Reducing Indoor Air Risks Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) EPA-OAR-ORIA-24-01

Questions and Answers, as of February 2, 2024

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is accepting applications for funding under the Reducing Indoor Air Risks grants competition (EPA-OAR-ORIA-24-01).

The Notice of Funding Opportunity and all application forms are available at this <u>grants.gov site</u>. The deadline to apply is **February 5, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. (ET).**

Please review all questions. If you have any additional questions, please email IEDGrantsAdminTeam@epa.gov by January 26, 2024. Questions marked NEW or UPDATED have been added or revised since the last posting of the questions and answers document.

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I. General Questions

Question 1: How can potential grant applicants learn more? **Answer 1:**

- Review the Question/Answer document on the website: Applicants are encouraged to review this
 Questions and Answers document for further information about this grant program and NOFO,
 available here. The EPA will respond to questions from applicants regarding:
 - o Threshold eligibility clarification criteria.
 - o Administrative issues related to the submission of the application.
 - o Requests about any of the language or provisions in the announcement.
 - Compliance with regulatory requirements and the EPA guidance for competition for procurement of professional services and equipment purchases and entering into proper subawards.
- <u>Email a Question to the EPA</u>: Applicants may email questions to <u>IEDGrantsAdminTeam@epa.gov</u>. Questions must be submitted via email before January 26, 2024. The EPA will answer relevant questions and post them in this Questions and Answers document the following week while the NOFO is open <u>here</u>. All applicants are encouraged to check the document regularly. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 2: Are there any resources available, such as templates or webinars, to help guide the proposal writing process?

Answer 2: The EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment has online training courses and helpful tools for applicants, including information on the application process. Please visit the EPA's Grant webpage for more information. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 3: What is the anticipated timeline for the review and award process?

Answer 3: Notification of selections for this competition are anticipated to made in March 2024 with award anticipated in June 2024. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 4: Is there a dedicated point of contact for technical questions or clarifications during the application period?

Answer 4: Yes, Peggy Bagnoli (<u>Bagnoli.Peggy@epa.gov</u>). You can also reach us at <u>IEDGrantsAdminTeam@epa.gov</u>. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 5: Will an application for development and operating funds be competitive? Can you please review our proposal to this program as I'm having trouble discerning whether my project fits?

We intend to study environmental asthma triggers and pathogen transmission in medical and mobile clinics that serve underserved communities. The main goal is to create a system of affordable mitigation plans in those spaces and assess them. After reading the NOFO, although those contaminants are listed in the call, it feels like the call is mainly looking for proposals that address homes (single and multifamily dwellings). Does the above idea fit the scope of this NOFO?

Answer 5: The EPA is not able to review, meet with applicants, or comment on pre-application concepts or materials. Please refer to Section I.B. "Program Goals and Objectives" to determine if your proposal aligns with the funding opportunity. (*Posted January 11, 2024*)

The EPA is not able to review, meet with applicants, or comment on pre-application concepts or materials.

This funding opportunity seeks applications to advance national policy or systems-level change to reduce indoor air risks and yield measurable environmental and public health outcomes. One of the objectives is to address indoor environmental asthma triggers. Applications should propose projects that use technical assistance and training to expand national-scale capacity to address indoor environmental determinants of health (IEDOH) by equipping State, tribal, and local communities to build and improve systems aimed to:

- Increasing the number of State environmental, public health, housing, and Medicaid programs effectively collaborating to develop and/or expand infrastructures that will support the access to, delivery and financing of in-home asthma interventions.
- Increasing the number of health plans serving Medicaid populations that expand coverage for and/or reimburse in-home interventions.
- Build and/or improve State, tribal, and local capacity to use IEDOH data and analytics to inform and target in-home interventions and focus indoor environmental investments to have the greatest impacts on asthma health outcomes.

