

substance and quality of each pre-proposal and the overall mix of projects. The panel may also consider other factors on a case-by-case basis when deciding whether to recommend funding for a specific proposal. The panel will review each pre-proposal and provide its funding recommendations to the OEI Assistant Administrator for a final decision.

Any mandatory requirements set forth in this document may be waived at the discretion of the OEI Assistant Administrator.

Section VI. Assistance Agreement Categories and Evaluation Criteria

OEI will consider funding pre-proposals for the three categories of assistance agreements described below: Readiness, Implementation, and Challenge. The categories have different, but complementary, objectives and evaluation criteria. One cross-cutting criterion for all categories is the description of benefits and advantages of using the Exchange Network to improve existing data exchange practices. This section should not exceed one-half page of the pre-proposal. Each pre-proposal must clearly indicate that the project can be completed in two years or less. The following points are provided to assist, but not limit, applicants in describing the expected benefits of their proposed projects:

- more frequent and/or efficient exchanges;
- better data quality through the use of data standards and validation and error-detection mechanisms;
- greater ability to share and integrate data through the use of data standards, XML schema, and Exchange Network Web services;
- the ability to exchange a variety of data with a number of partners;
- the ability to provide access to new kinds of data using the Exchange Network; and/or
- the ability to use common Exchange Network infrastructure capabilities (e.g., XML schema, common security controls, etc.).

Section VI(A). Evaluation Criteria for Tribes

Readiness Category for Tribes

Amount: up to \$75,000.

Eligibility: Applicants who have received no more than one Readiness Grant. This category is intended to assist Tribes in building upon their priority information technology investments while constructing initial links to the Exchange Network.

Criteria:

(1) Maximum of 90 points for one or more of the following activities:

(a) Develop the technical infrastructure needed to participate in the Exchange Network (e.g., servers, processors, storage devices/media, telecommunications products/services, computer peripherals). Tribes may wish to use the node client tool that is being made available on the Network Web site.

(b) Develop Web-based services, security enhancements, data quality improvements, locational data improvements [e.g., through global positioning system (GPS) units], or other capabilities that will enhance the Tribe's participation in the Exchange Network.

Make a commitment to share this information with other partners via the Exchange Network Web site at <http://www.exchangenetwork.net>. If a recipient of a previous Exchange Network assistance agreement, outline activities that build on and do not duplicate previously funded activities.

(2) 10 points.

Identify the benefits of the project (see Section VI introduction).

Implementation Category for Tribes

Amount: up to \$150,000.

Eligibility: This category is designed to assist Tribes in sharing data and building on their information technology investments, while constructing links to the Exchange Network.

Criteria:

(1) Maximum of 90 points for one or more of the following activities.

All activities listed in the Readiness Category may be considered for funding under this category with the addition of at least one of the following activities:

(a) Share environmental data with other Tribes, States, and/or EPA.

(b) Work with EPA, other Tribes, or States to use Web services they have or plan to provide. Tribes can satisfy the Exchange Network data exchange objectives by using Web service applications, such as those found on the Exchange Network Web site, <http://www.exchangenetwork.net>, under "Tool Box."

(c) Implement a project to link and exchange tribal data assets using standards. Projects could include things such as implementing the EDSC-approved Facility Identification data standard (refer to <http://www.epa.gov/edsc>), referencing water monitoring stations to the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) (e.g., using the Geospatial One-Stop hydrography data standard, which is currently under review), or

other data exchange activities involving the use of data standards.

(d) Enhance public access to data about pollution sources, the environmental performance of regulated facilities, or environmental status and trends.

In addition to pursuing one or more of the activities listed above, applicants must make a commitment to share information about their projects with other partners via the Exchange Network Web site at <http://www.exchangenetwork.net>. If an applicant has received funding through a previous Exchange Network assistance agreement, the applicant must identify activities that build on, but do not duplicate, previously funded activities.

(2) 10 points.

Identify the benefits of the project (see Section VI introduction).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Projects funded under the Implementation Category may be collaborative efforts among multiple parties (intertribal, intratribal), but collaboration is not required. If a collaborative project is proposed, the pre-proposal must identify a single lead agency or department that would be responsible for administering the assistance agreement.

Challenge Category for Tribes

Amount: up to \$300,000.

Eligibility: Applicants must propose activities that involve collaboration (e.g., intra tribal, intertribal, or State/Tribal) to develop the Exchange Network and demonstrate its value in sharing environmental, natural resources, or human health data and/or related administrative data.

Criteria:

(1) Maximum of 90 points for one or more of the following activities.

(a) Implement any type of data flow using the Exchange Network.

(b) Conduct multi-party planning activities to develop new data flows, explaining how the new data would be used and shared via the Exchange Network. This activity could include developing a collaborative project plan for possible submission to EPA if future funding becomes available.

(c) Use the Exchange Network to integrate and use information for environmental decision-making and public access, including Geospatial data. Projects could include, but are not limited to, activities that would improve the locational data for facilities in EPA's Facility Registry System.

(d) Use the Exchange Network to share data that have not previously been available for environmental and human health protection purposes (e.g.,