

**Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities
Request for Applications (RFA)
EPA-OAR-OAQPS-22-01
Questions and Answers
As of **January 6th, 2022****

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is accepting applications for funding under the Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities grants competition (EPA-OAR-OAQPS-22-01).

The Request for Application and all application forms are available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=336951>. The deadline to apply is **Feb. 25, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. (ET)**.

Please review all questions. If you have any additional questions, please email AirMonitoring@epa.gov by **February 18, 2022**.

General Questions (December 13, 2021) – *Questions from the public begin on page 6 and will be updated weekly*

1. How can potential grant applicants learn more?

- **Attend an Informational Webinar:** EPA will host a webinar to discuss this RFA. Participants will have the opportunity to have their questions answered by EPA in a public forum. Pre-registration is not required. Please email AirMonitoring@epa.gov by January 5, 2022 if you are a person with a disability needing other reasonable accommodations in order to meaningfully participate in this meeting, or a person with limited English proficiency needing language assistance services.
 - **Date:** Tuesday, January 11, 2022
 - **Time:** 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM EST
 - **Link:** [Click here to join the webinar](#)
 - **Or join by phone:** 1-669-254-5252 (San Jose) or 1-646-828-7666 (NY);
Use meeting ID: 161 328 3271
- **Review the Question/Answer document on the website:** Applicants are encouraged to review the questions and answers document for further information about this grant program and RFA, available at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/enhanced-air-quality-monitoring-communities>. EPA will respond to questions from applicants regarding:
 - Threshold eligibility criteria;
 - Administrative issues related to the submission of the application;
 - Requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement; and,
 - Compliance with regulatory requirements and EPA guidance for competition for procurement of professional services and equipment purchases and entering into proper subawards.
- **Email a Question to EPA:** Applicants may email questions to AirMonitoring@epa.gov. Questions must be submitted via email before February 18, 2022. EPA will answer relevant questions and post them in the Question/Answer document the following week while the RFA is open at: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/enhanced-air-quality-monitoring-communities>. All applicants are encouraged to check the document regularly.

2. Are there flexibilities in this grant process due to the COVID-19 pandemic (See page 1 of the RFA)?

- Yes, EPA is providing flexibilities to applicants experiencing challenges related to COVID-19. Please see the Flexibilities Available to Organizations Impacted by COVID-19 clause in Section IV of [EPA's Solicitation Clauses](#).

Eligibility (See Sections III.A. beginning on page 13 of the RFA)

3. Who is eligible to apply for this grant (note that there are additional eligibility questions in the Public questions beginning on page 5)?

- EPA will accept applications from states (including the District of Columbia); local governments; U.S. territories and possessions; Indian tribes; public and private hospitals and laboratories; and other public or private nonprofit organizations.
- Nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization that:
 - (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable or similar purposes in the public interest;
 - (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and
 - (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve and/or expand its operations.

The term includes tax-exempt nonprofit neighborhood and labor organizations. Nonprofit organizations do not need be tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code but may use documentation of tax-exempt status to demonstrate that it is a nonprofit.

4. How do I prove that I am a “nonprofit group” or a “community-based organization” to apply for the community-based organization set-aside?

- See Section III.A. on page 14 and Section III.C.6. on page 15 of the RFA. If applying for the community-based organization set-aside, the applicant must:
 - Provide documentation that it is a nonprofit or not for profit corporation under federal, state, or tribal law with authority to enter into binding legal agreements.
 - Specify the community they represent and provide documentation, such as their charter, mission statement, or other official documentation of the organization.
 - Include a statement demonstrating the effectiveness as a representative of the applicable community.

Please note that this information will be evaluated under evaluation criterion 2.C. under Section V.A. of this RFA.

5. Are for-profit organizations eligible for this funding?

- No. For-profit organizations are not an eligible entity for this funding opportunity.

6. Are nonprofits organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 eligible to apply for this grant funding?

- No.

FUNDING

7. How much money is EPA giving out from this RFA (See Section II.B. on page 11 of the RFA)?

- The total estimated funding for this competitive opportunity is approximately \$20,000,000. Approximately \$2 million of this amount will be awarded to tribal governments under a tribal government set-aside under which only applications from tribal governments will be considered, and approximately \$2 million will be awarded to community-based organizations under a community-based organization set-aside under which only applications from community-based organizations will be considered. The amounts for the set-asides are approximations, and EPA may increase or decrease the amounts and number of projects selected under each set-aside based on the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, funding availability, and other applicable considerations.

