

Sample Draft EJ Thriving Communities Subgrant Project Proposal Guidance Sheet

Notes on FIC Subgrant Project Proposal Guidance: In order that environmental justice work be done by frontline communities, be led by community interests and goals, and advance the growth of community assets and opportunities, it is essential that funding flow directly to communities that have been historically disadvantaged and disproportionately impacted by pollution, climate change, and other environmental stressors. This is, effectively, a structure to repair the harms created by systematic disenfranchisement and unjust design that removed communities from their resources and from one another.

The mission of the EPA is to protect human health and the environment for all people with an emphasis on assisting those communities adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental, climate, and human health harms and risks. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, EPA received significant investments for environmental justice and in the health, equity, and resilience of these, and all communities, to address past, current, and future environmental health and justice challenges. Additionally, the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) created the Environmental and Climate Justice block grant program in section 138 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and provided EPA with \$2.8 billion in grant funding for the program for projects to benefit disadvantaged communities. To maximize these significant investments, new and innovative strategies and approaches for issues such as community engagement and participation in environmental programs, equitable distribution of financial resources, capacity-building and outreach, and technical assistance and training to enhance access to financial assistance opportunities and promote effective grants management and performance, are necessary. This is especially true for underserved and disadvantaged communities that have, and continue to be, plagued environmental pollution and health, and environmental justice, challenges.

The [REDACTED] subgrant project proposal process is structured to be inclusive, transparent, accessible, intersectional, and easy to use for members of the diverse communities that comprise Region 2 to advance solutions for climate adaptation and community resilience. The FIC team has created the competitive project proposal process based on other successful models such as the Community Project solicitation in NY Congressional District 15, and after receiving feedback from two listening sessions in Puerto Rico (Aguadilla and Ceiba), two listening sessions in New York, two community activation events and conversations and convenings with over over 250 individual stakeholders including grassroots organizations, larger nonprofits, community leaders, institutions of higher education, and policymakers and elected officials. The FIC Grantmaker accepts proposals on a rolling basis, with subgrant determinations made quarterly by its Community Leadership Board, with support as needed from the Faculty Advisory Committee that leverages distinguished experts from Fordham University. In addition to privileging accessibility, transparency, collaboration, inclusivity and intersectionality in our process, the [REDACTED] team has created a project proposal process that supports organizations that have not previously applied for federal funding or for large-scale grants to build capacity and prepare not only for this proposal and subaward process but also build skills to identify and secure other sources to fund environmental justice work as well as sources to sustain funded projects through the EJ Thriving Communities Grantmaker program. These criteria and processes will be modified with input and feedback from the EPA and other relevant stakeholders in 2023. The FIC team will provide the following programming and support to subgrant applicants:

- (1) **Outreach** Beginning in June 2024, each regional statutory partner will reach out immediately to the organizations already identified and acquainted with the subgrant opportunity. The New York Immigration Coalition, the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, ConPRmetidos, and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands have particular expertise in conducting outreach to diverse and marginalized communities. Outreach capacity already conducted at the time of application includes approximately 600 organizations in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and over 1000 in New Jersey and New York; at least 30% of these are

located in rural, remote, or coastal communities. The [REDACTED] team will work through all partners who have indicated interest and support, through the Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers in the Region 2 (WE ACT and Universidad Interamericana); through local, state and federal partners and elected officials, and through the members of our Community Leadership Board and Faculty Advisory Committee to raise awareness of the grantmaker opportunity. We will conduct a multilingual community level social media and communications campaign to raise awareness among rural, remote, coastal and other hard to reach community leaders, activists, and organizers, partnering with credible messengers, identified in letters of support, such as like [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. All outreach materials will be disseminated in English and in Spanish; additional languages will be utilized in outreach materials in specific regions depending on language needs. Outreach efforts will be led by Regional Program Associates hired with considerable acumen for community organizing and communication with diverse stakeholders.

