



Southeastern Regional Small Public Water Systems Technical Assistance Center (SE-TAC)

2009-2011 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

December 11, 2008

Background

Mississippi State University, with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency, established the Southeastern Regional Small Public Water Systems Technical Assistance Center (SE-TAC) in FY 2000. The Center provides technical and instructional support to small drinking water systems in the Southeastern United States to facilitate compliance with technical, monitoring, and reporting requirements mandated by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) as amended in 1996, 42 U.S.C. " 300f *et seq.* The region includes eleven states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The SE-TAC's mission is to build partnerships among water utility organizations, state primacy agencies, technical assistance providers, and universities throughout the Southeastern Region of the United States to protect public health by enhancing small water systems' capacity to protect and provide safe drinking water.

SE-TAC accomplishes this, in part, by administering an annual competitive grants program to encourage and support regional and local projects that address pressing small public drinking water system problems. The SE-TAC's advisory board met in July 2008 to review project priorities and revise the 2007-2009 Request for Proposals (RFP). This RFP provides guidance on the SE-TAC's five priority areas and stresses the importance of applicants following instructions to clearly address and identify all required elements in their application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to pay close attention to items in bold text and strictly follow the RFP's format. The RFP, Evaluation Criteria, and State Primacy Agency Acknowledgement Form are available at <http://www.wrri.msstate.edu/se-tac>.

Request for Proposals

Contingent on receiving EPA funding for the 2009-2011 project cycle, SE-TAC anticipates funding approximately three competitive grants not to exceed \$50,000 per award. SE-TAC requests proposals from local governments, colleges and universities, public agencies, and non-profit organizations to directly and measurably assist small public water systems in protecting public health and to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act as amended in 1996. We especially encourage proposals which assist small systems that serve populations fewer than 3,300 and/or address Transient Non-Community Water Systems (TNCWS) issues. For purposes of this RFP, small public water systems are generally systems that provide water for human consumption to populations less than 10,000. For this RFP, small public water systems also explicitly include Community Water Systems (CWS) which supply water to the same population year-round; Non-Transient Non-Community Water Systems (NTNCWS) which regularly supply water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round (i.e., schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals which have their own water systems); and Transient Non-Community Water Systems (TNCWS) which provide water in a place such as a gas station or

campground where people do not remain for long periods of time. **Applications must clearly state how their project would assist small public water systems as defined above. Applications that fail to do so are ineligible for funding.**

One of SE-TAC's goals is to provide seed money for projects that will directly and significantly "empower" small public water systems to meet SDWA requirements and protect public health. Applicants are encouraged to review completed projects at <http://www.wrri.msstate.edu/se-tac> for examples of successful projects and to become familiar with the range of projects that SE-TAC has funded in the past. **There is no limit on the number of proposals an organization may submit; however, organizations are limited to one funded project per grant cycle. Priority will be placed on new projects.** Organizations that have received prior SE-TAC funding are encouraged to develop proposals that either initiate a new project or substantially expand the scope of a continuing successful project.

SE-TAC is soliciting innovative demonstration or pilot projects, technology transfer, and training projects in the five priority areas listed below. Successful projects must be relevant and applicable at either a state or multi-state (regional) level. SE-TAC is especially interested in funding projects that address current needs as well as issues on the horizon, such as new rules and regulations. **Please note that the evaluation criteria are weighted to reflect SE-TAC's strong commitment to applied, on-the-ground projects with measurable results. Every effort will be made to accommodate project start dates in November 2009. All projects must be completed by February 28, 2011.** For more information please contact Dr. Mary Love Tagert, SE-TAC Coordinator at mltagert@abe.msstate.edu or (662) 325-4617.

SE-TAC Priority Areas

SE-TAC solicits proposals in the following areas, in support of the 2009-2014 *EPA Strategic Plan Change Document* (Sept. 30, 2008) and specifically, sub-objective *2.1.1 Water Safe To Drink*. The entire plan can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/ocfopage/plan/pdfs/strategic_plan_change_document_9-30-08.pdf. Generally, the five priority areas expand on the broad capacity development category. The Board considers all five priority areas to be equally important. Proposals that directly apply any priority area to systems that have had repeated public health based Significant Non-Compliance (SNC) issues are strongly encouraged. Proposals with a clear link to National Sustainable Infrastructure (<http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/>) or Effective Water Utility Management (http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/pdfs/tools_si_watereum_primerforeffectiveutilities.pdf) will be well received.

