U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Information Collection Request

Title: Promoting Readiness and Enhancing Proficiency to Advance Reporting and Data (PREPARED) Quarterly Progress Reporting and Public Outreach Information Collections

OMB Control Number: 2090-NEW

EPA ICR Number: 2804.01

Abstract:

To help expand historically underserved and overburdened communities' access to critical resources, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed the Promoting Readiness and Enhancing Proficiency to Advance Reporting and Data (PREPARED) Program. The evidence-building technical assistance (TA) providers (thereafter referenced as Providers) will operate in cooperative agreements with EPA to remove barriers and improve access for communities who have applied for or received financial assistance awards to tackle their environmental justice concerns. The Providers will deliver TA and training that is intended to enhance capacity in: grant application and administration, collecting grant related data; meeting federal post-award reporting requirements; project planning/design; and generating information necessary for outcomes assessment, evaluation, and identification of opportunities for improvement. With this Information Collection Request (ICR), EPA seeks authorization to collect Quarterly Progress Reports from each Provider to track their progress. Collection of this information enables EPA to assess and manage the PREPARED program, which ensures responsible stewardship of public funds; rigorous evidence-based learning and improvement; and transparent accountability to the American public. This ICR also requests authorization for the Providers to collect input and insights from communities who seek to obtain technical assistance services, as well as stakeholders who have valuable experience and expertise in community engagement and empowerment. These information collections will enable the Providers to document local priorities, needs, and norms to ensure that they develop useful and relevant technical assistance and training services. Furthermore, feedback about these services will enable the Providers to conduct self-assessments to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Annual Respondent Burden & Costs

Responses	Burden Hours	Labor Costs	Non-Labor Costs	Total Costs
56,304	3,234	$116,142	$0	$116,142

Supporting Statement A

1. NEED AND AUTHORITY FOR THE COLLECTION

Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

Overview

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) makes competitive financial assistance awards to support projects that tackle environmental, public health, and energy challenges across the country. Historically, these investments have not reached communities and groups who are overburdened by the effects of pollution, environmental hazards, and climate change. While these communities often have the vision and plans to overcome their local challenges, they can face systemic barriers that limit their access to resources that are needed to implement and deliver these solutions. In particular, underserved communities may be less familiar with the data, evaluation, reporting, and evidence-building activities that are core components of federal assistance awards.

To help expand historically underserved and overburdened communities' access to these critical resources, environmental justice leaders have called for technical assistance and support. In direct response to this feedback and Executive Order 13985 instructing federal government to pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, the EPA developed the Promoting Readiness and Enhancing Proficiency to Advance Reporting and Data (PREPARED) Program.

The evidence-building technical assistance (TA) providers (thereafter referenced as Providers) will operate in cooperative agreements with EPA to remove barriers and improve access for communities who have applied for or received financial assistance awards to tackle their environmental justice concerns. The Providers will deliver TA and training that is intended to enhance capacity in: designing evaluations and evidence building activities; collecting grant related data; meeting federal post-award reporting requirements; project planning/design; and generating information necessary for outcomes assessment, evaluation, and identification of opportunities for improvement. The Providers will also create and manage communication channels to ensure that all communities and stakeholders have direct access to resources and information.

With this Information Collection Request (ICR), EPA seeks authorization to collect post-award information from each Provider to track their progress, with respect to *effectiveness* (e.g., the extent to which projects achieved their objectives, goals, and targets), *efficiency* (e.g., the extent to which projects delivered activities and outputs on schedule and within budget), and *equity* (e.g., the extent to which investments and benefits have been distributed to disadvantaged communities that are less familiar with data, reporting, evaluation, and evidence building requirements). Collection of this information enables EPA to assess and manage the PREPARED program, which ensures responsible stewardship of public funds; rigorous evidence-based learning and improvement; and transparent accountability to the American public.

This ICR also requests approval for the Providers to collect input and insights from communities who seek to obtain technical assistance services. These information collections will enable the Providers to document local priorities, needs, and norms to ensure that they develop useful and relevant technical assistance and training services. Furthermore, feedback about these services will enable the Providers to conduct self-assessments to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

The information requested under this ICR will be collected via two mechanisms:

(1) *Quarterly Progress Reports submitted by Providers*, which document their actual milestones, activities, target audiences, outputs, outcomes, timelines, and locations of activities or benefits;
(2) *Public Outreach Information Collections*, including focus groups and surveys that enable each Provider to engage with communities and consult stakeholders to assess needs, identify priorities, and obtain feedback.

Legal and Administrative Requirements

The collection of information to assess and manage financial assistance programs fulfills various legal and administrative requirements:

1. *EPA's general regulation for financial assistance programs* establishes the minimum management requirements for recipients of EPA's financial assistance programs. The reports submitted by the Providers under this ICR fulfills the information collection and reporting requirements included in EPA regulations 2 CFR Parts 200 and 1500.

2. The *Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRA-Mod)* requires agencies to set goals, measure performance against those goals and report publicly on progress. As a mechanism to achieve this goal, agencies must build and publish an Annual Performance Report (APR), which includes measurable goals, targets, and actuals from the prior fiscal year for all EPA programs. EPA publishes the APR each year alongside the Congressional Justification submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Information collected for the PREPARED program via the methodologies covered by this ICR—including reports from Providers and input from communities and stakeholders—will be included in the APR.

