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Dated: December 2, 2003.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-7596-3]

### Subject to Availability of Funding Solicitation Notice; Environmental Information Exchange Network Grant Program; Fiscal Year 2004

**SUMMARY:** The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announces that the Environmental Information Exchange Network Grant Program is now soliciting pre-proposals for the Program. The Exchange Network is an Internet and standards-based information systems network among EPA and its partners in States, Tribes, and Territories. It is designed to help integrate information, provide secure real-time access to environmental information, and support the electronic storage and collection of high-quality data and information. The Exchange Network provides a more efficient way of exchanging environmental information at all levels of government and with the public; it revolutionizes the way in which information is sent to and received by EPA and its State, Tribal, and Territorial partners. For examples of projects that EPA has funded in the past, please see the State and Tribal summaries of proposals that are available on the Exchange Network Grant Program Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/Networkg>.

**DATES:** Pre-proposals must be received electronically at [neengprg@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:neengprg@epamail.epa.gov) no later than February 3, 2004.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** Contact Rebecca Moser, Office of Information Collection, Office of Environmental Information, U.S. EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Mail Code 2823-T, Washington, DC 20460; phone, (202) 566-1679; email, [neengprg@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:neengprg@epamail.epa.gov). For additional information about the Exchange Network Grant Program, please visit the Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/Networkg>. An Information Session for potential applicants has

been scheduled for Monday, December 15, 2003, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. If you are interested in participating in this teleconference, please contact Rebecca Moser at the number listed above.

Dated: December 2, 2003.

**Mark A. Luttner,**

*Director, Office of Information Collection, Office of Environmental Information, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*

### FY 2004 Environmental Information Exchange Network Grant Program

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#### Section I. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands (subsequently referred to collectively as States) and Federally Recognized Indian Tribes (subsequently referred to as Tribes) and agencies or departments within the States or Tribes.

Applicants must indicate an intent and commitment to participate in the Exchange Network. Exchange Network participation involves the use of Web services to move data and information, the use of eXtensible Markup Language (XML) schema to format data, and the use of data standards within these schema to improve data clarity. Applicants should use data standards that have been approved by the Environmental Data Standards Council (EDSC) and XML schema that have been approved by the Technical Resource Group (TRG, a workgroup established by the Network Steering Board (NSB)), where such standards or schema are available. If the appropriate data standards or XML schema are not available, applicants should indicate how they will use existing guidelines to establish common terms, definitions, and XML schema for exchanging their data.

For a list of EDSC-approved data standards, please refer to the EDSC Web site, <http://www.epa.gov/edsc>.

Information on EPA's implementation of EDSC-approved data standards is available on the Environmental Data Registry Web site, <http://www.epa.gov/edr>. For guidance on the development of XML schema and the TRG approval process, please refer to the Network Steering Board's (NSB's) Exchange Network Web site <http://www.ExchangeNetwork.net>.

Agencies or departments within a State or Tribe should coordinate submissions of pre-proposals through the appropriate State or Tribal environmental agency and indicate that this coordination has taken place in the pre-proposal submitted to EPA. No cost-sharing or matching of funds is required on the part of the applicants.

#### Section II. Funding Opportunity Description

Congressional action on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2004 budget includes \$20 million to support the Exchange Network. Subject to the availability of appropriations for this purpose, EPA is soliciting pre-proposals that will support and accelerate the development of the Exchange Network. Ten percent of the appropriated funds will be set aside for Tribal assistance agreements. The total number and amount of the assistance agreements awarded will depend on the amount of funding for the Exchange Network in the FY 2004 EPA appropriations. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number is 66.608. Funding beyond FY 2004 will depend on continued appropriations.

Assistance agreements are used by EPA to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to a recipient to accomplish a public purpose; they may be in the form of a grant or a cooperative agreement. These assistance agreements will be funded in three separate categories: Readiness, Implementation, and Challenge. The funding ranges for these categories will be as follows:

(1) Readiness Category—States up to \$150,000 and Tribes up to \$75,000;

(2) Implementation Category—States up to \$300,000 and Tribes up to \$150,000; and

(3) Challenge Category—States up to \$750,000 and Tribes up to \$300,000.

#### Section III. Award Information

Subsequent to EPA's receiving FY 2004 appropriations for the Exchange Network, the EPA Administrator may delegate authority to approve pre-proposals for funding to the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Environmental Information (OEI) and delegate authority to award the