- (2) **Informational Sessions** Each Regional Hub statutory partner will host no fewer than 12 informational sessions each year (at least one per month), both online and in person, throughout Region 2, to acquaint eligible subgrant recipients with the project proposal process, the requirements of the projects, the rolling application process, the time to award, and the compliance requirements on the part of the subgrant recipient and on the part of the grantmaker. As the FIC team learned in our listening sessions, many smaller organizations are concerned about the burden of compliance and feel that larger organizations are prioritized by decision-makers for awards, about the necessity to match funding or to take on large-scale projects that are reimbursable but with long onramps to award. These informational sessions will respond to these concerns and demonstrate that the FIC grantmaker has a different structure that controls these issues that have historically precluded many organizations from receiving funding from federal sources. Sessions will be led by Regional Program Associates, statutory partner team members, and community leaders with successful experience in leading community EJ projects; over the course of the grant project, successful subgrant project teams will share their experiences with applicants during info sessions.
- (3) **Project Proposal Workshops Sessions** In addition to informational sessions, Fordham and FIC regional hub partners will host Project Proposal Workshops monthly beginning in July 2024, both online and in person. These workshops offer multilingual support and culturally competent technical assistance to understand the application process, answer questions, and direct applicants to resources. They will be supported with community, faculty, and graduate assistant team staff members, laptops and tablets, paper applications, internet connectivity, and resource materials to facilitate a smooth application process.
- (4) **Technical Assistance for Applicants** Fordham will support the grantmaker process with a digital platform and app, application website, and project management tracker, and subgrant sustainability solutions. The FIC team will also connect subgrant recipients with the EJ Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC) call center and a referral network hosted by WE ACT and the educational and training modules on EJ TCTAC EPA core areas for collaborative problem-solving and leadership, hosted by the Universidad Interamericana, as well as FIC partner NJIT NJ Brownfields Assistance Center for pro bono legal support, funding and financing sources, guidance through environmental regulatory processes and redevelopment strategies.
- (5) **Translation Services** The project proposal guidelines will be available online and in hard copy in the 15 most commonly spoken languages spoken in Region 2 in addition to English and Spanish (Chinese, Tagalog, Russian, Yiddish, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Korean, Haitian Creole, Italian, Arabic, Polish, French, Urdu, Portuguese). Applications submitted in any of these languages will be translated into English and Spanish for review by the FIC grants staff, the Community Leadership Board, and the Faculty Advisory Committee.

State or Territory	Info Session Locations	Project Proposal Workshop Locations
New York	Fordham University (Bronx County); Le Moyne College (Syracuse); Canisius College (Buffalo); Shinnecock Indian Nation (Suffolk County); Seneca Nation of Indians; NYIC Offices and Partners (Statewide - locations in NYC, Hudson Valley, Buffalo, Long Island, Syracuse)	
	Rowan University (Glassboro); NJIT (Newark); New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice (Statewide); Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey (Camden); Make the Road (Elizabeth)	Rowan University (Glassboro); NJIT (Newark); Make the Road (Elizabeth)
Puerto Rico	Friends of Puerto Rico (Aguadilla); APRODEC (Ceiba); ConPRmetidos (Island-wide); UPR Mayaguez	
Virgin Islands	Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas; St. John; St. Croix); Center for Marine and Environmental Studies (St. Thomas); My Brother's Workshop (St. Thomas, St. Croix)	Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas; St. John; St. Croix)

Flourishing in Community Application

A Thriving Communities Grantmaker Program

Welcome to the **Flourishing in Community Grantmaker**, a regional program under the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaker program that serves **New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands**. Our mission is to fuel the transformation of underserved areas into vibrant communities, equipped to take on past, current, and future environmental and public health challenges. The **FIC** Grantmaker understands the dire need to address climate change, curb pollution, champion racial equality, and uplift disadvantaged communities and works to redress previous harms by ensuring environmental justice, promoting fair treatment, and facilitating meaningful participation of all individuals in decisions impacting their environment and health. We focus especially on communities that have been historically marginalized and underserved.

Frontline communities and the organizations that serve them have a profound understanding of the challenges they face and possess the most promising solutions for the glaring environmental justice issues of our time. But the organizations striving to serve these communities often face hurdles in acquiring federal funding.

The **FIC Grantmaker** is here to bridge this gap, by offering funding, technical support, capacity development, programs, and research opportunities to projects led by community organizations, nonprofits, and other entities championing environmental justice initiatives in **Region 2: New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and eight federally recognized Indian Nations**. This initiative aligns deeply with Executive Orders (EO 14008 and EO 13985) from the Biden Administration and is funded and supported by the EPA. For questions reach out to: **InfoFIC@Fordham.edu**.