3. The *Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act)* requires the federal government to transform its spending information into open data, and link federal contract, loan, and grant spending information to federal programs to enable more transparent public examination of federal spending. To enable public scrutiny of federal investments, EPA will need to collect information from Providers about the location of each funded activity and its associated place of performance.

4. *Justice40* is a whole-of-government initiative launched by the Biden-Harris Administration in 2021, which represents a commitment to direct 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. As per OMB Guidance M-21-28, EPA programs that are covered by this initiative are required to report: (1) investments that go to disadvantaged communities; (2) program outcomes and benefits for disadvantaged communities; and (3) community engagement and stakeholder consultation with disadvantaged communities and their partners. The PREPARED Program will provide TA and training to helped underserved communities meet these reporting requirements. To fulfill the reporting requirements regarding the location of investments and benefits, EPA must collect information from each Provider about the location of each funded activity and its area of impact, at the appropriate and feasible level of specificity. To fulfill the reporting requirements regarding community engagement and stakeholder consultation, the Providers need to engage in public outreach information

collections.

5. The *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act)* provides a federal framework for agencies to work with stakeholders to promote a culture of continuous learning, and decision-making using the best available evidence. This legislation asks agencies to (1) produce measures and indicators; (2) use data to improve day-to-day operations; (3) advance the rigorous use of evidence as a routine part of planning and budget development; and (4) incorporate evidence in decision-making and reporting. Information collected for the PREPARED program via the methodologies covered by this ICR—including Quarterly Progress Reports submitted by Providers and public outreach information collections—will help develop an evidence base to address the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of the PREPARED program's activities. This evidence base, in turn, will address needs related to organizational learning, ongoing program management, performance management, strategic management, interagency and private sector coordination, internal and external oversight, and accountability.

2. PRACTICAL UTILITY/USERS OF THE DATA

Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

EPA will collect information from each Provider via a Quarterly Progress Report. EPA will use this information to verify that recipients are using Federal funds appropriately to comply with Federal requirements; assess the status of grant efforts; and track outcomes required for Federal reporting.[1]

EPA will collect Quarterly Progress Reports from each Provider for the duration of the funding period. This timeline was chosen based on the schedule along which progress on project activities can be documented and reported.

In line with Agency strategic goals, PREPARED program objectives, and submitted workplans, each Provider will be asked to provide **seven categories of information** in the progress reports that cover the specified three-month reporting period:

1. Objectives, milestones, and priorities
2. Accomplishments: Activities with associated timeframes, locations, target audiences, outputs, and outcomes, as applicable in each area of work: (a) Partnerships & Networks (b) Outreach and Engagement, (c) Technical Assistance, (d) Training and (e) Other
3. Summary of public outreach information collections (if applicable, and if not reported in part 2 above)
4. Program management updates (e.g., personnel changes, fiscal information)
5. Schedule of noteworthy activities for next reporting period

[1] The first version of this ICR package (published in Federal Register Notice 1) included two additional post-award reporting instruments: Workplans and Final Reports. These two instruments have been removed from the ICR package, as EPA has concluded that these program-specific instruments will be unnecessarily burdensome for respondents, after consultation with the three Providers who received PREPARED awards in the first round of the competition. The workplan that was submitted with the application (authorized under EPA's General Administrative Requirements for Assistance Programs [OMB Control Number 2030-0020]) was found to be sufficient, and EPA has determined that the Quarterly Progress Report submitted in the final reporting period will provide all the information that is required at the end of the project.

6. Feedback or comments for EPA
7. Optional: Images of key activities and events

EPA will use these reports to determine progress in relation to the approved schedule and milestones during the project. Tracking progress at regular intervals will enable EPA to identify and address issues in a timely manner, thus ensuring responsible stewardship of public funds and transparent accountability to the American public. Collection of the information will also facilitate the collection and dissemination of success stories and best practices in real time, thus contributing to learning and improvement across the Providers within the PREPARED program.

Public Outreach Information Collections

Given the role of the PREPARED program to remove barriers and improve accessibility for communities with environmental justice concerns who have applied for or received federal resources, it is essential that each Provider engage with community beneficiaries through the collection of feedback, insights, and understanding of experiences among those who seek to obtain technical assistance and training services. These information collections will enable the Provider to document local priorities, needs, and norms to ensure that they develop useful and relevant services. Feedback about the services will enable the Provider to conduct self-assessments of their work that will assist in the identification of best practices and areas for improvement.

This ICR seeks approval for four public outreach information collections: (1) Focus Groups; (2) Self-Assessment Surveys-Specific Events [2]that document a comprehensive range of priorities, goals, and needs; (3) Feedback Surveys after specific events or services provided (e.g., trainings, workshops); and (4) Feedback Surveys- General. The respondents will be potential or actual recipients of each Provider's services and products, including community leaders, community members, community-based organization staff, locally elected officials, and local government staff from underserved communities and communities in remote and rural areas from across the nation, including Indian Country and territories.

