

## FAQs – EJ Small Grants Program

- 1) **How much funding is available? How many grants will be awarded?** Up to approximately \$7.3 million in grant funding is available for approximately 100 projects nationwide. See the updated Request for Applications amended on April 19, 2021 for details about the sources of funding and allowable activities. Grants will be awarded in amounts of up to \$75,000 per award. Grants are for one year. Projects should plan a start date of October 1, 2021.
- 2) **Who is eligible to apply?** This solicitation is open to non-profit organizations (registered with the IRS or their State/territorial government), US Territories, Tribal governments (either Federally-recognized or State-recognized), Tribal organizations, and Freely Associated States (i.e. Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau).
- 3) **What types of projects may be funded under this announcement?** This announcement has 4 areas of emphasis with projects focusing on addressing the impacts of: 1) the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved communities, 2) Climate and Disaster Resiliency as well as Emergency Preparedness for underserved communities, 3) projects Diesel pollution in underserved communities living near ports and railyards as part of EPA's [Ports Initiative](#) , and 4) projects proposed by small non-profit organizations of 10 or fewer full-time employees.
- 4) **Can you explain the emphasis on small non-profits further?** Approximately \$3.6 million (or half the total amount of available funding) will be set-aside for non-profit organizations with 10 or fewer full-time employees. Applications will be separated into two tracks: one for small nonprofits and one for all other organizations (e.g. larger nonprofits, tribal governments, territorial governments, and other Native American organizations). Therefore, smaller nonprofits will be evaluated with similar-sized organizations rather than against larger organizations. This set-aside prioritizes equity and is intended to promote environmental justice funding to those communities and grassroots organizations that need it the most. To qualify for the set-aside, small non-profits applicants must submit documentation with their application (such as an employee roster) verifying the number of full-time employees on staff and the associated hours per week and salary/wage details for each full-time employee. For this announcement, a full-time employee is defined as an employee who works 40 or more hours per week for the applying organization.
- 5) **If my organization qualifies for the set-aside when we submit our application, but we grow larger over the next few months, what should I do?** Applicants who meet the standard set forth above for inclusion under the set-aside at the time of submission of their application, but who during this competition subsequently grow larger than 10 full-time employees, must immediately notify EPA of their change in size. If an applicant can confirm that their change in size has no material impact on their original workplan, then they will be moved from the set-aside track and considered for award under the non-set aside track. However, if an applicant fails to notify EPA, then they may be deemed ineligible to receive an award under this competition.

- 6) **If my organization has more than 10 full-time employees, should we still apply?** Yes, definitely! Half the total available funding will be set-aside for small non-profits. But that means that half the funding is still available for larger organizations.
- 7) **What are some types of allowable COVID-19 related projects?** Specifically, projects aimed at supporting public education, training, and emergency planning for communities impacted by COVID-19. Examples of projects include (but are not limited to): sharing information related to EPA-approved disinfectants to combat COVID-19; education activities related to COVID-19 vaccine information; addressing increased exposure of residents to in-home pollutants and healthy housing issues; training community health workers, and projects focusing on food insecurity issues exacerbated in communities heavily impacted by COVID-19 (leading to excessive vehicle miles traveled). **NOTE: While sharing information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine is allowable, EPA funds **cannot** be used to administer COVID-19 vaccines.**
- 8) **What are some allowable Climate/Disaster Resiliency projects?** Examples include (but are not limited to): Development of emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency action plans and programs for underserved communities and vulnerable populations to minimize the exposure to pollutants in the event of a natural disaster. Training on disaster response and/or for local community emergency responders. Disasters include but are not limited to hurricanes, tornadoes, coastal flooding, oil spills, wildfires, and earthquakes. Projects should address and/or prepare communities for the increases in pollution that can result from these and other disasters.
- 9) **What are some examples of Ports Initiative projects?** To qualify for this funding, applicants may propose projects that prepare community stakeholders to effectively engage with operators and other stakeholders of nearby **port or rail facilities\*** to influence decision-making on operations and projects that may impact **diesel engine emissions** and related air quality. To be considered for the [Ports Initiative](#) funding, applications should include the following:
  - a. Explanation of community concerns related to diesel engine emissions from a port or rail facility.
  - b. Description of how project will prepare the community to engage with other port or rail facility stakeholders to address these concerns.
  - c. Your project must only include activities related to the Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3). See Section I.C for more details about eligible activities under this statute.

Examples of potential project activities that would qualify for Ports Initiative funding include those outlined in Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the EPA Ports Initiative [Community Action Roadmap](#):

- prioritizing goals and concerns (e.g., learning about different sources of diesel pollution and identifying priority concerns such as truck traffic in a particular neighborhood)

- identifying levers of change (e.g. investigating upcoming port expansion projects and opportunities to provide input)
- identifying influencers and other stakeholders with whom to build relations (e.g., researching agency staff, elected officials, and other community stakeholders who support your goals)

See examples and lessons learned from [community-port collaboration pilot projects in Seattle, Savannah, and New Orleans](#).

\*See pg. 4 for port and railyard facility definitions. Projects focused exclusively on airports or ports of entry (international border crossings) are not eligible for Ports Initiative funding.