Please refer to Section I.B. "Program Goals and Objectives" to determine if your proposal aligns with the funding opportunity. (Posted January 26, 2024)

II. Funding

Question 1: How much funding is the EPA awarding via this grant program? What is the total program funding that can be requested per application?

Answer 1: The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards under this competitive opportunity is approximately \$1,000,000, annually, for up to three years. Funding is dependent upon agency appropriations, funding availability, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.

The amount of federal funding requested by an applicant must not exceed \$200,000 per year, and \$600,000 for a three-year project period. The EPA will not consider or review applications requesting in excess of \$200,000 per year in federal funds or applications requesting funds for more than 3 years. The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards under this competitive opportunity is approximately \$1,000,000 or more, annually, for up to three years. Funding is dependent upon agency appropriations, funding availability, Agency priorities, and other applicable considerations. The amount of federal funding requested by an applicant must not exceed \$200,000 per year, and \$600,000 for a three-year project period. The EPA will not consider or review applications requesting in excess of \$200,000 per year in federal funds. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 2: The funding limit per year for this award is \$200,000. Is that number for Direct Costs, or Total Costs (Direct + Indirect)?

Answer 2: The total amount requested by the applicant should include both direct and indirect costs and needs to be commensurate with the applicant's proposed activities. Please see Section IV.B.1. "Cover Page" as well as "Example Budget Table" on pages 35-36. (*Posted January 18, 2024*)

Question 3: When completing the budget narrative, should one year of budgeted funds be included, with the expectation that we will submit proposed budgets for following years of planned projects later? Or should we submit the budget for each/all years in the initial application package?

Answer 3: A best practice would be to clearly define each year's budget so the EPA can ensure the application

does not exceed the annual maximum each year. The project end date can be up to three years from the actual award date. Note, funding is contingent upon grantee progress and availability of funds. As stated in Section IV.B. "Project Narrative Instructions, Optional Format, and Content," under the Budget Summary, each application can request up to the full funding amount of \$200,000 annually. The total amount of requested funding needs to be commensurate with the applicant's proposed activities.

The proposed project period dates in Section II.D. are for planning purposes. In accordance with the EPA's grants policy, after an award is made, grantees may request adjustments to the project period in consultation with the EPA project officer. (Posted January 26, 2024)

Question 4: When completing the budget narrative, does the example table contain a sufficient level of detail, or is additional justification and description expected?

Answer 4: When completing the budget narrative, the example budget table on pages 35-36 of the NOFO does contain a sufficient level of detail when submitting an application. However, the example budget is only showing 1 year of funding. To show three years of funding, add an additional column for each year. Please see Section IV. Section 7- Budget that states that the EPA will evaluate the reasonableness of the applicant's budget based on the applicant's narrative description of the budget and detailed breakout of requested funding for each work component or task. Provide a detailed description of every itemized cost, including how every cost relates to the project narrative and specific emission reduction activities. Instructions for what to include in the Budget Detail are described in Section 7.a. Please also see Section V.A. Applications will first be evaluated against the threshold factors listed in Section III.C. of this NOFO. Only those applications which meet all the threshold factors will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria by an EPA evaluation team. (Posted January 26, 2024)

III. Administrative, including contents of applications

Question 1: What are all the documents I need to apply for this funding opportunity? **Answer 1:** Please see Section IV.A.3. "Application Materials" for a list of forms and documents that are mandatory and optional under this announcement.

Mandatory Documents:

- Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance. Please note that the organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) must be included on the SF-424.
- Standard Form 424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
- EPA Form 4700-4, Pre-Award Compliance Review Report
- EPA Form 5700-54, Key Contacts Form
- Project Narrative Attachment Form, Project Narrative Prepared as described in Section IV.B. below.

Optional Attachment Documents. Use the "Other Attachments" form identified under the "Mandatory Documents" tab to submit the following:

- Voluntary Cost Share Commitment Letter.
- Project Team Biographies.
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, note that this will be required if application is selected for funding.