Eligibility Requirements The entity applying for a project must belong to one of the following categories in order to be eligible for **FIC** grant funding:

- Nonprofit organizations (incorporated in **New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands**), state or federal;
- 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) spatially located in the **EPA's Region 2 (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands)**;
- Institutions of higher education (e.g., private and public universities and colleges, including community colleges);
- Local governments (as defined by [2 CFR 200.1](#) – includes cities, towns, municipalities, and counties, public housing authorities and councils of government);
- The governments of **Puerto Rico and of the US Virgin Islands**.

The Flourishing in Community Grantmaker, the Region 2 arm of the EPA's EJ Thriving Communities Grantmaker program, calls for project proposals in the amounts of \$150,000, \$250,000, and \$350,000. This funding will support community-led projects in Region 2 (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, Eight Federally Recognized Indian Nations) that aim to evaluate climate change and environmental justice concerns, design community plans in response to these issues, and execute these projects and plans at the community level to boost the growth and success of historically disadvantaged communities.

A wide range of projects that support communities to thrive are eligible for funding. Here are some examples potential projects community organizations and other eligible entities can propose for grant funding; many other projects are also eligible for funding:

1. Research and Monitoring:

Air quality & asthma
Fence line air quality monitoring
Monitoring of effluent discharges from industrial facilities
Water quality & sampling
Lead and asbestos contamination
Pesticides and other toxic substances
Research that is incidental to the project design
Sampling, testing, and monitoring
Investigations
Surveys and studies

2. Emergency Preparedness:

Emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency
Recovery and prevention measures
Managed retreat initiatives

3. Education and Outreach:

Public education
Environmental justice youth training
Education pipelines and pathways

Public outreach and education
Illegal dumping activities, such as education, outreach, and small-scale clean-ups
Training activities for community organizations and members

4. Infrastructure and Environmental Improvements:

Small cleanup projects
Improving food access to reduce vehicle miles traveled
Stormwater issues and green infrastructure
Healthy homes that are energy/water use efficient and not subject to indoor air pollution
Projects and activities to spur community involvement (e.g., cleanups of vacant lots)

5. Planning and Development:

Partnership-building
Coordination with community

stakeholders to address environmental issues

6. Project Development:

Blueprints for construction or cleanup projects, schematics, and technical development

Work to get permits in place directly related to an environmental project

Implementation of project plans

7. Land and Asset Acquisition:

Smaller land purchases and acquisitions that require less than half of the total amount of subgrant funding for the purpose of carrying out other eligible grant activities

8. Job Training:

Environmental job training for occupations that reduce greenhouse gasses and other air pollutants
Workforce development initiatives, microcredentials, certification, and partnerships

Priorities and Results: Your project should respond to the most pressing environmental justice concerns facing your community, which you are best equipped to take on. These will be different from community to community throughout Region 2. Here are some of the areas of priority in **Region 2** to help you identify your project: 1) Workforce development and student success to support the green economy; 2) Capacity-building for grassroots CBOs and other organizations; 3) Public and environmental health, with a particular emphasis on air quality and its short- and long-term impacts; 4) Intersectional projects that advance transit solutions, affordable and sustainable housing, food security, racial justice, and financial security; 5) Recovery, coastal resilience and managed retreat; 6) Community access to and revitalization of green spaces, waterways, and underutilized areas; 7) Clean energy transitions; 8) Biodiversity and conservation; 9) Sustainable transportation; and 10) Sustainable agriculture, food systems and food security. These are not the only important areas for environmental work in Region 2 and other areas of focus will also be considered for funding.

Priority Organizations

Your application will be prioritized for funding if it is made on behalf of an organization that falls within one of the following categories:

- Communities that appear as disadvantaged in the [EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities map](#). This tool can be used to determine whether a community is disadvantaged for the purposes of implementing programs under the IRA.
- Minority serving institutions (Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs); Hispanic-Serving Institutions; Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; Predominantly Black Institutions)

- Native American and Tribal Nations
- Rural or remote community organizations and agencies
- Coastal community organizations and agencies
- Women, minority, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ led organizations and agencies
- Organizations serving climate-impacted communities, including communities recovering from storms and natural disasters
- Organizations serving communities with increased health risks due to pollution and environmental stressors
- Organizations that take an intersectional approach to environmental justice (for instance, advancing housing justice, transit justice, racial justice)
- Organizations that demonstrate high levels of cross sector (public-private-civic) collaboration
- Organizations who have conducted EJ work for a minimum of 5 years in the community and have a proven track record of accomplishments
- Organizations that are place-based, e.g. they are directly based in the community/island/neighborhood that they are serving

Preference will be given to projects in which the majority of the funds are going to capacity-limited organizations and groups. Eligible applicants with annual budgets greater than 5 million dollars are highly encouraged to provide a partnership letter with a CBO or capacity-constrained organization. Partnership letters should detail specific resource allocation proposed between the partner organizations or entities.