8. Is this one-time money?

- Yes, these grants are part of the American Rescue Plan and will be distributed as competitive grants

9. How many assistance agreements/grants does EPA expect to award (See Section II.C. on page 12 of the RFA)?

- Overall, EPA anticipates awarding a total of approximately 50-70 assistance agreements (cooperative agreements or grants), subject to availability of funds, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.
- EPA anticipates awarding approximately 20-30 assistance agreements ranging in value from \$25,000 to \$100,000 (*i.e.*, “Small Grants”) and 30-40 assistance agreements ranging in value from \$100,001 to \$500,000 (*i.e.*, “Large Grants”).
- EPA may increase or decrease the total funding or set-aside amounts based on the number of meritorious applications received, agency priorities, funding availability, and other applicable considerations.

10. Will the grant money need to be matched (See Section III.B. on page 14 of the RFA)?

- No. There are no cost sharing/matching funds or leveraged resources required as a condition of eligibility under this competition.
- The money is being awarded under section 103 of the Clean Air Act, which has no cost share requirements.

11. What can this money be used for (See Section I.B. beginning on page 5 and Sections III.C.-D. beginning on page 14 of the RFA)?

- This funding can be used for ambient air monitoring projects and costs associated with those projects, including personnel.

12. How many applications can be submitted by an organization (See Section III.D.2.b.-c. on page 17)?

- No more than 2 applications.
- The applications limit is tied to the Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. DUNS) and SAM registration of the

eligible entity. The Unique Entity Identifier and SAM registration is explained further in Appendix A of the RFA.

OTHER

13. What is happening with the other \$30 million that Congress provided to EPA to enhance ambient air quality monitoring in communities across the US (See <https://www.epa.gov/arp/enhanced-air-quality-monitoring-funding-under-arp>)?

- In addition to the \$20 million competitive grants competition, EPA is using the balance of the \$50 million ARP ambient air monitoring funding to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic including:
 - **Direct Awards to Air Agencies for Continuous Monitoring of Fine Particles (PM_{2.5}) and Other Common Air Pollutants:** EPA is allocating \$22.5 million to state, Tribal or local air agencies for enhanced monitoring of PM_{2.5} and five other air pollutants regulated by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards under the Clean Air Act.
 - **Enhanced Regional Capacity for Short-term Community Monitoring Needs:** EPA is working to invest \$5 million in agency mobile monitoring labs or air sensor loan programs. These investments will improve EPA's ability to support communities in need of short-term monitoring and air quality information.
 - **Administrative Support:** EPA is improving air quality data management and ensuring the grants and programs are properly administered and tracked with \$2.5 million directed toward oversight and administration activities.

14. Can any of this \$20 million be used to address toxic air pollution (See Section I.B. beginning on page 5 and Section III.C.9. on page 16 of the RFA)?

- Yes, EPA is soliciting applications to conduct monitoring of pollutants of greatest concern in communities with health outcome disparities, including air toxics, also known as Hazardous Air Pollutants (current list of HAPs is available here: <https://www.epa.gov/haps/initial-list-hazardous-air-pollutants-modifications#mods>).
- The complete list of air pollutants covered by this RFA is:
 - Carbon Monoxide
 - Lead
 - Nitrogen Dioxide
 - Ozone, including ozone precursors
 - Precursors for ozone collected in the Photochemical Assessment Monitoring Stations (PAMS) Program including oxides of nitrogen, (NO, NO₂, NO_x, NO_y) volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and carbonyls. A list of ozone precursors can be found in the Technical Assistance Document for Sampling and Analysis of Ozone Precursors for the Photochemical Assessment Monitoring Stations Program, Revision 2 – April 2019. This is available at: https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/documents/pams_technical_assistance_document_revision_2_april_2019.pdf
 - Additional ozone precursors such as methane.
 - Sulfur Dioxide
 - Particle Pollution (ultrafine, PM_{2.5}, or PM₁₀), including aerosol composition and PM precursors

- Aerosol composition is determined by the Chemical Speciation Network (CSN). A full list of the CSN reported parameters is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/amtic/chemical-speciation-network-parameters-reported-air-quality-system-aqs>.
- PM precursors including ammonia, sulfur dioxide (SO₂), oxides of nitrogen, CO, and VOCs.
- Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs), commonly referred to as air toxics. A full list of HAPs is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/haps/initial-list-hazardous-air-pollutants-modifications#mods>.

Questions from Public (as of December 17, 2021)

Question 1 (12/16/2021):

When is the projected start date for projects that receive funding?

Answer 1:

The project start date is estimated to begin by July 2022 (see Section II.D. on page 12 of the RFA). However, this date is tied to when the grants are awarded, which will be approximately two months after the applications are selected for funding.

Question 2 (12/16/2021):

Would independent school districts be considered a unit of local government eligible to apply for this opportunity?