Focus Groups

The aim is to better understand the needs of the program participants receiving technical assistance and help the Providers identify pathways for how to best address those needs. Participants in the Focus Groups may include community leaders, community members, community-based organization staff, locally elected officials, and local government staff from underserved communities and communities in remote and rural areas from across the nation, including Indian Country and territories.

The focus group discussions will cover nine topics:

1. Satisfaction with the Provider's services
2. Environmental justice and energy justice challenges faced in the community
3. Experience with collecting and using data, forming and implementing an evaluation plan, and reporting data to a federal grant

[2] The "Self-Assessment Survey – Specific Events" instrument was originally named the "Intake Survey" in the first Federal Register Notice 1. The name change better represents the intended use of the document and the context in which the information will be collected. There are no other substantive changes to the instrument (e.g., audience, questions, intended use of the collected information).

4. Approaches to strengthening knowledge and skills for managing federal grants
5. Outreach to potential program participants (e.g., people from communities with environmental justice concerns who may apply to federal grants)
6. How to effectively engage with decision-makers at all levels of government and private sector entities to inform policy development and program design and delivery
7. How to engage community members
8. How to improve the Provider's services
9. Actions taken by the individual after receiving training/technical assistance

Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events

All individuals who participate in a Provider's training event (e.g., workshop) or technical assistance consultation—whether in person, on a video call, etc.—will be invited to complete a Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events at the start of the event or consultation. The aim is to document each individual's priorities and training needs.

The Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events will ask respondents to provide seven categories of information:

1. Organizational information (administrative information, communication preferences, etc.)
2. The primary environmental, climate, and/or energy justice concerns or challenges faced by their community;
3. Any barriers they have experienced in trying to address these concerns or challenges, design related projects, and/or measure progress in addressing concerns;
4. Their past experiences working with a technical assistance provider;
5. Areas of training and/or evidence-building related technical assistance that they are looking for;
6. The specific EPA grant(s) the respondent has applied for or received (if applicable);
7. Any additional information they would like to share.

Feedback Surveys – Specific Events

Each Provider will offer a series training events and technical assistance services either in person or online. At the end of each event or service, every participant will be invited to complete a short Feedback Survey that asks about their experiences and attitudes.

These surveys will include questions on the following topics about each session:

1. Understanding of the aims and/or learning objectives
2. Understanding of the content
3. Extent to which new knowledge was gained
4. Extent to which new skills were developed
5. Usefulness of the new knowledge and/or skills
6. Likelihood of applying and/or experience in application of the new knowledge and skills
7. Assessment of the instructor(s): knowledge, engagement, responsiveness
8. Assessment of resources (e.g., slide-deck, guidance, worksheets, templates)
9. Overall assessment of the session

Feedback Surveys – General

Providers will seek to get general feedback on their activities once a year, by inviting everyone who has participated in a Provider's training event, technical assistance consultation, or Focus Group to share their experiences and attitudes.

These surveys will include questions on the following topics about the Provider:

1. Awareness of the Provider's specific activities and services
2. Interest in each of the Provider's activities and services
3. Facilitators and barriers to participation in Provider activities
4. Satisfaction with the Provider's activities and services
5. What is working well: Positive aspects of the Provider's activities and services
6. What could be better: Suggestions for improving the Provider's activities and services
7. Success or challenges with meeting federal post award reporting requirements since interacting with the Provider(s)
8. Any federal or non-federal grants that an organization has applied for and/or received
9. General comments

3. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

With this ICR, EPA is seeking approval to require funding recipients to submit information via quarterly progress reporting forms, which will substantially reduce the burden on respondents and EPA staff by collapsing what could be extensive written narratives into concise, specific data fields. This approach will also improve the accuracy of data collected by each grantee and the consistency of data collected across grantees. All forms will be completed and submitted electronically via electronic documents or spreadsheets submitted to EPA via email or uploaded to a secure EPA website.

Public Outreach Information Collections

Each Provider will employ information collection technology as appropriate to reduce the burden on respondents who agree to provide information. Each information collection will be conducted in the mode that is most appropriate and convenient for respondents (e.g., online, in-person hard copy, in-person verbal, etc.). This approach will reduce the time and effort needed for respondents to access the information collection, and reduces the burden needed to provide the requested information.

4. EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION

Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

This ICR requests approval for the collection of information that is not currently collected and otherwise would not be collected. There is currently no mechanism for quarterly progress reporting and public

outreach information collections for the PREPARED program, with respect to the set of instruments and methodologies outlined in this ICR and the uses outlined in this ICR. EPA has determined that this information is not currently held by EPA or any other federal agency.

This ICR includes information collection instruments, methodologies, and uses of information that are not currently authorized by existing general and generic ICRs at EPA, as summarized below.

1. *General Administrative Requirements for Assistance Programs*
   (OMB Control Number 2030-0020)
   The Quarterly Progress Reports authorized by this ICR will differ from those covered by EPA's General Administrative Requirements ICR as PREPARED's Quarterly Progress Report is a form, while the progress reports in the EPA's General Administrative Requirements ICR is a narrative report.

2. *Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery*
   (OMB Control Number 2030-0051)
   The outreach information collections authorized by this ICR will differ from those covered in EPA's Generic Qualitative Feedback ICR in the follow way: The collected information will include specific information and be disseminated to the public (e.g., EPA website, OMB reports).

