21st Annual P3 Awards: A National Student Design Competition Focusing on People, Prosperity and the Planet Request for Applications (RFA)

Informational Webinar Questions and Answers

Webinar Date: January 22, 2024

Eligibility

- **What students are eligible to apply?**
  Answer: Undergraduate and/or graduate students enrolled in an eligible U.S. college or university may participate in the research. It is up to the faculty advisor to determine the mix of students and disciplines appropriate for the proposed research project.

- **Can high school students join the team?**
  Answer: No, high school students cannot be involved in the project.

- **Are Graduate Teaching Assistants eligible to apply?**
  Answer: The academic institution applies for a P3 grant. Graduate students, including teaching assistants, may participate in the student team. The Principal Investigator (PI), however, must be a faculty member. Research funds may be used for undergraduate or graduate student stipends.

- **Is there a requirement of how many students need to be part of the award, such as one PI and two students?**
  Answer: Answer: No. Teams may be composed of undergraduates, graduate students, or both. However, it is envisioned that a P3 team would be composed of more than one student.

- **How many people can there be in a team?**
  Answer: No, there is no maximum. Keep in mind the budget, as there will be $75,000 awarded and there are costs associated with each student. Each project should have more than one student, but the number of students is up to the PI.

- **Do you need to already have the student team, or could you apply and then form the team?**
  Answer: No, the team does not have to be in place to apply to the RFA.

  Per the solicitation, "If student investigators are known at the time of application submittal, list them, indicate whether each student is an undergraduate or graduate student, and indicate the expertise they will contribute to the P3 team. If student investigators are not yet known, provide a brief explanation of how and when the P3 student team will be formed and the areas of expertise to be recruited for the team. Include in the team students from schools and disciplines that will help make a successful project (e.g., from business, social science, and educational schools or departments)."

- **Can the group be a mix of both graduate and undergraduate students?**

Answer: Yes. The team can include both graduate and undergraduate students. One faculty member must be listed as the PI, but other advisors may be involved as well.

- **Do students have to be from the same university as the PI? Can student teams be from multiple universities?**
  Answer: The PI leads a student team from the lead academic institution receiving the grant. However, other institutions or subawardees can partner on the project along with students at that institution.

- **Are two-year institutions (community colleges) eligible to apply?**
  Answer: Yes, community colleges are eligible to apply.

- **Can a nonprofit organization apply that is collaborating with a university?**
  Answer: No, the university will have to apply and be the primary applicant, but the nonprofit organization can be a subawardee.

- **Can principal investigators (PI) and students be non-U.S. citizens?**
  Answer: Yes, as long as the PI and student are affiliated with the primary institution receiving the grant. and legally present in the U.S.

- **Can someone apply from an international institution?**
  Answer: No, international institutions are not eligible to receive P3 grants. However, collaboration with an international university is allowed.

  Per the Solicitation: "Public and private institutions of higher education (limited to degree-granting institutions of higher education) located in the U.S. (includes eligible institutions of higher education located in U.S. territories and possessions) are eligible to apply to be the recipient of a grant to support teams of undergraduate, graduate students, or both. Profit-making firms and individuals are not eligible to receive assistance agreements from the EPA under this program."

- **Is the grant application open to research outside the US?**
  Answer: Yes, but the institution applying must be in the U.S. If the research takes place outside the U.S. and for your project to be considered, you must address the second Relevancy Review criteria, "The degree to which the research is primarily performed in the U.S. and the benefits of the research primarily accrue to the U.S."

- **If you don't get the P3 this year, can you reapply next year?**
  Answer: Yes. An unsuccessful applicant can reapply to future solicitations. However, the application should not be the same as previously submitted.

- **Our team is participating in an EPA challenge (with prize money), are we still eligible for a P3 award?**

Answer: Yes, as long as the proposed P3 research is distinctly different from the work to be funded in the challenge.

- **Can you be a peer reviewer for one research area, if you apply for another research area?**
  Answer: No, you cannot serve as a peer reviewer if you apply to any research area.