- Lobbying Form.
- Partnership Letter(s).
- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) or the EPA's EJSCREEN results.
- Approval Letter, if applicable to use alternate means to submit initial application.

(Posted January 5, 2024)

Question 2: Why do I see an error message stating, "No SAM.gov records match your email" when trying to access the application form?

Answer 2: If you receive this error message, please confirm that:

- 1. The organization you intend to apply for is actively registered as an entity on SAM.gov and has a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
- 2. You are listed as one of the following four Points of Contact (POC) in your organization's entity registration on SAM.gov:
 - a. Electronic Business POC.
 - b. Alternate Electronic Business POC.
 - c. Government Business POC.
 - d. Alternate Government Business POC.
- 3. The login.gov account you are using to access the application form uses the exact same email address as is listed in your POC information in your organization's SAM.gov entity registration.

Note: If you are still seeing this error message, you meet all three requirements above, and it has been more than 2 business days since updating your SAM.gov information, then please reply back with your organization's name, 12-character UEI, and the name and email of the user trying to access the application form. We can then investigate the issue. (*Posted January 11, 2024*)

Question 3: Is Calibri (Body) 11 point acceptable?

Answer 3: Yes. Calibri (Body) 11-point font is acceptable. Please note that there is no minimum font size and margin for the application, however Section IV.B of the NOFO states, "The project narrative, including the cover page, workplan, and budget table and detail, must not exceed a maximum of 10 single-spaced typewritten pages. Pages in excess of the 10-page limit will not be reviewed." (*Posted January 18, 2024*)

Question 4: Is a list of references included within the 10-page limit?

Answer 4: No. References are considered "Other Attachments" and will not count towards your 10-page limit. Please see Section IV.B. Project Narrative Instructions, Optional Format, and Content for more information. (Posted January 18, 2024)

Question 5: Is it possible to have a co-project manager model for this grant, with one project manager at a University and a co-project manager from public school staff?

Answer 5: Successful applicants may provide funds to a project partner through a contract, provided the applicant follows the procedures contained in the NOFO. Please refer to the "Note" on page 1 and Appendix A – Further Information Regarding Contracts, Subawards, and Participant Support Costs. If you intend to name a contractor (including an individual consultant) or a subrecipient as a project partner or otherwise in your application, the EPA recommends that you carefully review, and comply with, the directions contained in the "Contracts and Subawards" clause that can be accessed under the Section IV.E clause for "Additional Provisions for "Applicants Incorporated Into the Solicitation." Please also note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering, or other firms assisting applicants with the application solely

based on the firm's role in preparing the application or based on an assertion that the individual or firm has "unique qualifications." (Posted January 18, 2024)

Question 6: Can a person act as a professional consultant for my proposal (being paid as a professional consultant as part of the budget if funded) even though they are applying for this funding opportunity as well?

Answer 6: Yes, this is allowable. The consultant needs to be aware of the "Duplicate Funding" clause on page 5 of the "Additional Clauses" that are linked in Section I.E. of the NOFO. They should also review the "Contracts and Subawards" section of these clauses, beginning on page 4. NEW

Question 7: I recently applied for non-profit status and am awaiting my employer identification number (EIN). Can I still apply to this grant program if my EIN is not assigned by the deadline?

Answer 7: Becoming a new non-profit organization and not being registered in time to submit via grants.gov is not grounds for submitting via email.

Please read the key information from Section III. "Threshold Eligibility Criteria" which states that "the EPA will only consider accepting applications outside of Grants.gov from applicants that are able to demonstrate that they are unable to submit through Grants.gov due to Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov. NOTE: DO NOT WAIT! Register in SAM.gov and Grants.gov as soon as possible. Finalizing these registrations could take a month or more. You do not want a late registration to prevent you from being able to properly and timely submit your application through Grants.gov."