3. *Focus Groups as Used by EPA for Economics Projects*
   (OMB Control Number 2090-0028)
   EPA's Generic Economic Focus Groups ICR narrowly focuses on economics projects, and thus is not appropriate for use by the PREPARED program. Specifically, the Generic Economic Focus Groups ICR does not allow for the collection of the broad range of activities, outputs, outcomes, and input from communities and stakeholders that may be reported by recipients of PREPARED funding. Furthermore, the Generic Economic Focus Groups ICR cannot be used to authorize public outreach activities that would be conducted by the PREPARED program, as the topics discussed in these outreach activities will extend beyond economic issues.

5. MINIMIZING BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES AND SMALL ENTITIES

If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

EPA has considered whether to establish different progress reporting requirements for small businesses and other small entities and has decided to maintain consistent reporting requirements for all entities regardless of size, based on the following determinations:

1. Different reporting requirements among recipients will result in inconsistent data that may reduce the Agency's ability to oversee and report on program activities and accomplishments;
2. The burden imposed by this information collection is relatively small and small entities should not be unduly burdened by the reporting requirement; and
3. The PREPARED program is voluntary and Providers who elected to enter into the cooperative agreements with EPA have determined that the expected benefits of participation outweigh any burden associated with preparing the responses.

EPA will assist Providers in meeting quarterly progress reporting requirements. EPA Project Officers will meet quarterly with their designated Provider and will document their questions and concerns; EPA staff will then determine the appropriate resources and support to address each issue.

Public Outreach Information Collections

Many respondents of the public outreach information collections will be providing information as individuals. However, some respondents will be providing information on behalf of communities or stakeholder groups that may include small businesses and other small entities. Regardless of their size or resource capacity, all respondents will benefit from Providers' efforts to reduce the burden associated with each information collection activity.

For instance, each Providers will employ information technology as appropriate to reduce the burden of respondents who agree to provide information. In particular, each information collection will be conducted in the mode that is most appropriate and convenient for respondents. This approach will reduce the time and effort needed for respondents to access the information collection, and reduces the burden needed to provide the requested information.

Furthermore, respondents have the opportunity to contact the Provider if they have any questions about an information collection activity or if they face any technological or logistical challenges in providing the requested information. Where respondents are in the physical or virtual presence of Provider staff (e.g., visiting the Provider in person, attending a webinar, etc.), they can ask their questions directly and get assistance quickly. Where respondents are not in the presence of Provider staff, they will be provided with contact information (phone number, email) so that they can communicate their question to Provider staff.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF LESS FREQUENT COLLECTION

Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

EPA recognizes the importance of balancing the need for data collection efforts against respondent burden and costs. The quarterly progress reporting schedule set out in this ICR is consistent with the Agency's reporting schedule for financial assistance programs. As noted in 2 CFR Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*, grantees are required to report updates on their respective projects regularly (up to quarterly) throughout the project's period of performance.

EPA has determined that the quarterly reporting schedule is necessary to adequately track awardee progress in completing the proposed activities, and to measure project outcomes (e.g., determine the change in compliance with federal reporting requirements). Less frequent collection would weaken EPA's ability to oversee and manage the PREPARED program and to report up-to-date and accurate information on program activities and accomplishments.

If this information were not collected, EPA would have no mechanism for tracking and assessing the extent to which the PREPARED program is operating effectively, efficiently, and equitably. This situation

would leave EPA unable to fulfill its legal and administrative requirements to ensure responsible stewardship of public funds; rigorous evidence-based learning and improvement; and transparent accountability to the American public.

Public Outreach Information Collections

Given the role of the PREPARED program to remove barriers and improve access for communities with environmental justice concerns who wish to apply for federal resources, it is essential that each Provider collect input and insights from communities who seek to obtain technical assistance and training services, as well as stakeholders who have valuable experience and expertise in community engagement and empowerment.

Reducing or limiting these information collections will undermine Providers' ability to (1) document local priorities, needs, and norms to ensure that they develop useful and relevant technical assistance services; and (2) conduct self-assessments of their work, and identify best practices and areas for improvement. More broadly, reducing or limiting these information collections would undercut EPA's commitment to environmental justice, including the efforts to ensure fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

7. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

Information collections for the PREPARED program will be conducted in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act [Title 5 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) section 1320.5(d)(2)] and will adhere to OMB's general guidelines for information collections. There are no known special circumstances that would require reporting on an alternative timeline or methodology.

The Providers will not be required to report information to EPA more often than quarterly and will be provided the relevant forms and instructions at least 30 days in advance. The Provider will not be required to submit more than an original and two copies of any document.

In conjunction with OMB's general guidelines, grant recipients must retain all progress reports for three years after submission of the end of the project period. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the expiration of the three-year period, the recipient must maintain all appropriate records until these actions are completed and all issues resolved.

The Providers will not be required to submit Confidential Business Information (CBI). If a participant feels that any information requested would be CBI, the participant may request that such information be treated as confidential. All confidential data will be handled in accordance with 40 CFR 122.7, 40 CFR Part 2, and EPA's *Security Manual* Part III, Chapter 9, dated August 9, 1976. Any claim of confidentiality must be asserted at the time of submission.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CONSULTATIONS

8a. Public Comment

If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the Agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the Agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

EPA published a notice in the Federal Register (89 FR 13332) announcing the Agency's intention to request an OMB review of this information collection activity. This notice was published on February 22, 2024 and provided a 60-day period for public comment (Docket ID EPA-HQ-OCFO-2024-0048-0001). No comments were submitted as part of this process.