- a) **Training/Technology Transfer** – Compliance with the SDWA's increased reporting and monitoring standards requires additional and timely training for small public water systems' board members and/or operators. Technology assistance or transfer projects are sought, with an emphasis on proposals to develop or enhance training materials (e.g., videos, multimedia, audio visuals, manuals, workbooks, handouts) or the delivery of training to small public water systems (e.g. develop training courses or provide technical assistance to systems developing their Standard Monitoring plans). Novel technology transfer and training approaches to establish or enhance the ability of small public water system operators or boards to access and use relevant web-based and CD ROM technology are also encouraged.
- b) **Capacity Development** – Proposals to enhance the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of small public water systems to directly and significantly assist them in complying with SDWA are encouraged. Potential areas of interest include but are not limited to alternative water supplies, system consolidation, workforce development and retention, optimization of existing facilities

and processes, compliance with new regulations (e.g., LT2ESWTR or Stage 2 DBPR rule requirements), long-range planning, demonstration projects in financial and managerial methods and/or practices, as well as technology applications to improve small public water systems' managerial and financial viability and reporting.

- c) **Source Water Protection Implementation** – Innovative approaches to implement source water protection plans or methodologies for small public water systems are sought. Applicants are encouraged to consult their state primacy agency to determine priority source water threats (i.e., Non-Point Source Pollution, failing septic systems) and/or priority geographic areas for demonstration or outreach projects. **Projects must relate to implementation of Source Water Protection Plans and include a plan to transfer project results to other small public water systems. Competitive proposals will clearly document a direct link to small systems' significant source water protection issues.**

- d) **Security and Natural Disaster Response, Funding, Reimbursement Procedures, and Mutual Aid Agreements** – Proposals for innovative projects that enhance small public water system emergency responses to and security from purposeful contamination or jeopardy through acts of terror and/or vandalism, and natural disasters are requested (i.e., emergency preparedness plans, risk communication plans, and emergency funding/insurance). Disaster preparedness education/training materials and projects should be developed and delivered based on EPA Region IV's templates, which may be customized for particular states. Proposals should enhance and/or expand emerging national and state efforts in this area. **Applicants must provide a literature review of existing small public water system emergency response and security tools and programs to show that their proposed project will not duplicate any existing program. Training projects must identify the source of proposed training materials/tools. Proposals must ensure that they are consistent with EPA's Small Drinking Water System Emergency Response Plan guidelines (<http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/security/index.html>). Applications should focus on systems with 3,300 or fewer customers unless they are preparing tools or training for a particular rule that clearly identifies small systems as serving 10,000 or fewer customers.**

- e) **Distribution System Operation and Maintenance** – Many small systems lack resources to address aging distribution systems. In particular, older systems require more attention to operation and maintenance. Projects that support improved water loss accountability, valve excising, flushing programs, and mapping/modeling are of particular value. Proposals to develop a comprehensive energy conservation program that demonstrates how leak detection saves money by conserving water and electricity, economizing on chemicals, and saving wear and tear on pumps and motors are also of interest.

Eligible Organizations

Local governments, colleges and universities, public agencies, and non-profit organizations within the eleven-state Southeastern Region that have: 1) knowledge of small public water systems' responsibilities under the Safe Drinking Water Act and 2) experience with and/or provide training and/or technical assistance to small water systems are eligible for funding. Advisory board members may submit proposals. However, board members cannot evaluate their own proposals or proposals from their state. Advisory board members may also recuse themselves from evaluating proposals that present a real or potential conflict of interest. Recusals do not have any bearing on a proposal's competitiveness.

Proposal Selection Process/Timetable

SE-TAC staff will review all proposals for completeness and compliance with instructions before forwarding them to the advisory board for evaluation. Incomplete proposals and those that do not follow instructions will not be evaluated.

January 30, 2009	Proposals for 2009-2011 cycle grants due to SE-TAC by close of business
February 6, 2009	SE-TAC reviews proposals for completeness and sends complete proposals to the advisory board for evaluation
March 11, 2009	Evaluations returned to SE-TAC for ranking and funding decisions
March 17, 2009	SE-TAC notifies successful applicants and begins negotiations. Project funding is contingent on SE-TAC funding for 2009-2001.
March 20, 2009	SE-TAC notifies all applicants in writing of results (evaluation comments, if any, will be provided if requested by applicant)

Funded Project Requirements

SE-TAC will require that successful applicants provide the following documents/reports:

1. Quarterly project progress reports must be submitted on or before March 31, June 30, Sept. 30, and Dec. 31 until project completion (SE-TAC will provide a report template). The first quarterly report is due on the first of these dates after the project award. These reports, along with their project deliverables, will help SE-TAC document the success of SE-TAC projects and provide full accountability of grant funds expended to EPA and others.
2. Progress reports must include a brief financial status report **and a Minority Owned/Women Owned Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) form (provided with award documents)**.
3. For projects that include developing training materials or conducting a study (i.e., a document), the applicant must submit one hard copy and three CD-ROMs of a draft report for review and approval at least two months prior to the final report submittal. **Applicants must notify SE-TAC prior to distributing any product.** Where appropriate, applicants must also identify what, if any, **peer review** their materials will undergo. Applicants must address all reviewer comments in finalizing their materials and provide twenty CD-ROMs and two hard copies of any original materials. Applicants must also provide SE-TAC with a copy of any abstract for a presentation at a professional conference, symposium or workshop.
4. SE-TAC welcomes photos or videos and narrative documentation of the project and copies of any testimonials with the one-year and final report.
5. All projects must complete and submit administrative forms, including an EPA Communications Form, upon project completion.

General Instructions for Preparing Applications

Proposals cannot exceed ten typewritten pages in length with one-inch margins using no less than an eleven-point font. Investigator(s) resumes and letters of cooperation/collaboration or support from state, regional, or local water authorities and small public water systems may be appended and do not count against the page limit. Letters, including a State Primacy Agency(s) Acknowledgement Form, are a significant factor in proposal evaluation. An application is considered complete when it includes all the items listed below. Failure to include any of the required items with an original signature, where appropriate, may disqualify your application from consideration.

REQUIRED ITEMS FOR COMPLETE APPLICATION

To be considered complete, all application materials must be submitted together:

1. Number of copies: one digital copy in Word or WordPerfect, an original and 18 copies
2. Completed Cover Sheet
3. Complete and concise narrative statement and work plan (Items A through J below, where applicable)
4. Detailed itemized budget and budget justification/narrative (Items D and E below)
5. Brief biographical sketch or vita of key personnel (Item K)
6. Completed logic model (see attached example/template)
7. State Primacy Agency(s) Acknowledgement Form Available at <http://www.wrri.msstate.edu/se-tac>. Applicants are strongly encouraged to obtain guidance from their state primacy agency(s) to ensure that their proposal addresses priority state small public water system issues. The form documents the proposed project's relevance of the proposed project to the state's needs and issues, and does not imply an endorsement. **The proposal package must include the State Primacy Agency Form.** If you are unsure of your state's primacy agency, please refer to <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/index.html>
8. Letters of support from project collaborators/partners. The proposal package must include support letters.

Applications should be delivered to:

Mail Proposals to:

Dr. Mary Love Tagert
ATTN: SE-TAC Proposal
Box 9632
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Overnight Proposals (FedEx and UPS) to:

Dr. Mary Love Tagert
ATTN: SE-TAC Proposal
130 Creelman Street
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Submit Digital Copies to mhtagert@abe.msstate.edu or include on a disk or CD-ROM with hardcopy.

Proposal Format

A. Cover Page (Use attached format.)

B. Project Summary: Proposals must focus on at least one of the five SE-TAC Priority Areas. This is your opportunity to convince readers that your project meets the SE-TAC's goals. It should briefly answer the following questions:

1. What is the project's goal(s) and how do you expect to achieve it (them)? Describe the indicators or measures that will be used to assess the project's outcome.
2. What services will the project provide and to whom?
3. What are the project's anticipated outcomes, deliverables, and impact? Think in terms of how **programmatic, technical, and environmental outcomes** relate to project goals. (**Note: Quantify outcomes to the maximum extent possible**). Outcomes can be quantitative or qualitative. Outcomes represent a change in behavior on the targeted audience of the grant project or program.
4. What organizations are participating as project partners?

You may use appendices to expand your presentation. Do not assume that the reviewers reading your application know any information about you, your organization, project, or the communities you are

trying to impact. Reference any appendices in the Project Summary.

