

## EPA National EJ Community Engagement Call

May 17, 2022

### Summary of Questions and Answers

Welcome! Thank you for joining us today. The purpose of these engagement calls is to inform communities about EPA's environmental justice work and enhance opportunities to maintain an open dialogue with environmental justice advocates. As environmental justice continues to be integrated into EPA programs and policies, the Agency hopes that these calls will help reaffirm EPA's continued commitment to work with community groups and the public to strengthen local environmental and human health outcomes.

*o Webpage with information about upcoming calls: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls>*

*o For up-to-date information about Environmental Justice funding opportunities, events, and webinars, subscribe to EPA's Environmental Justice listserv by sending a blank email to: [join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov](mailto:join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov).*

*o Follow us on Twitter: @EPAEnvJustice*

*o Meeting materials and recordings for this call and all past calls will be here: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls>*

*o Send follow-up questions or comments to: [Environmental-Justice@epa.gov](mailto:Environmental-Justice@epa.gov)*

Question	Asker Name	Answer
Knee Jack meeting? What does that mean?	Jeanne Nightingale	Hi Jeanne. Matt was referencing the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, known as the NEJAC. You can learn more about the Council here: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-advisory-council">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-advisory-council</a>
Does the DW grant include tribal systems?	"Danielle O'Neil, EPA R6 Drinking Water "	The statutory language does not provide a specific allotment for tribal communities but public water systems that are governed under tribal communities are eligible
How is "underserved" defined?	Krista Mantsch	underserved community" means a political subdivision of a State that, as determined by the Administrator, has an inadequate system for obtaining drinking water. In this program, that is to mean communities that do not have household drinking water or wastewater services or are part of a water system that violates, or exceeds a requirement of a national primary drinking water regulations
What if your state is not interested in addressing the drinking water problems rampant throughout the state (especially rural areas and environmental justice communities)?	naomi yoder (they/them) Healthy Gulf	live answered
Will we receive these slides for notes?	Green The Church	Hi Ambrose, thank you for the question. The slides are currently available here: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls</a> . The recording will also be available on this page, along with recordings and slides from past calls.
Comment; I am concerned about corporate self-regulation self-monitoring agreements by governmental agencies that often result in negligence or corruption. eg; Few students are allowed to grade themselves for obvious reasons.	lynn hamamoto cincinnati ohio	live answered
Is this separate from the DW State Revolving Funds funding coming through the BIL?	Cindy Lowry	Yes, this is an appropriations that originated under AWIA in 2018 and has annual appropriations in FY 20 to FY 22. This is not a BIL appropriations new grant program.
In the same vein; Government contracting that edge towards privatization of government agencies; promise low cost services at the expense of quality to the consumer And, often accelerates in times of economic stress euphemistically called budget constraints.	lynn hamamoto cincinnati ohio	live answered
has every state designated what is an EJ community? What happens if a state has not the desire to pass through funds that meet Justice 40?	Spring Creek association.	live answered

Question	Asker Name	Answer
The Office of Water (OW) current position on water fluoridation is of particular interest as fluoride has been shown to disproportionately harm Blacks and other minorities. OW stated to a Massachusetts dentist in a letter dated March 30, 1983, the following: "In regard to the use of fluosilicic acid as a source of fluoride for fluoridation, this Agency regards such use as an ideal environmental solution to a long-standing problem. By recovering by-product fluosilicic acid [FSA] from fertilizer manufacturing, water and air pollution are minimized, and water utilities have a low-cost source of fluoride available to them. I hope this information adequately responds to your concern." That position is clearly obsolete in principle, but as long as FSA from industrial pollution control scrubbers is added to public water supplies, does the OW continue to embrace that position?	John Mueller	live answered
Will the definition of underserved include public school districts, many of which are older buildings.	Charles Bryson	live answered
We are using Census data/zip codes to determine applicable areas right?	Joseph McGuire EPA R7 ARD	Hi Joseph, I hope your question was just answered thoroughly in the presentation!
Maybe a better way to put my concern is that the state has to apply for the grant, when our state doesn't even tell us what's in the water right now (nor do they test anywhere close to often enough). The reason we know what's in some of the small rural water systems is because of independent sampling. So it doesn't seem like this grant call addresses communities most in need in my area. I'd like to advocate for an alternative for this grant opportunity for those of us in less-friendly-to-environmental-monitoring states.	naomi yoder (they/them) Healthy Gulf	Hi Naomi, thank you for your feedback. A public water system may itself apply for the resiliency grant funding. It does not have to be the State (though that is one option). This is as long as it meets the following: serves a community— (A) that is underserved; or (B) that, under affordability criteria established by the State under section 1452(d)(3), is determined by the State to be a disadvantaged community; or (C) with a population of less than 10,000 individuals.
A unique aspect of the solution to ending this EJ problem is that banning the addition of fluoridation chemicals to public water supplies will require no additional federal funding. And it will save water utilities as they enhance their drinking water infrastructure capacities to meet Justice40 initiatives. The problem can be solved by Administrator Regan approving an upcoming citizens' petition to ban that addition of fluoridating chemicals.	John Mueller	live answered Fluoride is an element that can be found naturally in water and may also be added to the water by drinking water systems. EPA's maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG) and enforceable maximum contaminant level (MCL) for fluoride are 4.0 mg/L. EPA's secondary maximum contaminant level (a non-enforceable standard) is set at 2.0 mg/L. EPA's levels were developed to prevent skeletal fluorosis (MCL) and mitigate dental fluorosis in young children (Secondary MCL). EPA's standards apply to all drinking water systems and limit the amounts of fluoride present in their drinking water. EPA is currently reviewing the National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for fluoride under the fourth Six Year Review.
The word "transparency" isn't a very assuring solution because bad data(misrepresentation) in; bad data out	lynn hamamoto cincinnati ohio	Thank you Lynn, that is helpful insight. EPA is committed to using the best science and data available. We will continue to be transparent about the data we use and welcome input on our processes. Thank you!
Is the REACH program part of, or coordinated with, the USDA Rural Partners Network? They sound identical.	"Annie Contractor, she/her/Mx "	Thanks for your question. We are in conversation with USDA about their support. Will answer further live.
I just got on to this meeting. Will the slides be available? Thanks	shela poke-williams	thank you for the question. The slides are currently available here: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls</a> . The recording will also be available on this page, along with recordings and slides from past calls.