8b. Consultations

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the Agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

1. Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

   The PREPARED program undertook the following consultation process during the process of developing the instruments, collection methodology, burden estimates associated with quarterly progress reporting:

   a) PREPARED program staff worked with *EPA offices and teams with relevant expertise* (e.g., Evidence & Evaluation Team, Office of General Counsel, Office of Grants and Debarment) to obtain their views on the following aspects of the planned quarterly progress reporting information collections: availability of data, frequency of collection, clarity of instructions, and recordkeeping.
   b) PREPARED program staff consulted with *three Providers that will be submitting progress reports*. The program asked these respondents questions about the burden associated with the instruments and for general feedback on the ease of filling out the forms. Recipient responses formed the basis of EPA's calculations of the burden hours and costs for each instrument.

2. Public Outreach Information Collections

   To develop appropriate and relevant information collection instruments and appropriate burden estimates, the EPA asked three Providers and two subrecipients for an estimate on how long it would take to fill out each form. Each responding Provider and subrecipient also employs at least one staff member with experience engaging in public outreach, either as part of their own work or collaborations with other entities, providing valuable insight into the burden of these forms.

9. PAYMENTS OR GIFTS TO RESPONDENTS

Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

Incentives are generally not appropriate for recipients of assistance agreements because they already have a preexisting relationship with the Agency. Incentives will not be provided for Quarterly Progress Reports submitted by Providers.

Public Outreach Information Collections
There are no plans for compensation for public outreach information collections.

10. ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or Agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

EPA asks grantees to refrain from including any confidential business information (CBI) in their reporting. All confidential data will be handled in accordance with 40 CFR 122.7, 40 CFR Part 2, and EPA's *Security Manual* Part III, Chapter 9, dated August 9, 1976. Any claim of confidentiality must be asserted at the time of submission. Any personal information included in a request would be treated in accordance with the Privacy Act, section 14 of TSCA, and the Freedom of Information Act.

All data collected via these forms will be stored in internal EPA servers that meet or exceed EPA's current policies and guidelines regarding security and privacy. Additionally, personal identifiers will not be used to retrieve specific information in these systems.

Public Outreach Information Collections

Each Provider will collect information in the form of surveys or focus groups. Respondents will be informed of all planned uses of data, that their participation is voluntary, and that their information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity in data collection and records management, Provider staff will undertake training on data privacy and records management, shall protect respondent privacy to the extent permitted by law, and will comply with all Federal and Agency regulations for private information.

Individuals who participate in the *Focus Groups* will not be anonymous, as records will include the names and contact information of people attended each session. However, these records will be kept confidential and responses in the focus group notes/transcripts will be de-identified so that no individual participant can be personally identified from these documents.

The *Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events* and *Feedback Surveys- Specific Events* will ask respondents to provide their name and contact information in case Providers want to have follow-up conversations with them. When the collected survey responses are collated in a database for review by a broader group of staff, personally identifying information will be removed so that individual respondents cannot be identified. In this way, the broader group discussions about the collected information are decoupled from individual respondents.

Public Reporting

Data will be publicly reported in anonymous and aggregated form where necessary to protect Confidential Business Information (CBI) and Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Location identifiers will be used to fulfill federal reporting requirements (e.g., DATA Act, Justice40 Initiative) to document results in different geographic locations. EPA will follow best practices in stating the source of the data (e.g., Quarterly Progress Reports) and the methodology used to collect the information (e.g., self-report).

Photographs of Center Activities

Providers may submit photos of their activities to EPA as part of their Quarterly Progress Reports (optional). EPA plans to publish a subset of these images on its public website and/or in public reports.

EPA expects that only adults will be photographed (no children under the age of 18), based on the nature of the activities that the Providers will conduct. The terms and conditions will require that Providers take the following actions to obtain informed consent from participants in their activities: At the start of each activity that will be photographed, the Provider will inform participants that photos will be taken and will obtain consent for their likeness to be included in photographs that may be publicly released. The term and condition will also direct the Providers to obtain legal advice from their own attorneys on the form for the participants to provide written consent to be photographed. EPA will not provide the Providers with legal advice on this matter.

To protect the privacy of participants whose photographs are submitted to EPA by the Centers:

1. Only EPA staff and Providers staff who are trained in data management best practices will handle images.
2. EPA staff will ensure that photos curated for public release will not include any personally identifiable information.

11. JUSTIFICATION FOR SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the Agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

The information collection activities covered by this ICR will not include questions about sensitive issues (e.g., religious beliefs, sexual attitudes, and behavior).

The public outreach information collection activities (Focus Groups, Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events, Feedback Surveys) will collect standard demographic information (e.g., race/ethnicity, income level, preferred language, etc.) so that Providers can track the extent to which a broad range of individuals and communities are using their services. This information is essential for the PREPARED program, as the primary goal is to provide technical assistance and support to historically underserved communities that have been overburdened by pollution and other environmental and health problems.