- **Can a graduate student with undergraduate students or vice versa participate with support from an advisor from the same program of study or are multiple advisors needed for each individual student participant?**
  Answer: P3 teams may have a combination of graduate or undergraduate students. One faculty member must be listed as the PI, but other advisors may be involved as well.

Principal Investigators (PI)

- **Can staff serve as the PI or must the PI hold an appointment at the applicant institution? Can a student serve as a PI?**
  Answer: The PI must hold an appointment at the applicant institution. It is possible for the PI to change after the award has been made. A student may not serve as the PI.

- **Can a postdoc or non-faculty employee serve as a PI? If a postdoc wants to participate as a student, is that allowed?**
  Answer: PIs must be faculty at the granted institution.

  Refer to Section I.B of the RFA, "Each student team must include a faculty advisor that will serve as the Principal Investigator throughout the P3 competition and grant award process. The faculty advisor must be a professor at the participating academic institution. Current graduate students are not eligible to act as a faculty advisor. Teams may be composed of undergraduates, graduate students, or both. A P3 team should not be composed of only one student and a faculty advisor."

- **Can one PI submit multiple projects?**
  Answer: Yes. One PI can submit multiple proposals as long as the proposals are substantially different.

- **Can there be more than one faculty on proposal? Can there be Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs) on the team?**
  Answer: The application should include one PI, but can include, as appropriate, co-PIs who will significantly contribute to the project. However, the applications must be submitted with a single lead PI who will serve as the primary faculty advisor for the P3 student team.

- **Does the PI need to be a U.S. citizen?**
  Answer: Faculty advisors/PIs must be U.S. citizens and/or lawfully admitted to U.S.

- **Does the university faculty advisor submit the application or does a student in the group submit the application?**
  Answer: The institution of the primary faculty advisor serving as the lead PI submits the application via Grants.gov. If you have any trouble submitting the application on Grants.gov, use the Grant.gov helpline (1-800-518-4726), note the case number and send an email with case number to the email box (electronic-grant-submissions@epa.gov) before the February 1, 2023, deadline. Applications submitted directly by students will not be accepted.

- **If your project is in collaboration with another university, does a PI from each university need to be on the team? Or is it possible to list as co-PIs?**
  Answer: If another university is proposed as a subawardee, then the application should list a faculty member as a co-PI.

Research Areas and Objectives

- **Do we need to address both objectives under the listed research area? Or can we address only one of the objectives listed?**
  Answer: Applicants must address one of the objectives of one of the research areas (Clean and Healthy Air, Clean and Safe Water, Safeguard and Revitalize Communities, and Ensure Safety of Chemicals) in their application. Note that each application must be submitted using a single Funding Opportunity Number (FON). Projects must not exceed the $75,000 budget and two-year duration.

- **Can a proposal cover more than one research area?**
  Answer: A proposal may focus on more than one research area, but each application must be submitted using a single Funding Opportunity Number (FON). The PI should determine the primary focus of the application and apply to that FON.

- **Would a proposal based on a Phase II continuation of a prior award be considered?**
  Answer: A project can be considered if it is a proof-of-concept and fits within the four Funding Opportunity Numbers (FONs).

- **What does full implementation of a project mean?**
  Answer: In the P3 program, projects move from "proof of concept" to "implementation/demonstration." Full implementation refers to the stage where the concept or pilot is ready for testing in the lab or a real-world setting.

Budget and Funding

- **How will the awarded institution receive grant funds and how long does it take?**

Answer: When the grantee is notified about the award, they can start putting the project in place such as setting up accounts and start the research and submit invoices. It will be on the primary institution.

- **Do you fund the same number of projects under each research area?**
  Answer: The number of awards per Funding Opportunity Numbers (FONs) may not be proportionate and can vary from year to year.

- **Can you elaborate on the budget categories? Can we pay students under this award?**
  Answer: Some student support is provided by funding (e.g., participant support costs such as stipends or travel assistance). If students are considered employees of the university, those expenses would be indicated under the Personnel category. If not, these costs are considered participant support costs. For more information, refer to Section IV.C.4 of the RFA for specific information on each budget category.

