



SOUTHEAST SUSTAINABILITY  
DIRECTORS NETWORK



## **EPA Community Grants Training Session 1**

June 26, 2024



# Training Objectives

- Share resources to apply for and manage Community Grants
- Create a supportive peer-to-peer network
- Increase local grant writing and management capacity

## Disclaimer!

The training provides guidance, but not authoritative interpretations of federal laws, rules or regulations.

# Curriculum

## **1. Possibilities, Limitations & Requirements: June 26**

2. Project Scope; Waiver Eligibility: July 10

3. Entity Registration; Listening Session: July 24

4. NEPA & Cross-Cutting Regulations: August 7

5. Budgeting & Procurement: August 21

6. Application Submittal: September 4

*Bonus: Other Water TA Providers: September 18 - to be confirmed*

7. Grant Management & Reporting: October 2

8. Troubleshooting & Closing: October 16

# Session 1 Agenda

1. Introduction to SSDN and EFC
2. Case study  
Catherine Clark, Grant Writer, Holly Springs, NC
3. Community Grants basics
4. Overview of the grant application process  
Brendan Held, EPA Region 4
5. Q&A and peer connections

# 1. Intro to SSDN and EFC

# Southeast Sustainability Directors Network

## Member-Driven Network

- Peer learning
- State networks, policy
- Technical expertise
- Equity
- Community grants
- **Federal programs**

We connect local government sustainability and resilience professionals throughout the region to accelerate, scale, and implement sustainable best practices so that communities are equipped to equitably adapt to and mitigate climate change.



# Federal Funding Program Initiatives

- **Southeast Sustainable Recovery Center**

- Member-focused support (1:1 or peer-based)
- Grant resources, including: tracking, analysis, and other services

- **EPA Region 4 Multimedia Environmental Finance Center**

- Technical Assistance on water and environmental justice
- All Communities in Region 4 are eligible

- **Local Infrastructure Hub Cohort**

- Deep support to help communities access funding
- Targeting specific grant authorities and communities

- **NREL ETIPP Technical Assistance**

- Energy transition & resilience along Gulf of Mexico
- Focus on island, coastal, and/or remote communities

# Multimedia Environmental Finance Center

## Services:

- Community Outreach and Facilitation
- Capacity Building
  - Peer learning
  - Training
  - Technical Assistance one-on-one
- Research, Policy Analysis and Funding

## Current focus:

- Water
- Environmental Justice



### The Southeast Sustainability Directors Network

The Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN) is a collaborative community that develops sustainability solutions to the South's unique sustainability challenges. SSDN's 115 local and tribal government members build knowledge and learn from colleagues in other areas about best practices to meet their community's needs. Communities located in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia working in all stages of sustainability implementation join the network to scale, accelerate, and implement sustainable best practices so that our region's communities are equipped to adapt to and mitigate climate change.



*Sustainability Directors representing over 75 local governments attended our 2022 Annual Meeting*

### SSDN's Environmental Finance Center

SSDN's Environmental Finance Center (EFC) provides a flexible service to help communities in the Southeast compete for funding opportunities. The EFC aggregates and shares funding opportunities, tools, and resources with local and state governments and community-based organizations. It also provides guidance and information about opportunities, and communicates strategically to maximize the opportunity for federal investments in Southeast communities' sustainability and resilience priorities. Through these efforts, the EFC helps local sustainability practitioners:

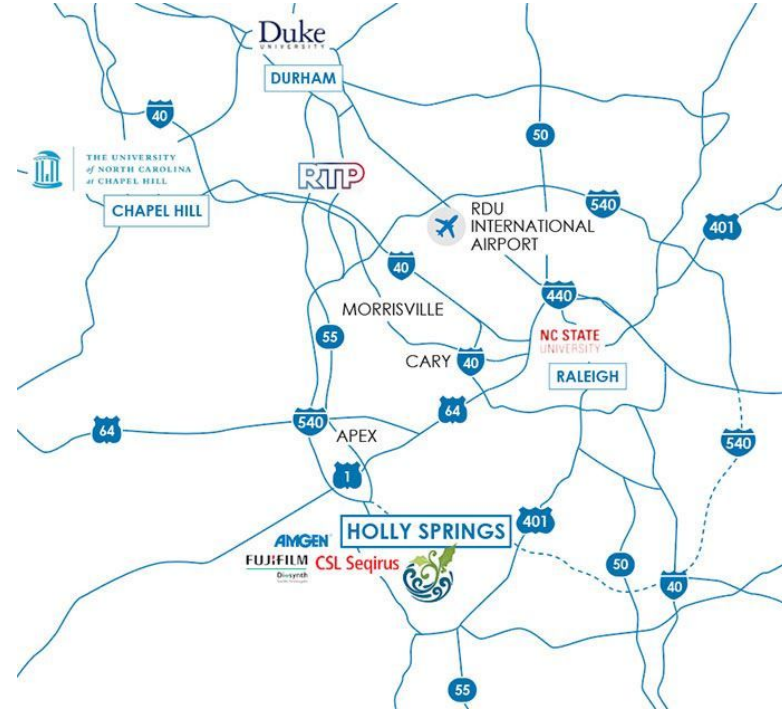
- Find Federal Funding Opportunities
- Access Federal Financial and Technical Assistance
- Build and Strengthen Strategic Relationships
- Build Capacity for Long-term Success