12. RESPONDENT BURDEN HOURS & LABOR COSTS[3]

Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- *Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.*
- *If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and the aggregate the hour burdens.*
- *Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included as O&M costs under non-labor costs covered under question 13.*

EPA provided preliminary estimates of burden hours and costs in the first Federal Register Notice. Since then, EPA has engaged in further consultation with relevant parties (see Section 8b) and used this new input to slightly revise the burden estimates. The revised estimates are provided below.

Total Annual Hour Burden (across all instruments and respondents) = 3,234 hours
Total Annual Cost (across all instruments and respondents) = $116,142.48

12a. Respondents/NAICS Codes

Respondents to the Quarterly Progress Reports will include the awarded PREPARED Providers, who are covered by the following NAICS code: 813410 (Civic and Social Organizations)

Respondents to the Public Outreach Information Collection will include individual members of the public.

12b. Information Requested

Quarterly Progress Reports will request the following information: Objectives, milestones, and priorities; activities with associated timeframes, locations, target audiences, outputs, and outcomes, as applicable in each area of work: (a) Partnerships & Networks (b) Outreach and Engagement, (c) Technical Assistance, (d) Training and (e) Other; Summary of public outreach information collections (if applicable, and if not reported in an activity); program management updates (e.g., personnel changes, fiscal information); schedule of noteworthy activities for next reporting period; feedback or comments for EPA and; (optional) images of key activities and events.

[3] As noted in Footnote 1, the first version of this ICR package (published in Federal Register Notice 1) included two additional post-award reporting instruments: Workplans and Final Reports that have been removed from this version. Thus, the burden estimates for these two instruments have been removed from this section.

Public Outreach Information Collections will request the following information: Organizational information; the primary environmental, climate, and/or energy justice concerns or challenges faced by the respondent's community; any barriers the individual has experienced in trying to address these concerns or challenges, design related projects, and/or measure progress in addressing concerns; the individual's past experience working with a technical assistance provider; any areas of training and/or evidence-building related technical assistance that the individual is looking for; the specific EPA grant(s) the individual has applied for or received; satisfaction with the Provider's services; the individual's experience with collecting and using data, forming and implementing an evaluation plan, and reporting data to a federal grant; how to effectively engage with decision-makers at all levels of government and private sector entities to inform policy development and program design and delivery; how to engage community members; how to improve the Provider's services; actions taken by the individual after receiving training/technical assistance; any federal or non-federal grants that an organization has applied for and/or received; any additional information they would like to share.

12c. Respondent Activities

Respondents will prepare, complete, and submit the information requested in the materials.

12d. Respondent Burden Hours and Labor Costs

Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

Total Annual Hour Burden = 288 hours
Total Annual Cost (across all instruments) = $16,200

Respondent burden and costs: The Providers incur a burden in the process of preparing, completing, and submitting the information via Quarterly Progress Reports.

Methodology: The hourly burden for respondents was estimated with consultation with multiple Providers, EPA offices and teams with relevant expertise, and pilot testing the form on EPA employees not affiliated with the PREPARED program. The labor cost was inferred from the previously approved TCTAC ICR (2035-0001) The labor cost per response inference was deemed acceptable due to the similarity of the post award reporting requirements of the PREPARED and TCTAC programs. The total hourly and labor cost burden estimation was developed using the **Table 12.2 Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers Respondent Burden Table** (included below).

Public Outreach Information Collections

Total Annual Hour Burden (across all focus groups and surveys) = 2946 hours
Total Annual Cost (across all focus groups and surveys) = $99,942

Respondent burden and costs: Members of the community and stakeholder groups incur a burden in the process of participating in Focus Groups, completing the Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Event, and completing feedback surveys.

Methodology: The hourly burden for respondents was estimated with consultation with three Providers (who will administer the surveys for their project). Each Provider employs at least one staff member with experience engaging in public outreach, either as part of their own work or

collaborations with other entities, providing valuable insight into the burden of these forms. The total hourly and labor cost burden estimation was developed using **Table 12.4 Public Outreach Information Collections Respondent Burden Table** (included below).

TABLE 12.1: Loaded Wage Rates for Providers responding to Quarterly Progress Report (NAICS 813410- Civic and Social Organizations) (Hourly Wage rate + 110% loading for account for costs of benefits and overhead)			
Wage Rate/Hour: Management	Wage Rate/Hour: Technical	Wage Rate/Hour: Clerical/Support	Wage rates obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for civic and social organizations.
$96.31 (General and Operations Managers)	$50.80 (Social Scientists and Related Workers)	$42.27 (Secretaries and Administrative Assistants)	

Table 12.2: Respondent Burden Hours and Labor Costs for Quarterly Progress Reports Submitted by Providers

Activity Description	Legal per activity		Manager per activity		Technical per activity		Clerical per activity		Hours per activity	Cost per activity	Annual Responses per Respondent	# of Respondents	Total Annual Hours	Total Annual Cost
	Hours	Cost	Hours	Cost*	Hours	Cost*	Hours	Cost*						
Reporting Requirements														
Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	1	$96.31	3.5	$177.80	1	$42.27	5.5	$316.38	4	12	264	$15,186.24
Recordkeeping Requirements														
Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	$21.13	0.5	$21.13	4	12	24	$1,014.24
Third Part Disclosure Requirements														
Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	1	$96.31	3.5	$177.80	1.5	$63.4	6	$337.51	8	12	288	$16,200.48

