

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grant Program

Administered by Grantmaker B

Request for Applications (RFA)

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1. Background

The EPA Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program supports EPA's goals and objectives of two Executive Orders (EO 14008 and EO 13985) issued by the Biden Administration that demonstrate the EPA's and Administration's commitment to achieving environmental justice and embedding environmental justice into Agency programs.

Grantmaker B is the Grantmaking partner of the EPA for this program in < geographic region >.

This program's objective is to provide grant funding to community-based organizations and other eligible entities advancing environmental justice initiatives in their respective communities.

2. Executive Summary

Through this RFA process, Grantmaker B will award a portfolio of approximately 171 grants. Grants will be available for four (4) distinct tiers of community readiness:

| Tier | Award Focus | Expected | Amount | Award Period |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|

| | | Number of Awards | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| I | Assessment Projects | 60 | Up to \$150,000 | 1 Year |
| II | Planning Projects | 51 | Up to \$250,000 | 1-2 Years |
| III | Implementation Projects | 50 | Up to \$350,000 | 2 Years |
| N/A | Noncompetitive Capacity-Building | 10 | \$75,000 | 1 Year |

- 60 Tier I awards will be for 1 year up to \$150,000 assessment projects,
- 51 Tier II awards will be for 1-2 years up to \$250,000 planning projects, and
- 50 Tier III awards are for 2-year up to \$350,000 project development projects.
- 10 Noncompetitive awards will be for one-year up to \$75,000 for severely capacity constrained communities.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, beginning in August 2024, and ending in November 2024 for 2-year proposals and ending April 2025 for 1-year proposals. Grantmaker B will review applications on a rolling basis and issue awards through five rounds:

- Round 1: December 2024
- Round 2: February 2025
- Round 3: April 2025
- Round 4: June 2025
- Round 5: August 2025

There is a limit for the total amount of funding (\$40,000,000) available (around 171 awards across all tiers). Should all funds be awarded prior to the later rounds, Grantmaker B will keep potential applicants informed about the remaining awards available after each round. And if all funds are fully awarded prior to the last round, applicants will be directed to any competitions remaining at the national grant maker level. In addition, Grantmaker B will have resource referrals to other funding opportunities to share with potential applicants as allowed and in accordance with EPA guidelines. Each eligible entity is restricted to receiving up to two awards.

3. Program Overview

o Project Tiers

Grantmaker B has been awarded funding by the EPA to run a competition to provide funding to historically, underserved communities that have been disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards and health consequences and have faced environmental and energy justice challenges. These communities are often exposed to unhealthy land uses, poor air and water quality, dilapidated housing that leads to lead exposure, and other environmental threats that drive health disparities. The combination of environmental risks and social inequities creates a cumulative, disproportionate impact that hinders optimal environmental health and justice particularly for these communities.

Subgrants may address a wide range of environmental issues and consist of a variety of project types including (but not limited to) the following:

- Air quality & asthma
- Fence line air quality monitoring
- Monitoring of effluent discharges from industrial facilities
- Water quality & sampling
- Small cleanup projects
- Improving food access to reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Stormwater issues and green infrastructure
- Lead and asbestos contamination
- Pesticides and other toxic substances
- Healthy homes that are energy/water use efficient and not subject to indoor air pollution
- Illegal dumping activities, such as education, outreach, and small-scale clean-ups
- Emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency
- Environmental job training for occupations that reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollutants
- Environmental justice training for youth

To ensure that this program can best support the needs of communities working on environmental justice initiatives, EPA has structured the awards into three distinct tiers as well as an allocation of noncompetitive grants for severely capacity constrained communities. The RFA process has been designed to minimize the administrative burden for resource-constrained organizations to apply for federal funding.