Question	Asker Name	Answer
Will you please explain how you are defining technical assistance, especially with, EJ communities in mind, that may be different from how utilities or regulators define or utilize TA?	Sylvia Orduño	live answered
How will the regional hubs ensure that the counseling services are free of charge? Will you be provided resouces to enage in these services or will you be going into communities to provide these servces at times and spaces convenient for community members?	Ardie Griffin (she/her) Emerald Cities Collaborative	live answered
Will there be an emphasis on REACH vendors being required to locate in or near the community that requires Technical Assistance? Solution should be where to problems are.	Jerome Shabazz	live answered
Can water and wastewater utilities receive services from hubs?	Anonymous Attendee	live answered
The public always blames the Government for bad outcomes because corporate partners skillfully shift blame to Big Government.. On the other hand "private partners" capture all credit and profits, clearly an unhealthy relationship. Government isn't the problem GovernANCE is. Do you have a department of marketing?	lynn hamamoto cincinnati ohio	Hi Lynn, thanks for your comments. We do have public affairs offices around the federal government. Thank you.
How will the REACH grants interact with Technical Assistance Support for Communities (TASC) grants that the Superfund program currently provides?	"Steve Wharton, EPA "	I think this TA will provide a lot of the services that OEJ typically provides by buying into TASC, and hopefully allow TASC to stay more focused on a higher level of technical assistance while the REACHes provide the most fundamental foundation
I would like to see a navigator program providing technical assistance so that applying for these grants could be more inclusive and equitable.	Martha Armas-Kelly	Thank you Martha, that is very valuable feedback. We will bring that back to our grants program.
Does 'ground floor' assistance look like Assistance Agreements, like EPA does with Tribal Nations? EPA providing daily or otherwise intensive education, oversgih, and help with programming?	Joseph McGuire EPA R7 ARD	live answered
How will REACH make a difference in providing TA to grassroots, frontline/fenceline community-based groups and reduce competition with NGO and/or larger environmental groups? They oftentimes have more capacity and sometimes complicate direct vs. direct resource allocations and capacity building.	Sylvia Orduño	live answered
are these virtual hubs or be in a regional federal office?	Spring Creek association.	live answered
Certainly the most challenging issue facing CBO's seeking EJ funding grants from EPA are delays in reimbursement that pose a hardship to non profits who must accept financial responsibility for launching and maintaining EPA projects. I was recently informed there will be an 8 week delay in reimbursement for an awarded grant due to end of year disbursement delays.	Ahimsa Porter Sumchai MD - Hunters Point Biomonitoring Foundatio	live answered
So these will be EPA techinal assistants working in/alongside the grantee's organization and over an indefinite time or over a project period?	Anonymous Attendee	live answered