Grants are available for funding in the following phases:

Phase I = Assessment projects for up to \$150,000 for a one-year project period

Phase II = Planning projects for up to \$250,000 for a 1-2 year project period, and

Phase III = Project Development projects for up to \$350,000 for a two-year project period.

\$150,000 awards may be made to organizations that offer a plan for engagement, capacity building, or assessment but do not provide a fully itemized budget (fixed amount awards). \$250,000 and \$350,000 awards must provide an itemized budget as well as a timeline for spending.

Assessment Projects Phase I Assessment Projects are starter funds for local groups or new groups who need support with environmental or public health problems and must begin by assessing or studying the problem. These funds might be used to measure air quality, water contamination, or the prevalence of toxic substances in a particular area, or funds can be used to understand how well a group of people in a community or geographic area understand a particular environmental issue. Groups receive funding of \$150,000 for one year to help understand the most pressing issues facing their community and to prepare for an action plan. They can use the money for different tasks like research, sampling, testing, monitoring, surveys, or even educating the public about the problems. The main goal is to support communities in understanding EJ problems facing them, to prepare to make a plan to address those issues. Grant recipients at this phase may be paired with faculty research support at participating universities and colleges to support their assessment activities if it would be useful to the proposed projects. These are examples of possible funded projects; other projects are also eligible for funding.

Planning Projects Phase II Planning Projects are designed for groups in the community, or other qualified parties, that have a good understanding of their local environment and public health issues. They should be ready to come up with a detailed plan to solve these problems. These projects can be run by a single group or by a team of partner organizations working together. Usually, a Phase II subgrant offers up to \$250,000 for a project that lasts 1 to 2 years. This money can be used for several activities like creating the project plan, building partnerships, educating and reaching out to the public, coordinating with community stakeholders, and training for community groups and members, including workforce development programs and education programs. The funds can also support community projects like

cleaning up empty lots and buying small pieces of land, as long as these purchases don't use up more than half of the total grant money. These are examples of possible funded projects; other projects are also eligible for funding.

Project Development Projects Phase III Project Development Projects are aimed at community-based nonprofits and other eligible recipients who have a good understanding of their local environmental and public health problems. These groups should already have a plan to address these issues and are ready to start the critical work of the project. Building strong partnerships with people in the community is a crucial part of creating a plan and putting that plan into action. Typically, a Phase III subgrant provides up to \$350,000 for a 2-year project period. There are many activities that might be funded under these subgrants, such as developing the project, creating construction or cleanup plans, working on permits needed for an environmental project, buying small lands that cost less than half of the total grant, putting project plans into action, or launching an education or workforce development program or project. These are examples of possible funded projects; other projects are also eligible for funding.

Project Proposal Resources Grants are administered by **Fordham University**, and do not require any matching funds or reimbursements. When you are getting ready to apply, you can access an information session at least four times each month, one will be held each month in **New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands**. You can join online, dial in, or come in person. When you are ready to apply, you can come to an application workshop held four times a month where you can use a computer or tablet provided to you, receive free internet connectivity, and get questions asked by a trained expert in English or in Spanish. If you are at home working on your application, you can call our hotline to get your questions answered while you are working. These project proposal guidelines are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Yiddish, Bengali, Korean, Haitian Creole, Italian, Arabic, Polish, French, Urdu, Portuguese, Hindi, and Gujarati. You can submit your application in any of these languages, and it will be translated into English and Spanish for the reviewers.

Applications Your application will be submitted through an online application portal, which also has an app feature. If you prefer, you may complete and submit your application via a paper application. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis over the three-year time period. The **FIC Grantmaker** accepts proposals on a rolling basis over a three year time period, with subgrant determinations made quarterly by its Community Leadership Board, which comprises EJ and community experts from across **Region 2**.

Disaster and Extreme Weather **Parts of Region 2** are disproportionately impacted by extreme weather, including hurricanes. Proposal evaluations for a particular state, territory, or Nation will be paused in the event of a declaration of emergency, and will be resumed upon its resolution. Organizations may continue to submit applications during this time period, but evaluation will be paused in order to avoid placing key regions and organizations at a disadvantage to receive funding.