Section IV.A. provides links and contact info for assistance with SAM.gov and Grants.gov pasted below:

Contact the <u>Federal Service Desk</u> help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

Contact <u>Grants.gov</u> for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or <u>support@grants.gov</u> to resolve technical issues with Grants.gov. Applicants who are outside the U.S. at the time of submittal and are not able to access the toll-free number may reach a Grants.gov representative by calling 606-545-5035. The Grants.gov Support Center is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays. **NEW**

IV. Allowable Activities

Question 1: The program description mentions focusing on "national policy or systems-level change." Can you provide some examples of previously successful projects under this category?

Answer 1: Section I.C. (2. Outputs; 3. Outcomes) is illustrative of the outputs and outcomes of projects to be funded under this announcement. In addition, please visit the EPA's Cooperative Agreement Funding for Indoor Air Quality and click on links to Cooperative Agreements, 2021 – 2024, and Cooperative Agreements, 2017 – 2021, for a list of current and past recipients and brief descriptions of the selected cooperative

Question 2: While the program broadly identifies radon, asthma triggers, and comprehensive risk reduction as priority areas, are there any specific sub-themes or research gaps within these areas that the EPA is particularly interested in exploring?

Answer 2: Please refer to Section I.B. "Program Goals and Objectives". Common indoor air contaminants include radon, environmental asthma triggers (e.g., secondhand smoke, cockroaches and other pests, chemical irritants, dust mites, pet dander, nitrogen dioxide, wood smoke, and mold); pathogens transmitted through the air (e.g., SARS-COV-2, Influenza); particulate matter; combustion byproducts; and volatile organic compounds. Please note: The EPA will not consider any applications under this NOFO that are exclusively designed to conduct scientific research. However, applications may include research components as a foundation for demonstration, technical assistance, training, education, and/or outreach projects. In such cases, applications should clearly articulate this linkage, explain why the research component is necessary for the project's success, and ensure that such research does not already exist. (Posted January 5, 2024)

Question 3: Are there any measurable outcomes or metrics the program prioritizes when evaluating proposals?

Answer 3: Section I.C. (2. Outputs; 3. Outcomes) "Environmental Results and Strategic Plan Information" lists the programs outputs and outcomes and is illustrative of the projects that can be funded under this announcement. Section IV.B. Section 2 "Environmental Results" further details how to capture and measure performance of proposed activities of the expected quantitative and qualitative outcomes and outputs of the project as defined in Section I.C. of the NOFO. Specific outputs and outcomes should be provided and may include short- and longer-term activities. Section V.A "Evaluation Criteria" provides a table on how the EPA will evaluate each application based of 100 points possible. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 4: Does this program apply to work conducted in K-12 schools?

Answer 4: This funding opportunity does not specify a particular focus on schools, nor does it exclude schools. You may want to look at the recently posted <u>Grant Funding to Address Indoor Air Pollution at Schools (EPA-R-OAR-24-02)</u> on January 11, 2024. This funding opportunity from the Inflation Reduction Act provides funding for grants and other activities to monitor and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions at schools in low-income and disadvantaged communities. The EPA posts all new air funding opportunities on this site. But please read each notification carefully for eligibility requirements. Note that for-profit organizations usually aren't eligible for our competitions. *The EPA's Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools Action Kit* shows schools how to carry out a practical plan to improve indoor air problems at little- or no-cost using straightforward activities and in-house staff. The Action Kit provides best practices, industry guidelines, sample policies, and a sample IAQ management plan.

The federal government provides a variety of <u>financial resources for school construction</u>, <u>renovation</u>, <u>or repair</u>. Although few federal programs focus specifically on supporting school infrastructure, many programs may be used for capital improvements at school facilities. Additional resources are available through states and utilities.

The Department of Energy <u>website</u> also offers solutions to access capital and financing energy-efficiency projects in schools. While not all financing options presented will be available in every region or state, they represent a cross-section of what is available in the market.