* See Table 12.1 Loaded Wage Rates for Respondents (NAICS 813410- Civic and Social Organizations)

TABLE 12.3: Wage Rates for Respondents (individual members of the public) responding to Public Outreach Information Collection Request	
Wage Rate/Hour: Public	Labor cost for each response, based on hourly wage of $33.88, the average hourly earnings of all employees in private nonfarm sectors in September 2023, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
$33.88	

Table 12.4 Public Outreach Information Collections Respondent Burden Table

Activity Description	Legal per activity		Manager per activity		Technical per activity		Clerical per activity		Public per Activity		Hours per activity	Cost per activity	Annual Responses per Respondent	# of Respondents	Total Annual Hours	Total Annual Cost
	Hours	Cost	Hours	Cost	Hours	Cost	Hours	Cost	Hours	Cost*						
Reporting Requirements																
Focus Group	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	2	$67.76	2	$67.76	1	540**	1080	$36,590.40
Self-Assessment Survey	0		0		0		0		0.5	$16.94	0.5	$16.94	1	1200	600	$20,328
Feedback Survey- Specific Event	0		0		0		0		0.33	$11.29	0.33	$11.29	1	1200	396	$13,548
Feedback Survey- General	0		0		0		0		0.5	$16.94	0.5	$16.94	1	1740	870	$29,475.60
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.33	$112.93	3.33	$112.93	4	4680	2946	$99,942
Recordkeeping Requirements																
Focus Group	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-Assessment Survey	0		0		0		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Feedback Survey- Specific Event	0		0		0		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Feedback Survey- General	0		0		0		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third Party Disclosure Requirements																

Focus Group	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-Assessment Survey	0		0		0		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Feedback Survey- Specific Event	0		0		0		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Feedback Survey- General	0		0		0		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.33	$112.93	3.33	$112.93	4	4680	2946	$99,942

* See Table 12.3: Wage Rates for Respondents (individual members of the public) responding to Public Outreach Information Collection Request

** 12 Providers x 3 Focus Groups per year * ~15 attendees per Focus Group = 540 respondents per year

13. RESPONDENT CAPITAL AND O&M COSTS

Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life) and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component. The estimates should consider costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling, and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.
If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collections services should be a part of this cost burden estimate.

Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

Capital and Start-Up Costs

Quarterly Progress Reports submitted to EPA: There are no specified capital or start-up costs for Providers to meet the PREPARED program's quarterly progress reporting requirements, as each Provider should already have the standard equipment (e.g., computer, relevant software packages) and infrastructure (e.g., workspace, access to internet services) that is required to collate, store, and report the required information for the Quarterly Progress Reports. No specialist equipment or infrastructure is needed to complete the Quarterly Progress Reports.

Public Outreach Information Collections: There are no specified capital or start-up costs for respondents to participate in each Provider's public outreach information collections (Focus Groups, Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events, Feedback Surveys). This is because each information collection will be provided in a mode that is accessible to each respondent in their current circumstances (e.g., in-person verbal survey, in-person paper survey, online survey, or focus group).

Operation and Maintenance and Purchase of Services

Quarterly Progress Reports submitted to EPA: Providers are not expected to incur any specified operation or maintenance costs in order to meet the PREPARED program's quarterly progress reporting requirements. This is because they can use the standard equipment and infrastructure that they use for other aspects of their work in the organization; thus, the costs associated with operation and maintenance should already be included as standard items in their annual budgets.

Public Outreach Information Collections: Respondents who provide information for the Focus Groups, Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events, and Feedback Surveys should not accrue any

operation or maintenance costs, as each information collection will be provided in a mode that is accessible to each respondent in their current circumstances (e.g., in-person verbal survey, in-person paper survey, online survey, or focus group).

14. AGENCY COSTS

Provide estimates of annualized costs to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

14a. Agency Activities

EPA incurs a burden in the process of reviewing and processing the information collected via the Quarterly Progress Reports submitted by the PREPARED Providers. The EPA Project Officer uses the Quarterly Progress Report for programmatic baseline monitoring and stores the reports in the Provider's grant file. The assigned Project Subject Matter Expert provides a secondary review of the Quarterly Progress Report to confirm sufficient progress is being made on the Provider's project. The Manager provides oversight of all reviews and involved employee activities.

The EPA does not incur any costs for the Public Outreach Information Collections, as the EPA will not be administering or reviewing these Information Collection instruments.