- C. Project Methods or Design:** The project design outlines the task(s) that will be accomplished with the available resources. It is helpful to structure the project design as a time line. Early in the planning process, applicants should list the tasks that will have to be completed to establish benchmarks to measure success in meeting the project's goals. They can then break these into smaller tasks and set out a schedule over the grant time period. Consider what personnel, materials, and other resources will be needed to carry out the tasks.
- D. Project Evaluation:** Since 2005, EPA has required SE-TAC to document outputs and outcomes from our sub-award. Accordingly, it is critical that applications clearly identify both outputs and outcomes and include steps to measure outcomes to the extent practical. We are also requiring a one page logic model this year to help explain the link between a proposal's outputs (deliverables) and outcomes. Below is information summarized from EPA Region 10's website to assist you in preparing your application. Additional information on measuring outcomes and logic models can be found at: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/ECOCOMM.NSF/webpage/measuring+environmental+results>

OUTPUTS: Outputs are activities or deliverables to be accomplished as a result of a grant. Proposals generally describe outputs as deliverables or milestones in a work plan. SE-TAC will closely track the completion of outputs to monitor recipients' progress on grants. Possible outputs may include one or more of the following: number of training workshops held, number of operators trained, field work completed, training courses developed, etc.

OUTCOMES: Outcomes aim to measure the impacts of outputs completed during the grant period. Briefly explain how your outputs help small public systems provide safe drinking water to their customers. Outcomes seldom occur until after the grant has ended. **All awardees are asked to keep SE-TAC informed of outcomes that occur after the grant closes.** Measuring environmental outcomes is challenging, especially for small grants such as those SE-TAC awards, which can focus on short- and medium-term outcomes linked to achieving a long-term goal from Sub-Objective 2.1.1. of the 2006-2011 EPA Strategic Plan, http://www.epa.gov/ocfo/plan/2006/entire_report.pdf. Still, the proposal must be closely linked to making progress towards meeting these long term goals and objectives.

- a. **Short-Term Outcomes** may include things like increased knowledge, active stewardship program, systems requesting follow up assistance, adopting or updating SOPs, etc.
- b. **Medium-Term Outcomes** might include documented widespread adoption of new or updated SOPs by small systems, continuing requests for web-based training, document requests, etc.
- c. **Long-Term Outcomes** can be costly to document, especially if monitoring, sampling and analysis are involved. But with small drinking water systems, it is possible to monitor and report on a reduction of administrative reporting violations and public health related violations. In the long-term, all outcomes should be directed towards items included in EPA's 2009-2014 EPA Strategic Plan Change Document.

Proposals must explicitly include self-assessment and identify expected outcomes. The proposal must be clear on how the project's impact will be determined. Develop objective, measurable criteria to evaluate progress toward project goals. **It is important to define carefully and exactly how the project's success will be determined and measured. Applicants should explain what they expect to be different after the project is complete. This information is critical to the proposal evaluation. Support material such as digital photos and testimonial letters that demonstrate the project's need and audience may be included.** What are the anticipated milestones or target dates

for deliverables? How do you plan to evaluate and share what you've learned from your efforts?

E. Budget: The project budget should demonstrate consistency with project activities and outline specific expenses by category (i.e., salaries and benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, etc.). The budget should show how funds will be spent and by whom (see example below). Cost sharing is not mandatory but the Advisory board will specifically consider budgeted cost share and/or leveraging with other funding sources in evaluating projects.

Sample Budget			
Personnel	<i>SE-TAC</i>	<i>Match</i>	<i>Total</i>
Salary			
John Doe, (12 months @ 0.25 FTE)	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$12,000
Jane Doe, (12 months @ 0.50 FTE)	\$10,000	\$18,000	\$28,000
Fringe Benefits (@ 25.5%)			
John Doe (\$48,000 @ 25.5%)	\$0	\$12,240	\$12,240
Jane Doe (\$56,000 @ 25.5%)	\$0	\$14,280	\$14,280
Total Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$15,000	\$51,520	\$66,520
Commodities	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
Equipment	\$8,000	\$0	\$8,000
Contractual	\$2,300	\$0	\$2,300
Travel	\$900	\$0	\$900
Total Direct Costs (19.475%)	\$21,200	\$0	\$21,200
Indirect Costs (not to exceed 25% on TAC funds)	\$7,050	\$0	\$7,050
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$43,250	\$51,520	\$94,770

F. Budget Justification/Narrative: Provide a brief justification for **each** budget category. Explain personnel duties and any single commodity or supply expense over \$400. Fully describe any equipment purchases and justify them within the context of the project. If you propose an equipment purchase, please include a summary of your procurement process and equipment inventory procedures. List any equipment that will be purchased under this agreement and if you request to retain this equipment after the project's completion. The ultimate disposition of equipment will be decided in the project's pre-award phase. For contractual expenses, list any anticipated subcontracts, including the names (if available), reason for requiring a subcontractor, and identify the expertise they bring to the project. For travel, explain briefly the destination and purpose of each trip. Include your organization's indirect cost rate, if you have a set rate. Indirect costs may not exceed 25% of SE-TAC funds. Finally, if the project requires funding from another source, which can be listed as cost share, please clearly identify the source, the amount, and include a letter of commitment from them.