## 2. Case Study

# Case Study: Holly Springs, NC

- Raleigh-Durham metro area
- +/- 50,000 population
- Town-owned wastewater utility



# Case Study: Holly Springs, NC

- FY23 Community Grant Recipient
- Water Reclamation Facility upgrade
  - Increase capacity from 6 to 8 MGD
- \$3,750,000 total budget
  - \$3,000,000 grant
  - \$750,000 cost-share



# Case Study: Holly Springs, NC

## What went well

- EPA Region 4 is great to work with
- The funding process is clearly laid out in the guidance
- EPA offers great advice to simplify project administration

## What was challenging

- Getting to your first advance or reimbursement can take a while
- Your internal processes and procedures may differ from EPA/federal requirements
- Will be a team effort: grant coordinator, project manager, procurement officer, accountant, attorney

# Case Study: Holly Springs, NC

## How to get started

- Create your workplan
  - Contents of the workplan are in the guideline appendices
  - Define your project, timeline, outcomes and connection with EPA goals
  - May do in-house or use your engineering/design firm
- Submit to EPA contact; they will advise next steps (technical correction, scope refinement, etc.)

# 3. Community Grants Basics

# Community Grants Basics

Appropriated through Congress

- Congressionally Directed Spending (Senate)
- Community Project Funding (House of Rep.)

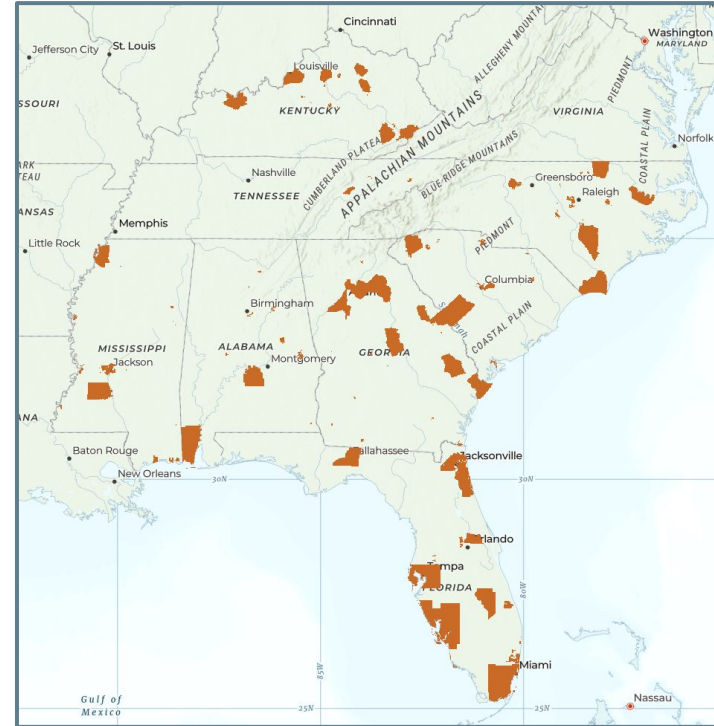
NOT State and Tribal Assistance Grant, or State Revolving Fund!

Project Types

- Drinking water
- Clean water (wastewater and stormwater)

# Community Grants in EPA Region 4

	FY22	FY23
No. of projects	59	105
States	All 8	All 8
Total Allocated	\$102M	\$240M





## 4. Grant Application Process



# Pre-Award Project Requirements

*Note: Procurement regulations will remain active post award. Other post award grant management activities include inspections, recipient reporting (semiannual progress reports), and invoice review for reimbursement.*

## 1. Workplan

Recipients prepare a guide that includes:

- Project description
- Project objectives/needs
- Budget breakdown
- Timeline of major milestones
- Environmental outcomes and benefits the project will provide.

## 2. Project Specific Requests

### Technical Corrections

Recipient needs to modify the type, purpose, or named recipient of the Community Grant. Requires consultation with Congressional Sponsor.

### Cost Share Waivers

Recipient must provide cost share amount of 20% of the total grant project cost, unless recipient qualifies as a disadvantaged community per program guidance and is approved for cost share waiver by the EPA.