The Small Business Administration has a list of grant opportunities you can explore on their webpage and at

grants.gov. (Posted January 5, 2024) UPDATED

Question 5: Is research to enhance indoor air quality an eligible activity?

Answer 5: The EPA will not consider applications that are exclusively designed to conduct scientific research under this NOFO. Please refer to Section 1.B. Program Goals and Objectives. However, applications may include research components as a foundation for demonstration, technical assistance, training, education, and/or outreach projects. These types of applications should clearly articulate this linkage, explain why the research component is necessary for the project's success, and ensure that such research does not already exist. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 6: What is the overall goal for this new grant opportunity? Is this grant targeted for smaller organizations or is this more for larger institutions to carry out larger programs like the K-State Radon program? Can smaller organizations also apply here?

Answer 6: Any eligible entity, as defined in Section III.A of the NOFO, can submit an application. However, the goal of this funding opportunity is to advance national policy or systems-level change to reduce indoor air risks and yield measurable environmental and public health outcomes. This NOFO is not intended to fund small-scale local projects. Section I.B (page 6) describes the Program Goals and Objectives and gives information on the types and scale of projects that are sought by this funding opportunity.

Smaller organizations are eligible and may consider including an individual consultant or a subrecipient as a project partner or otherwise in the application. The EPA recommends that each organization carefully review, and comply with, the direction contained in the Note on page 1 of the NOFO directing applicants to the current "EPA Solicitation Clauses," Section IV.d. "Contracts and Subawards" for more information and "Appendix A - Further information Regarding Contracts, Subawards, and Participant Support Costs."

Please refer to Section I.B to determine if your proposal aligns with the NOFO. There is specific guidance in this section addressing research proposals. There is specific guidance concerning demonstration projects in Section I.D. (Posted January 5, 2024) UPDATED

Question 7: Is carbon dioxide (CO₂) considered an indicator of pollution under this funding opportunity? **Answer 7:** Yes, CO₂ is considered an indicator of pollution under this funding opportunity. (*Posted January 11, 2024*)

Question 8: Are applications that focus on chemicals that are significant contributor to poor IAQ, indoor chemicals, chemical irritants, not governed by "other EPA program offices" related to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Clean Air Act (CAA) or the Clean Water Act (CWA), eligible for funding?

Answer 8: As described in Section I.B. Program Goals and Objectives, the EPA will not consider applications under this NOFO which specifically address indoor asbestos, lead, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), or other chemical-specific pollutants. Applicants may submit applications that uniquely address one or more of these program priority areas: Radon, Indoor Environmental Asthma Triggers, and Comprehensive Indoor Air Risk Reduction. Please visit <u>Asthma Triggers: Gain Control</u> for EPA's list indoor allergens and irritants. You can also visit <u>Indoor Pollutants and Sources</u> for a list of indoor air pollution. This NOFO does not preclude the inclusion of chemical irritants or volatile organic compounds, in applications that are responsive to the Program Goals and Objectives described in Section I.B.

As stated in Section I.D. Statutory Authority, the statutory authority for this NOFO focuses on the Clean Air

Act, §103(b)(3). Asbestos, lead, PCBs, or other chemical-specific pollutants are addressed by other EPA program offices. Please visit the <u>EPA's Grants</u> webpage for additional information. Funding opportunities intended to uniquely address asbestos, lead, and PCBs, however, can be identified by searching grants.gov. (*Posted January 18, 2024*)

Question 9: Is removal of lead paint and asbestos eligible activities covered under this funding opportunity? **Answer 9:** As described in Section I.B. Program Goals and Objectives, the EPA will not consider applications under this NOFO which specifically address indoor asbestos, lead, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), or other chemical-specific pollutants as these pollutants are addressed by other EPA program offices. Please visit the EPA's Grants webpage for additional information. (Posted January 18, 2024)