G. Software, Modeling or Web Sites: If you propose to develop software, models or web sites, you must answer each of the following questions (not included in page limit):

1. How is the work primarily benefiting small public water systems and the public? How does it

support the recipient's mission?

2. Who are the products being developed for under the project? Who will use them?
3. Who will the products be delivered to at the end of the grant?
4. How is the information being disseminated to the public? Who is the primary audience?
5. Will the recipient use assistance funds to provide advice to EPA or another Federal Agency? Does the project support activities of any Federal Advisory Committee set up to advise the Federal government under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)?
6. If this project involves developing a web site, will it be accessible to the public? If so, where will it be located? Please provide the web site's tentative address.
7. If the project involves developing a web site, who will maintain it during and after the project?
8. Will a fee be charged to access the web site during the project period? If yes, program income will be:
 used to support additional eligible project activities
 used to meet the recipient's cost sharing requirement
 deducted from total costs to determine net allowable project costs
9. Does the recipient anticipate developing and copyrighting software or written material?
Yes No

H. Training/Workshops - If you plan to provide training (workshop/conference/meeting), you must answer each of the following questions (not included in page limit):

1. Who is initiating the training?
2. What training materials will be used?
2. How is the training being promoted?
3. Whose logo will be on the agenda and training materials?
4. What is the anticipated composition of audience? (i.e., what percent of participants in training will represent public participants, state and local government, and federal agency employees?) Will the grant recipient prepare a proceedings or analysis and disseminate information back to state/local/scientific community?
5. Do you anticipate any program income being generated from this training? Yes No
If yes, how will these funds be used? (40 CFR 30.24) or (40 CFR 31.25)
 - a) add to funds already committed to further support eligible objectives;
 - b) finance the non-federal share of the project;
 - c) deducted from the total allowable project costs.

I. Use of Program Income: Applicants are advised that any program income generated is subject to special conditions. Program income is gross income the recipient earns that is either directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award (e.g., training registration fees, fees to obtain training materials). In addition, federal policy prohibits any recipient or sub-recipient receiving federal funds from using equipment acquired with these funds to provide services to non-federal outside organizations for a fee less than private companies charge for equivalent services. The project budget must properly document anticipated program income. Should recipients receive unanticipated program income, it must be reported to the SE-TAC, and the project's budget

renegotiated to account for this program income.

- J. Procurement of Goods and Services:** If your project will include the procurement of any goods or services, you are encouraged to review the federal requirements in 40 CFR 30.40 for nonprofit organizations and universities prior to developing your project proposal or contacting any potential contractor's suppliers. **Recipients of SE-TAC funds are required to follow a fair and open competitive process when procuring goods and services from the commercial sector. This requirement specifically includes using minority and women owned business enterprises.**

- K. Key Personnel Qualifications** - Append a one-page resume for key personnel (not included in page limit).

PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Limit to 1 page; cover page does not count against page limit

2009-2011 SE-TAC Proposal

Proposal Title:

Project Coordinator(s): Name, title, organization, address, phone, fax, and e-mail.

Financial Contact(s): Name, title, organization, address, phone, fax, and e-mail.

Cooperator(s) or Collaborator(s): If applicable, list and append letters [not included in page count].

Statement of Eligibility: Indicate organizational type of **applicant and cooperator(s) or collaborator(s)** (i.e. local government, college or university, public agency, or nonprofit organization) and if applicable, **size of water system for pilot or demonstration project.**

Funding Requested \$ _____ ; Match \$ _____ ; Total Project \$ _____

Duration: (month/day/year - month /day/year). **Projects must be completed by February 28, 2011.**

SE-TAC Priority Area: Specify priority area and indicate if a regional/multi-state project.

Proposal Summary: Brief description of project (no longer than two or three paragraphs).

Logic Model Template

Assumptions: *Optional*

Goal(s): *Optional*

INPUTS	OUTPUTS		OUTCOMES		
<i>What we invest</i>	ACTIVITIES	PARTICIPANTS	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
	<i>What we do</i>	<i>Whom we reach</i>	<i>What the short term results are</i>	<i>What the long term results are</i>	<i>What the ultimate impact(s) are</i>
				OUTCOME MEASURES	