## 3. Environmental Regulations

### NEPA Environmental Review

The National Environmental Policy Act requires evaluation of how federal grant actions may affect the quality of the environment. Under NEPA, environmental impacts must be considered before EPA can award the grant.

*Note: EPA will conduct a 30-day comment period with other Federal agencies and Tribal partners.*

### Section 106 Historic Preservation Review

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, assist, fund, permit, license, or approve throughout the country.

## 4. Procurement Regulations Pre-Award Costs

### Davis Bacon Act

DBA requires contractors and subcontractors performing construction, alteration, and repair work under federal contracts more than \$2,000, pay their laborers and mechanics not less than the prevailing wage and fringe benefits for the geographic location.

### Build America Buy America

BABA requires that all the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are to be produced in the United States.

### American Iron and Steel

AIS requires that all the iron and steel used in the project are to be produced in the United States. Compliance with AIS satisfies a subset of BABA requirements

### Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program

DBE Programs requires recipients who procure goods and/or services to employ the six good faith efforts, document their efforts and maintain DBE forms/documentation from the prime contractor, and report their procurement and DBE activities.

### General Procurement 2 CFR 200

All procurement transactions for professional engineering services and construction contractors must be conducted in a manner that includes and promotes fair and open competition from an adequate number of qualified sources. [Guidance on Preparing Solicitation Documents](#)

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 Link:  
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-05/FY23-Community-Grants-Final%20Implementation-Guidance.pdf>

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 Links:

<https://www.epa.gov/nepa/nepassist>

<https://www.achp.gov/>

*Note: EPA will conduct a 30-day comment period with other Federal agencies and Tribal partners.*

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<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-10/Buy%20America%20Preference%20Overview.pdf>

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-10/AIS%20Overview.pdf>

# Pre-Award Project Requirements

## 4. Procurement Regulations Pre-Award Costs



Links:

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-10/DBE%20Overview.pdf>

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-07/CDS-Procurement-using-federal-funds.pdf>

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-07/CG-Reminders-for-Preparing-Solicitation-Docs.pdf>

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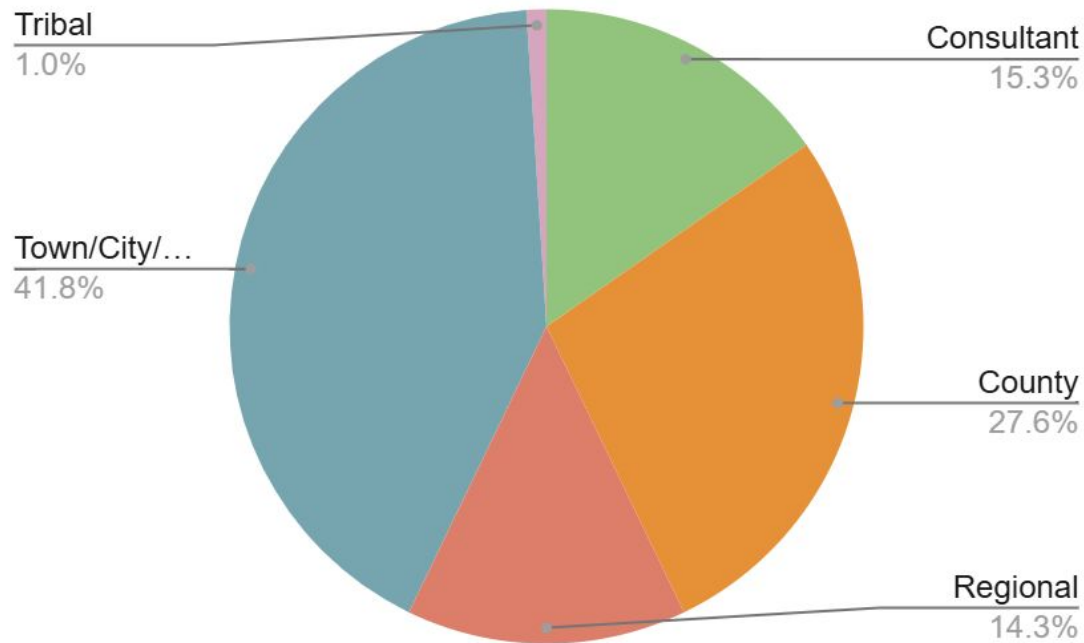
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Guidance on Preparing  
Solicitation Documents

## 5. Peer Exchange, Q&A

# Attendees

- Grant writing/management
- Project management
- City management
- Planning
- Public works/utilities





# Q&A

- Commonly requested topics of discussion:
  - The whole process!
  - Cross-cutting reg compliance
    - NEPA
  - Procurement
  - Post-award requirements

# Contact Information

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# Next Session

Project Scope; Waiver Eligibility: July 10