Question 10: We are a smaller regional non-profit organization considering an anti-natural gas campaign in the near future. It could be regional or possibly part of a statewide coalition. Due to the recent information about natural gas creating indoor hazardous air conditions. Does this qualify as an eligible activity? **Answer 10:** The goal of this funding opportunity is to advance national policy or systems-level change to reduce indoor air risks and yield measurable environmental and public health outcomes. This NOFO is not intended to fund small-scale local projects. Section I.B (page 6) describes the Program Goals and Objectives and gives information on the types and scale of projects that are sought by this funding opportunity. Smaller organizations are eligible and may consider including an individual consultant or a subrecipient as a project partner or otherwise in the application. The EPA recommends that each organization carefully review, and comply with, the direction contained in the Note on page 1 of the NOFO directing applicants to the current "EPA Solicitation Clauses," Section IV.d. "Contracts and Subawards" for more information and "Appendix A – Further information Regarding Contracts, Subawards, and Participant Support Costs."

With respect to "natural gas," it would depend on what you are focusing on with regards to natural gas use:

- Is it about nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) exposure?
- Is it about particle (PM) exposure?

If it's about particle exposure much of the particle exposure is generated from the act of cooking itself less is about the source of that heat for cooking be it gas or electric. Much of the exposure to NO_2 and particles can be mitigated by proper ventilation and hood use. If it's about using less fossil fuels (methane) then that's outside of the scope of our grant.

You can visit <u>Asthma Triggers: Gain Control</u> to see the EPA's list of indoor allergens and irritants. You can also visit <u>Indoor Pollutants and Sources</u> for a list of indoor air pollutants. This NOFO does not preclude the inclusion of chemical irritants or volatile organic compounds, in applications that are responsive to the Program Goals and Objectives described in Section I.B. (*Posted January 18, 2024*)

V. Allowable Costs

VI. Eligibility, including partner eligibility

Question 1: Who is eligible to apply for this grant? Could you clarify the types of organizations eligible to apply for this grant?

Answer 1:

- Eligible Entities for this NOFO include "States, local governments, territories, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, international organizations, public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, and other public or private non-profit institutions." Please see section III.A "Eligible Entities" for additional information and definitions.
- 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.
 - (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.
- The EPA will accept applications from hospitals operated by State, Tribal, or local governments or applicants that meet the definition of nonprofit organization. (Posted January 5, 2024)

Question 2: What are the restrictions and limits to the definition of "schools and hospitals?" **Answer 2:** The EPA will not accept applications from for-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals or any organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4). (Posted January 5, 2024) **UPDATED**

Question 3: Are there any geographic restrictions for project implementation?

Answer 3: All work under this NOFO must be conducted within the United States. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 4: Does the program prioritize specific populations or indoor settings (e.g., low-income housing, schools, elder care facilities)?

Answer 4: Section I(b) Program Goals and Objectives lists describes the EPA Indoor Air Program's priority areas and Environmental Justice and Disadvantage Communities program. Section IV(B) describes how the proposed project substantially comply with the instructions and content described below. The project narrative must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections I-III of this announcement (including the threshold eligibility criteria in Section III.C). It should also address the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. of the NOFO. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 5: Are federal agencies eligible to receive funding under this NOFO?

Answer 5: Federal agencies are not eligible to receive an award under this NOFO. (*Posted January 5, 2024*)

Question 6: Are universities based outside of the United State eligible to submit a proposal for this funding opportunity? Is a U.S. partner required?

Answer 6: All work under this NOFO must be conducted within the United States. (*Posted January 5, 2024*) **UPDATED**

Question 7: Can a licensed radon mitigation business apply for this funding opportunity to promote radon

reduction / system installation?

Answer 7: Licensed radon mitigators qualify as a for-profit organization and are thus ineligible to receive financial assistance under this NOFO. Please see Section III.A "Eligible Entities" for more information. (*Posted January 5, 2024*) **UPDATED**

VII. Other