14b. Agency Labor Cost

Total Annual Hour Burden to the Agency (across all instruments) = 192 hours
Total Annual Cost to the Agency (across all instruments) = $14,973.12

Methodology: EPA has used its best professional judgement to develop preliminary estimates of burden hours and costs for each instrument, as presented in **Table 14.2- Annual Agency Burden and Cost.** Applicable wage rate calculations are provided in **Table 14.1- Wage Rates for Agency Staff.**

TABLE 14.1: Wage Rates for Agency Staff
OPM listed wage rate + 60% loading to account for costs of benefits

Wage Rate/Hour: Manager	Wage Rate/Hour: Technical (Project Subject Matter Expert)	Wage Rate/Hour: Clerical (Project Officer)	
$125.70 (GS-15, Step 1 basic wage rate + 60% loading)	$90.43 (GS-13, Step 1 basic wage rate + 60% loading)	$63.46 (GS-11, Step 1 basic wage rate + 60% loading)	Agency wage rate data used to calculate labor costs gathered from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Salary Table 2024-DCB, for employees based in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Table 14.2- Annual Agency Burden and Cost

Activity Description	Legal per activity		Manager per activity		Technical per activity		Clerical per activity		Hours per Activity	Cost per activity	Annual Activities	Total Annual Hours	Total Annual Cost
	Hours	Cost	Hours	Cost*	Hours	Cost*	Hours	Cost*					
Federal Oversight													
Review Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0.5	$62.85	1	$90.43	2.25	$142.79	3.75	$296.07	48**	180	$14,211.36
Store Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.25	$15.87	0.25	$15.87	48**	12	$761.76
Subtotal	0	0	0.5	$62.85	1	$90.43	2.5	$158.66	4	$311.94	96	192	$14,973.12
Contractor Cost													
Review Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Store Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Costs													
Review Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Store Quarterly Progress Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0.5	$62.85	1	$90.43	2.5	$158.66	4	$311.94	96	192	$14,973.12

* The cost to employ Federal government workers was obtained from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The OPM wage rates were increased by 60% to account for benefits

** 4 Quarterly Reports Submitted per year per Provider x 12 Providers = 48 Quarterly Reports per year to review/store

14c. Agency Non-Labor Costs

There are no expected operational costs unique to this information collection, as EPA Project Officers are reviewing the collected information as part of their work in supporting the grantees.

15. REASONS FOR CHANGE IN BURDEN

Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in the burden or capital/O&M cost estimates.

Not applicable: This is a new collection, and so does not involve any program changes or burden adjustments.

16. PUBLICATION OF DATA

For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Use and Publication of Information

Information collected under this ICR will be used to support Program and Agency activities in two ways.

1. Internal Decision-Making: Continuous Improvement and Evidence Building

   EPA can use the collected information about project outputs and outcomes to track progress against program objectives, thus allowing for assessments of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. Results will help EPA identify success stories as well as areas for improvement, which will inform internal discussions to develop evidence-based recommendations for best practices and improvement strategies within the program. In line with the 2018 Evidence Act, this evidence base will be used to inform and improve day-to-day operations and decision-making. The Agency's Office of the Chief Financial Officer provides resources and support to develop staff capacity to use information and data in this way.

2. Public Reporting: Accountability

   To enable more transparent public examination of federally funded activities, the information collected under this ICR will be published in four ways:
   a) EPA will post aggregated summaries of the Providers' performance (e.g., activities, outputs, outcomes) on its public websites.
   b) EPA will collate program-level information for inclusion in public reports, such as the Annual Performance Report mandated by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and annual reports on activities supported by supplemental funds (e.g., Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act).
   c) EPA will use the collected information to respond to requests for data and information from the Executive and Legislative branches.
   d) Each Provider will periodically post aggregated summaries of their public outreach information collections on their public websites and/or in public reports.

Information will be reported in anonymous and aggregated form where necessary to protect Confidential Business Information (CBI) and Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Location identifiers will be used to fulfill federal reporting requirements (e.g., DATA Act, Justice40 Initiative) to document results in different communities. EPA will follow best practices in stating the source of the data and the methodology used to collect the information.

Collection, Tabulation, and Public Reporting of Information

1. Quarterly Progress Reporting by Providers

Quarterly:	Providers submit progress reports to EPA. EPA reviews information for each Provider to assess individual progress. EPA aggregates and reviews information across Providers to identify themes.
Semi-annually:	EPA publishes information and images on EPA public website.
Annually:	EPA summarizes aggregated information in reports to OMB (e.g., budget data requests, Annual Performance Reports).
Periodically:	EPA summarizes aggregated information to respond to requests for data and information from the Congressional and/or Executive Branch.
End of Award:	EPA reviews information for each Provider to assess individual progress. EPA aggregates and reviews information across Providers to identify themes.

2. Public Outreach Information Collections

It is not possible to provide a precise schedule for the planned public outreach information collections, as each Provider will develop its own plans and timetable. Below is a general overview of the approach and timetable for the collection, tabulation, and public reporting of the collected information.

Periodically:	Respondents participate in Focus Groups. Respondents complete the Self-Assessment Survey- Specific Events prior to a training event or technical assistance consultation.
After events:	Respondents complete a Feedback Survey- Specific Event immediately after the event or consultation concludes. Provider staff review feedback for the self-assessment and specific event.
Quarterly:	Provider staff reports summary of information collections to the EPA Project Officer via the Quarterly Progress Report.

Annually: Respondents complete a Feedback Survey- General, one year after an event or interacting with the Provider.
Provider reviews information from Feedback Surveys- General to assess performance.

17. DISPLAY OF EXPIRATION DATE

If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

All instruments will display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection.

18. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

Explain each exception to the topics of the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."

EPA does not seek any exceptions to the topics for the certification statement identified in the "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."