Tier I: Assessment

The Tier I EJ (Environmental Justice) Thriving Communities Awards are available for severely capacity-constrained community-based organizations and/or “entry-level” applicants to assist them during the initial steps of their work to address specific issues impacting them locally by conducting assessments of environmental and public health concerns. Tier I EJ Thriving Communities Awards are for up to \$150,000 each for a one-year project period. Tier I projects can address multiple environmental issues (e.g., air quality, water contamination, toxic substances, etc.). The following is a list of the types of activities which may be considered by the Grantmakers for Tier I EJ Thriving

Communities Awards. **The following activities examples are provided for illustrative purposes only and the list is not all inclusive:**

- research (that is incidental to the project design)
- sampling
- testing
- monitoring
- investigations
- surveys and studies
- public education

Tier II: Planning

The Tier II EJ Thriving Communities Awards are available for community-based organizations and other eligible recipients who have assessed environmental justice issues in their community and are ready to formulate a community-wide plan to address those issues. Developing key cooperative partnerships with community stakeholders is an essential part of developing a community-wide plan and later implementing that plan. Therefore, partnership development is a key aspect of the Tier II Awards. Tier II EJ Thriving Communities Awards are for up to \$250,000 each for a 1 to 2-year project period. Tier II project activities can address multiple environmental issues (e.g., air quality, water contamination, toxic substances) and should also include plan formulation and partnership development activities to address those environmental issues. The following is a list of the types of activities which may be considered by the Grantmakers for a Tier II EJ Thriving Communities Award. **The following activities are provided for illustrative purposes only and the list is not all inclusive.**

- Planning
- Partnership-building
- Public outreach and education
- Coordination with community stakeholders to address environmental issues
- Training activities for community organizations and community members
- Projects and activities to spur community involvement (e.g., cleanups of vacant lots)
- Smaller land purchases and acquisitions that require less than half of the total amount of Award funding

Tier III: Project Development

The Tier III EJ Thriving Communities Awards are available for community-based nonprofit organizations and other eligible recipients who already have assessed their local environmental and/or public health issues, have already formulated a community-wide plan addressing those issues, and/or are now ready to develop the technical aspects of the project (i.e., implement the project on the ground). Developing key cooperative partnerships with community stakeholders is an essential part of developing a community-wide plan and later implementing that plan. Therefore, partnership development is a key aspect of the Tier III Awards as well. Tier III EJ Thriving Communities Awards are for up to \$350,000 each

for a 2-year project period. Tier III projects can address multiple environmental issues (e.g., air quality, water contamination, toxic substances). The following is a list of the types of activities which may be considered by the Grantmakers for a Tier III EJ Thriving Communities Award. **It is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not all inclusive.**

- Project Development
- Blueprints for construction or cleanup projects, schematics, and technical development (grant funds cannot be used directly for construction)
- Work to get permits in place directly related to an environmental project
- Smaller land purchases and acquisitions that require less than half of the total amount of Award funding
- Implementation of project plans
- Public outreach and education

Noncompetitive Awards

The Thriving Communities Program operates with participatory governance, a formalized way to ensure meaningful participation and community engagement in decision-making processes. This is aligned with a core principle of Environmental Justice, which is that all communities can participate in decisions that impact their environment. Grantmaker B's grantmaking activities are overseen by an Advisory Board comprised of various environmental justice organizations. Grantmaker B and the Advisory Board have set criteria around organizational capacity to identify organizations that are "severely capacity-constrained" and thus would be eligible for receiving a \$75,000 noncompetitive award to achieve concrete goals. Organizations who go through this process do not need to submit an application per this RFA, but will, as a recipient of EPA funds, have reporting requirements. There will be approximately 10 noncompetitive awards provided. Grantmaker B and the Advisory Board will collect information from potential recipients of these noncompetitive funds. Potential achievable activities under this up to \$75,000 award include the activities eligible under Tier 1 (1 (1 (Assessment).

The Advisory Board will review and approve all noncompetitive awards.

Organizations that are interested in the noncompetitive award process should contact < email address >

4. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria. Applicants, and projects, must be in EPA [geographic location]. Applicants must be registered in the Federal System of Award Management (SAM) to be eligible [<https://sam.gov>].