- **Do you have any suggestions on the budget allocated to the PIs and Co-PIs? Is there a limit on the budget? Does EPA have a limit on indirect costs? Is there a cap on facility and administrative costs from my institution? Is institutional overhead an allowable budget cost?**
  Answer: Requests for amounts in excess of a total of $75,000 per award, including direct and indirect costs, will not be considered. Peer reviewers evaluate the application for "Budget and Project Management", so it is important to ensure that the budget realistically supports the research being proposed including travel to the National Student Design Expo which is a requirement.

- **Can our budget include elements for continued research (i.e. interviews) during the development of the Proof of Concept to Full Implementation?**
  Answer: Yes. Categorize costs as appropriate – staff and/or student time and travel, supplies, contractual, etc.

- **How much should we budget on average to attend the Expo?**
  Answer: The answer is largely dependent on how many team members you want to send to the Expo, the cost of transportation, lodging, etc., for each day. This year's Expo will take place at the National Harbor in Maryland.

Format and Requirements

- **What is the page count and requirements for the abstract and research plan? Are figures and tables included in the page count?**
  Answer: Refer to Section IV.C.5 of the RFA for information on the page counts, headers and other requirements for the abstract and research plan respectively. Figures and tables are included in the page limit.

- **Are tables and charts required to use 12-pt. font in the application?**

Answer: Table and chart font size are under applicant discretion. However, font sizes should be legible and consistent throughout the application.

- **Is there a requirement to have the Human Subjects Research Statement?**
  Answer: Yes. Even if your project does not include any human subjects research, your application must contain a statement to this effect. Consult the solicitation for exact wording for non-human subjects research.

- **What information should be included in the singular PDF for the submission package?**
  Answer: Refer to RFA section IV.F.3.e., "Project Narrative Attachment Form: Attach a single electronic PDF file labeled "Application" that contains the items described in Section IV.C.5.i through IV.C.5.viii.a (Table of Contents, Abstract, Research Plan, Quality Assurance Statement, Human Subjects Research Statement, Scientific Data Management Plan, References, Budget Justification, Resumes, Current and Pending Support, Applicant Current and Pending Support Certification, and Letters of Intent/Support) of this solicitation."

- **Can you elaborate on the time frame of the project? Could our timeline be a year and a half?**
  Answer: Yes, and it should be no more than two years.

- **Are there any previous application templates available to refer to as a guide for our team's application?**
  Answer: Unfortunately, we cannot make previous applications available. However, you can see previously funded P3 projects at https://www.epa.gov/P3/p3-teams. The RFA should provide all the guidance that is needed to develop an application. If you have any questions, please email the points of contact listed in the announcement.

Partners

- **Can there be industrial, federal agencies partners or international partners?**
  Answer: Yes. We strongly recommend that applicants obtain letters of support from organizations with which they plan to partner.

  Per the solicitation, "Partnerships are strongly encouraged and will be particularly important for the demonstration strategies. While formal partnerships need not be established prior to submitting the application, indicate anticipated partnerships including the type of partner (educational institution, industry and/or NGOs). Formal letters of understanding or commitment from partners should be submitted in support of the application, when available and appropriate and will be considered letters of intent/support as described in Section IV.C.5.vii.a."

  Per the solicitation, "The applicant institution may enter into an agreement with a Federal Agency to purchase or utilize unique supplies or services unavailable in the private sector to the extent authorized by law. Examples are purchase of satellite data, chemical reference standards, analyses, or use of instrumentation or other facilities not available elsewhere. A written justification for federal involvement must be included in the application. In addition, an appropriate form of assurance that documents the commitment, such as a letter of intent from the Federal Agency involved, should be included."

- **How detailed does the letters of support have to be?**
  Answer: In general letters of support should be one page, with a short paragraph stating their endorsement and what support they intend to provide, if any.

- **If you have one support letter that is less than the length of one page, is that included within the 12-page research plan?**
  Answer: If letters of support are one brief paragraph, they are not considered part of the research plan. If a letter of support exceeds one brief paragraph, it is considered part of the 12-page research plan limit.

- **How many letters of support do we need to submit?**
  Answer: There is no minimum or maximum.