Answer 2:

Yes, school districts are considered a unit of local government, and are therefore eligible to apply for this grant competition. "Local Government" is defined under [2 CFR 200.1](#), which includes school districts:

Local government means any unit of government within a state, including a:

- (1) County;
- (2) Borough
- (3) Municipality
- (4) City
- (5) Town
- (6) Township
- (7) Parish
- (8) Local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937
- (9) Special district
- (10) **School District**
- (11) Intrastate district
- (12) Council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law: and
- (13) Any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-, regional, or intra-State or local government.

Question 2.a. (12/20/2021)

Are public health departments under a city considered a unit of local government, and thus eligible to apply for this opportunity?

Answer 2.a.:

Yes, public health departments of a city are considered a unit of local government, and are therefore eligible to apply for this grant competition. “Local Government” is defined under [2 CFR 200.1](#), with the relevant pieces highlighted:

Local government means **any unit of government within a state**, including a:

- (1) County;
- (2) Borough
- (3) Municipality
- (4) City**
- (5) Town
- (6) Township
- (7) Parish
- (8) Local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937
- (9) Special district
- (10) School District
- (11) Intrastate district
- (12) Council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law: and
- (13) **Any other agency** or instrumentality of a multi-, regional, or intra-State or **local government**.

Question 3.a. (12/20/2021):

Are universities ineligible to apply for this opportunity? Can they partner with an eligible entity?

Answer 3.a.:

Universities and other institutions of higher education are ineligible to directly apply for a grant under this competition. However, an entity that is eligible to apply (see Section III.A. beginning on page 13 of the RFA) can partner with you to carry out a portion of their proposed project. They can apply for a grant under this RFA and include you as a project partner. This competition is encouraging partnerships, as noted on pages 6-7. Also, be sure to read through the “Note” on page 2 about how an applicant can include a subrecipient as a project partner and [EPA’s Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) and [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#).

Question 3 (12/15/2021):

Can we apply to acquire sensors and directly distribute the sensors to tribal citizens, as well as provide technical assistance to them for the sensors? Is there a minimum?

Answer 3:

Yes, eligible entities can apply for commercially available technology where performance has been documented and/or proven methods for air pollutants within scope to distribute to tribal citizens (See Section I.B. of the RFA, specifically page 6). The minimum amount an eligible applicant can apply for is \$25,000 (see number 3. on page 15 of the RFA).

Question 4 (12/15/2021, edited 1/5/2022):

Are projects eligible for funding that utilize sub-Federal Reference Method (FRM)/Federal Equivalent Method (FEM) technologies (e.g., air sensors)?

Answer 4:

The paragraph below from page 6 of the RFA, and the list of ineligible costs and activities in Section III.D. on page 17 of the RFA, are intended to prohibit funding the research, development, demonstration, or evaluation of new methods or equipment (highlighted below). FRM/FEM only apply to NAAQS, but any other commercially available technologies are allowed for NAAQS or other pollutants where performance has been documented. Applicants can provide performance validation data and other proof of performance documentation.

Examples of commercially available equipment could include, but are not limited to, instruments designated as federal reference or equivalent methods, air sensors, or air toxics samplers.

Air Monitoring Technology (from page 6 of the RFA)

To provide timely air quality information in communities, applicants should use commercially available technology and/or proven methods to monitor these air pollutants. For example, projects must utilize commercially available air quality monitoring equipment (e.g., a continuous PM_{2.5} monitor), EPA procedures (e.g., EPA's Compendium of Methods for the Determination of Toxic Organic Compounds in Ambient Air), and/or other air quality methods that have been previously researched and documented in literature. EPA will not fund projects that involve the research, development, demonstration or evaluation of new air monitoring methods or equipment under this RFA.

Question 5 (12/16/2021):

Is the RFA requesting projects that build a solution to monitoring, or is it just monitoring your community?

Answer:

These grants are for enhancing air quality monitoring in communities. Eligible activities need to be within scope of Section I.B. beginning on page 5 of the RFA. Specifically:

"EPA is soliciting applications from eligible entities, as described in Section III.A., for projects designed to monitor air pollutants of greatest concern in communities with disproportionate and adverse health outcomes. EPA's objective in issuing these awards is to enable communities to monitor their own air quality and to promote monitoring partnerships between communities and tribal, state, and/or local governments that:

- Leverage existing air quality monitoring expertise;
- Expand use of community monitoring advisory groups and other approaches that give the community a voice in the monitoring of their air quality; and
- Build a foundation of trusting relationships and enhanced understanding from which sustainable solutions to community air pollution problems can be found."

Additionally, it is for using existing monitoring technology to expand/enhance the air monitoring in communities. Examples of commercially available equipment could include, but are not limited to, instruments designated as federal reference or equivalent methods, air sensors, or air toxics samplers. (See Answer 4 above).