Any proposed activity must be in an area considered disadvantaged, as defined by the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#). If you need assistance using the tool, please reach out to Grantmaker B staff at < email address >

Eligible entities include:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Community-based and grassroots nonprofit organizations
- Philanthropic and civic organizations with nonprofit status
- Tribal governments (both federally recognized and state-recognized) and intertribal consortia (i.e., a partnership between two or more tribes that work together to achieve a common objective.)
- Native American Organizations (includes Indian groups, cooperatives, nonprofit corporations, partnerships, and associations that have the authority to enter into legally binding agreements)
- Local governments (as defined by 2 CFR 200.1 – includes cities, towns, municipalities, and counties, public housing authorities and councils of government)
- Institutions of higher education (e.g., private, and public universities and colleges, including community colleges)

5. Ineligible Entities:

- Individuals
- For profit businesses unless EPA’s Award Official makes an exception based on factors such as those described in Appendix A of EPA’s Subaward Policy
- State governments
- Projects that include human subject testing

6. Important Dates

- RFA will open August 2024 and run through April 2025. Specific dates will be provided on Grantmaker B’s landing page.

7. Application Materials

The application must include the following materials:

- Proposal Narrative: Please respond to the selection criteria outlined in the RFA. The proposal narrative shall have a **maximum** length of seven (7) pages, numbered and double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. Cover sheet and any supplementary materials do not count toward the page limit. Narrative language beyond the seven (7) page limit will not be reviewed.
- Budget (an optional template is provided but applicants can use their own budget format. The format will not impact the scoring and the budget does not count towards narrative length).

- Work plan (an optional template is provided but applicants can use their own work plan format. The work plan does not count towards narrative length).
- Most recent organization financial statement is required for Tier II and Tier III applicants. Tier I applicants who do not have a financial statement may explain how the project will be financially managed (does not count towards narrative length).
- Most recent A-133 audit, if applicable.

Application may include the following optional attachments. Grantmaker B may also request these optional attachments from potential awardees prior to award.

- 2-3-minute video on the project.
- Additional project-related documents (up to 3), such as case studies or news articles. This will not factor into initial application scoring but will be helpful during the due diligence and clarification process.
- Up to 3 Letters of commitment from partnering organizations' leadership (optional but recommended): Please provide letters demonstrating commitment of key partner organizations, if possible, to provide convening, human or economic resources, training, or other types of support to the project. This will not factor into initial application scoring but will be helpful during the due diligence and clarification process.

The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to be 4 to 8 hours per response. Within the 4 to 8 hours, the budget is estimated to take up to 1 hour, and the work plan is estimated to take up to 1 hour.

8. Office Hours for Application Support

Grantmaker B will hold office hours support to organizations interested in applying to this RFA. Office hours will be posted on Grantmaker B's landing page and any clarifications provided by Grantmaker B during the office hours will be reflected in updates to the Frequently Asked Questions.

9. Submission Process

Please submit your application materials to Grantmaker B's application portal located at < website address >. Please submit the Proposal Narrative in .pdf format. Attachments may be included as separate documents. Applicants may also submit a 2-3-minute video and a written narrative. Any videos must be uploaded to YouTube and provide the link in the application cover page. No additional points will be awarded for a video, but it may help illustrate the written application.

Applicants may also choose to mail their materials to [Grantmaker B address]

Communications for questions on the RFA: Please direct all questions regarding the RFA or application and selection process to the Grantmaker B Project Management Team to [email] or call (410) 534-6447 or [phone number]

10. Review Process

Grantmaker B will prioritize both expeditious review and dedicated feedback to all applicants. Within 15 days of receiving an application, Grantmaker B will determine if the applicant meets the basic threshold criteria (applicant is an eligible entity and has provided the required application components). If an applicant does not meet the threshold criteria, they will be notified and told why they are not moving forward in the review process. Applicants who receive this notification may rectify the identified threshold criteria issues and resubmit their application within the open RFA window. Those projects that do meet the threshold criteria will be fully evaluated for the award within 1.5 months of receipt. Following selection, financial risk analyses and award, agreements will be completed within 30 days for applications identified for awards. The duration of the grant making process from submission to award agreement for applicant organizations will be 3 months.

