6.1 Disclaimers

The issuance of this solicitation does not commit CWSS to make an award to any prospective subawardee responding to this solicitation. Prospective subawardees will not be reimbursed for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal. CWSS reserves the right to reject all applications or make an award without further discussion or negotiation.

All awards will be negotiated, denominated, and funded in US dollars. All costs funded under the award must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable.

6.2 Conflict of Interest

Applicants must provide disclosure of any past, present or future relationships with any parties associated with the issuance, review, or management of this RFA and anticipated subaward. Failure to provide full and open disclosure may result in CWSS having to re-evaluate the selection of a potential applicant. See Appendix D for the Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form.

6.3 Other Conditions

- Issuance of award agreements will be subject to applicable approval by EPA, as needed.
- Applicants may submit more than one application per organization under this RFA.

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 CWSS or EPA, including any grantee headquarters expenses that are not linked to the implementation of the proposed activities
- Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or "representation" 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, including land improvements, and structures thereto)

The following activities are also **ineligible** under this grant per EPA terms and conditions of the award to CWSS:

- 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 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 its construction.

7 – Appendices

Download the following Appendices on the [CWSS Website](#)

Appendix A – Pre-Application Template

Appendix B – Budget Template

Appendix C – Subaward Expectations Summary

Appendix D – Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form