Question	Asker Name	Answer
How can Federal agencies assist communities with study design, engaging topics which clearly have had underpowered study designs to date? Near highway and near major airport ultrafine particle and noise comes to mind. Regional PM2.5 is easy relative to this. How can do the study design and execution that will be sufficiently powered to result in health protection? - Thanks - Wig Zamore - Somerville MA	Wig Zamore O + R + G	live answered
What is the definition of large nonprofit?	Charles Bryson	live answered
The Urban Waters Federal Partnership program has a draft Technical Assistance Guide we developed in 2019. It was never made public. This guide is a list of technical assistance from the 15 fed agencies in the partnership. The TA doc is 62 pages searchable by topic area including; brownfields, coastal waters, community and housing development, environmental justice, infrastructure, job training, mapping, public health, and youth engagement, just to name a few.	Abu Moulta Ali	live answered
Thanks for your TA defining explanation, Chitra, but that's the same as what's needed and described for small-medium size utilities, i.e., "hand-holding" help, that are not utilizing SRF funding, for example. How will REACH build TA beyond grant application help for EJ communities such as improving community-based programs they seek funding for, e.g., stakeholder engagement with EJ communities, workforce training and development, citizen science, etc?	Sylvia Orduño	live answered
The FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan, March 28, 2022, Goal 5, Objective 5.1 first two bullet items refer to ". . . community water systems still in noncompliance with health-based standards . . ." What are those health-based standards and where can we find them?	John Mueller	Hi John, thanks for the question. I suggest you contact our Office of the Chief Financial Officer who released the strategic plan. You can contact them here: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/forms/contact-us-about-planning-budget-and-results">https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/forms/contact-us-about-planning-budget-and-results</a>
Is there a webpage that summarizes this presentation yet?	stephanie coates	thank you for the question. The slides are currently available here: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls</a> . The recording will also be available on this page, along with recordings and slides from past calls.
I mean is there a webpage that summarizes the REACH program yet	stephanie coates	Thank you for the question Stephanie. Right now REACH is still in the planning phase. We currently do not have a designated webpage for it. Our slides will be the best resources. We have not created a webpage as of yet but we are working on pulling together all of the information to put online. Please check our website in the future for more information: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice</a> . We will also be announcing information via our listserv and twitter. For up-to-date information about Environmental Justice funding opportunities, events, and webinars, subscribe to EPA's Environmental Justice listserv by sending a blank email to: <a href="mailto:join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov">join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov</a> . Follow us on Twitter: @EPAEnvJustice
Can you share a list of success stories from other grant applicants and means and tools that made their applications successful?	Ngozi Nwosu	Ngozi - Yes we will circle back with our grants team and see if they have tips on submitting successful applications.

Question	Asker Name	Answer
For assistance developing these "Hubs" look to EPA's BF program or EDA's Economic Development Districts. EDA's EDDs provide assistance to communities in local geographic areas.	Elizabeth Barnes	Thank you Elizabeth for sharing this!
When do you anticipate releasing Region 3 and 4 REACH tech assistance RFA? Spring 2023?	Pamela Bingham	Additional REACH RFAs will be contingent on funding but will likely be in 2023.
Hi. Can you repeat where the slide deck has been posted on the website? Thanks!	Chani Wiggins	Hi Chani, no problem. The slides are currently posted here: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls</a> and the recording will be there too. Thanks!
What is "knee jack"?	Bethany Ayers Fisher	The NEJAC: <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-advisory-council">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-advisory-council</a>
Let him know on the water Fluoridated and Chlorinated water there should be funded for filters to take this out of the water in EJ community homes. It could be RO at the sink which might solve other issues. Usually carbon activated for whole house.	Brett Little (GreenHome Institute)	Thanks Brett.
For smaller non-profits maybe instead of paying TA back in funding (ie. cash) they can provide TA to other community groups; sharing lessons learned, building a wider community of practice.	Abu Moulta Ali	live answered Yep! We already do this in a way but formalizing it in the form of a network of peer to peer assistance providers would be AWESOME!
How do we get on the mailing list to receive notifications about these meetings?	CRYSTAL BATES	For up-to-date information about Environmental Justice funding opportunities, events, and webinars, subscribe to EPA's Environmental Justice listserv by sending a blank email to: <a href="mailto:join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov">join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov</a> . Follow us on Twitter: @EPAEnvJustice
is there any way you can create the eventbrite so we can register for multiple EJ Community engagement calls at one time? I'm always worried I'll forget to do it each month	stephanie coates	live answered
gotcha. thank you! that would be great	stephanie coates	You also may want to follow OEJ's eventbrite page at <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/o/us-epa-office-of-environmental-justice-32375610899">https://www.eventbrite.com/o/us-epa-office-of-environmental-justice-32375610899</a>
I only wanted to note that I applaud the focused wellness moment at the beginning of the meeting. It is an importance that I hope will become a business norm.	Belinda.J.Baber	Thank you Belinda, we are glad it held a good space for you :)