Question 6 (12/16/2021):

What pollutants are of most interest to the EPA?

Answer:

The RFA is for funding to monitor the air pollutants of greatest concern in communities, as noted in the text from page 5 of the RFA. The eligible pollutants to monitor are listed above in Answer 14 of the General Questions.

Question 7 (12/17/2021):

Can EPA provide technical assistance or drafting assistance to grassroots community groups?

Answer:

EPA has multiple trainings available online to assist entities that have limited (or no) experience applying for EPA or federal assistance and are interested in applying for

grants. They include [How to Develop a Budget](#) and [EPA Grants Management Training for Applicants and Recipients](#). We also hosted and recorded a webinar on applying for grants, which is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/arp/enhanced-air-quality-monitoring-funding-under-arp>. Also of note on this site is information about our upcoming webinar on the Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities Request for Applications (RFA), which we will host on January 11, 2022.

EPA cannot provide assistance to draft applications under a grant competition. Under Section I.F. on page 11 of the RFA we link to [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#) that apply to all EPA grant competitions. Section IV.b. of these Clauses includes this provision:

b. Pre-application/Application Assistance and Communications

In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications/applications. However, consistent with the provisions in the announcement, EPA will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about any of the language or provisions in the announcement. Please note that applicants should raise any questions they may have about the solicitation language to the contact identified in Section VII as soon as possible so that any questions about the solicitation language may be resolved prior to submitting an application. In addition, if necessary, EPA may clarify threshold eligibility issues with applicants prior to making an eligibility determination.

Question 8 (12/20/2021):

Is Ethylene Oxide considered a VOC for this specific grant?

Answer 8:

Yes, projects can include ethylene oxide under this competition. Please see the "Pollutant Scope" on pages 5-6 of the RFA. Ethylene oxide is one of the listed hazardous air pollutants at <https://www.epa.gov/haps/initial-list-hazardous-air-pollutants-modifications#mods>.

Question 9 (12/20/2021):

Are these funds available for black carbon and ultra-fine particle (UFP) monitoring, or will EPA reject proposals for black carbon and UFP monitoring?

Answer 9:

Under this competition projects can include Particle Pollution (ultrafine, PM_{2.5}, or PM₁₀), including aerosol composition and PM precursors. Please see the “Pollutant Scope” section on pages 5-6 of the RFA (attached for reference) for more detail, as well as Question 14 on pages 4-5 of this document.

Question 10 (12/22/2021):

Can weather sensors, and/or mixing layer ceilometers can be submitted with the grant proposals if they have an impact on air quality monitoring?

Answer 10:

The RFA is for funding to monitor air pollutants of greatest concern in communities, as noted in the text from page 5 of the RFA. The eligible pollutants to monitor are listed in Section I.B. beginning on page 5 and Section III.C.9. on page 16 of the RFA. Meteorological equipment (e.g. weather sensors or mixing layer ceilometers) that complement the measurement of one or more pollutants identified in the RFA can be submitted.

Question 11 (12/22/2021):

How many sub-recipients can participate in our application?

Answer 11:

There is not a limit on the number of subrecipients you include in your application. Be sure to read through the “Note” on page 2 of the RFA about how an applicant can include a subrecipient as a project partner and [EPA’s Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) and [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#).

Question 12 (12/22/2021):

Can university professors be listed in the application? If so, can we list the university as the sub-recipient or can we only hire the professor as a consultant to help with data analysis?

Answer 12:

Professors can be included as subrecipients, as long as you follow [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#) on page 2 of the RFA under “Note”.

Question 13 (1/3/2022):

What is the difference between the award date and the beginning of the project period?

Answer 13:

The award date is generally the same as the start date, and is at least two months after applicants are notified whether they have been selected for an award. Page 1 of the RFA states this will be between September and October of 2022. The beginning of the project period, also known as the start date, is generally about two months after the award date. We have since updated the start date in Section II.D. of the RFA to coincide with the start date on page 1.

Question 14 (1/3/2022):

Can we have a different active EPA grant while receiving funds for the Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities grant?

Answer 14:

Whether or not you have an active EPA grant does not limit your eligibility to apply for the Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities request for applications (RFA). The only restriction on existing grants is that no costs from other active grants are included as costs or voluntary cost share in your application (see 1.c. on page 17 of the RFA, under "Ineligible Costs or Activities").

Question 15 (1/6/2022):

Will the webinar on January 11 be recorded for people who are not able to attend during that time? How will we be able to access the recording?

Answer 15:

The webinar will be recorded and posted here: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/enhanced-air-quality-monitoring-communities>.