The review process will be guided by continuous quality improvement and transparency governed by an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will ensure that Grantmaker B receives and responds to a breadth of perspectives and voices when it comes to recruitment, review, award selection, and awardee oversight.

Grantmaker B will hold detailed debriefing meetings with applicants not awarded funds to support their potential future success. Grantmaker B will provide feedback on ways the applicant may strengthen their application for future funding round opportunities. If the RFA is still open, and funds are available for the applicant's tier of interest, applicants are allowed 1 re-submission.

11. Grant Compliance and Oversight

Grantmaker B is committed to supporting Awardees throughout the duration of their projects. This includes working with Awardees through regular touchpoints to ensure compliance with federal requirements and reporting. The compliance and oversight processes are intended to strengthen the internal capacity of Awardees to increase readiness for future funding opportunities. Compliance activities will include:

- Regular check-in meetings between Awardee and Grantmaker B Program Officer
- Quarterly reporting
- Initial risk assessment to establish ongoing compliance activities
- Desk review and/or site monitoring visits to review organizational internal controls and other grant program performance

12. Application Narrative and Scoring Rubric

Applications for Tier I (Assessment), Tier II (Planning), and Tier III (Project Development) must include an application narrative that addresses the following prompts. Applications will be scored based on the points shown below.

| Application Section | Maximum Possible Points | Suggested Page Length |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <p><u>Cover Page:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization name • Organization address • <u>Unique Entity Identifier (Proof of SAM Registration)</u> • <u>Tier I, II, or III</u> • <u>Request Amount</u> • Project name • Brief project description (2-3 sentences) • Point of contact name, title, email address, phone number • <u>Optional YouTube video link</u> | n/a | n/a |
| <p><u>Community Need:</u></p> <p>Describe the community need(s) that the proposed project will address. Also indicate, using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, that the area of focus for the project is in an area considered disadvantaged. If you need assistance using the tool, please reach out to Grantmaker B's staff at < contact email address ></p> <p>As applicable, include relevant evidence, qualitative and quantitative data, and other information that demonstrates the significance of the community need(s). Tier I project applications that may not have access to existing data may use this section to describe the importance of the issue area being addressed. Describe the target population to be served and geographic area/footprint of the project.</p> | 20 points | 1 to 2 pages |
| <p><u>Project Description:</u></p> <p>Describe the proposed project. Describe the following aspects of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed Tier of the project (Tier I, II, or III as | 30 points | 2 pages |

| | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|
| <p>described in Section “3. Program Overview”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed activities and interventions • Partner organizations and their roles (if applicable) • Completed Work Plan (optional template is provided, it does not count towards narrative length) • Community engagement and involvement | | |
| <p><u>Organization Capacity and Needs:</u></p> <p>Describe the capacity of the applicant organization. Provide information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization background including the Board if applicable • Experience relevant to proposed project • Staff descriptions and roles on proposed project • Capacity to receive and manage grant funds • Technical assistance needs and how those needs can be addressed through this project (e.g., assistance in understanding policy advocacy strategies) | 30 points | 2 pages |
| <p><u>Evaluation Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe three to five desired outcomes that will result from this project. • For each outcome, list up to five measurable outputs and/or indicators that will be tracked by the project. • Describe how outcomes and outputs will be evaluated. | 10 points | 1 page |
| <p><u>Budget:</u></p> <p>Provide a completed budget (optional template provided) that shows anticipated project costs and provides the purpose for each budget line item. The budget file is not counted in the overall length of the application.</p> | 10 points | n/a |
| Total | 100 points | 7 pages (maximum) |

Narrative language beyond the 7 page limit will not be reviewed.