**10) How many Ports Initiative projects will be funded?** The Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) and OEJ will fund approximately 6 Ports Initiative projects. Additional high-ranking Ports Initiative applications may be funded as appropriate.

**11) Can applicants propose projects that are NOT related to the 4 areas of emphasis?**

Yes. Projects addressing long-standing environmental injustices are also strongly encouraged. Types of general EJ projects include (but are not limited to):

- Air Quality & Asthma
- Water Quality & Sampling
- Food Access to reduce vehicle travel and fuel emissions
- Stormwater & Green Infrastructure
- Lead Contamination
- Pesticides and other Toxic Substances
- Healthy Homes
- Illegal Dumping
- Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Resiliency
- Environmental Job Training
- Youth Development through Environmental Education

**12) Can EJSG projects include extensive lead pipe replacement, demolition of buildings, or construction of needed infrastructure in underserved communities?** No,

construction activities are not eligible under EJSG. In general, construction is considered building of large structures. Removal of large amounts of dirt and extensive use of heavy machinery are signs that a project includes construction activities. While EJSG funds cannot be used for construction, partners and/or funds from other resources can be used to cover the cost of necessary construction activities. As stated in the RFA, “All applications for EJSG activities under this solicitation must relate to gathering or transferring information or advancing awareness.” However, for projects focused on

training personnel, some activities which may fall under the “construction” umbrella may be allowable if those activities are determined to be reasonable and necessary to execute an otherwise eligible project. In these cases, applicants are encouraged to contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII of the RFA for clarity on the potential eligibility/ineligibility of their project.

**13) Do we need to provide documentation of our organization's nonprofit status?**

YES. An eligible non-profit organization applicant must include verification of the organization's incorporation status. Attach your organization's certificate that shows that your organization is either:

- a. a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization as designated by the Internal Revenue Service; OR
- b. a non-profit organization recognized by the state, territory, commonwealth, or tribe in which it is located. Verification must be on official state government letterhead.

**14) Does an organization have to be located in the same state, territory, or tribal area where the project will occur?**

Yes, eligible entities must be located within the same state, territory, commonwealth, or tribal jurisdiction that the proposed project will be located. This means that an applicant's registered address of record (i.e. the address designated on their IRS or State-sanctioned documentation) must be in the same state, territory, commonwealth or tribe as the location of the proposed project. This requirement supports the EJSG program goal for grantees having a direct connection with the target communities of EJ-funded projects.

**15) Are Fiscal Agents/sponsors allowed?**

Yes, fiscal agents and/or fiscal sponsors ARE eligible to apply to this opportunity as long as the fiscal agent or sponsor is a 501(c)3 or State-incorporated non-profit organization. However, the applying organization (the fiscal agent) needs to understand that (1) they will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria, including their programmatic capability, and (2) they will ultimately will be responsible for carrying out the project.

**16) My organization is NOT an eligible organization under the EJ Small Grants Program. Does this prohibit our organization from participating in this opportunity?**

Organizations considered ineligible under EJSG are encouraged to partner with an eligible organization. Partners can receive EJ funding through subawards and/or contracts. So, while your organization may not be eligible to apply, it's likely you can still receive a portion of the EJ funding through partnering. Please refer to the announcement for details in relation to applicant eligibility and partnership requirements.

**17) My organization engages in lobbying federal/state/local governments. Does our lobbying activity make us ineligible under this announcement?**

Organizations may not use Federal grant funds or cost-sharing funds to conduct lobbying activities of any kind. Please refer to Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. If a proposal is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of

the proposal will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the proposal, render the entire proposal ineligible for funding.

**18) Are partnerships required?**

Technically, no. However, there are a significant number of points allocated for partnerships in the evaluation criteria. So, while you may not be ineligible if you don't have partnerships, you most likely won't score as well on that criterion. **Therefore, partnerships are strongly encouraged.** Letters of Support or Commitment are also encouraged so EPA can verify the partnership.

**19) How should I submit Letters of Support/Commitment?**

When submitting your application via grants.gov, you should: Consolidate all letters into one document Label this document "Partnership Letters" or "Letters of Commitment" and Submit the document using the "Other Attachments Form."

**20) Can I partner with an organization located in a different state?** YES, if the reasoning is thoroughly explained in your proposal. For example, if you partner with an organization located in a neighboring state, you should explain why that partnership is relevant to your project or important for achieving results for the target underserved communities and/or vulnerable populations in your location.

**21) Will EPA consider multiple applications from a single organization for the 2021 EJ Small Grants or EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving announcements?** No. Applicants may only submit one EJ grant application. Applicants can choose either the EJSG or EJCPS announcement. Applicants cannot receive more than one EJ award between these two announcements. Therefore, it is important that applicants read the details of each announcement carefully to determine which opportunity they are better suited for.

**22) What is the procedure for modification of an application?** All applicants who wish to modify an application must resubmit a new application in accordance with all guidelines and application criteria as stated in the announcement. Applicants should include a cover memo acknowledging the revised submission and a request to disregard any previously submitted applications. All revised applications/submissions must be received by the published deadline.

**23) My workplan exceeds the eleven-page limit. Will this affect my eligibility to be considered for an award?** The workplan should not exceed eleven (11), single-spaced, typewritten pages. Anything over eleven (11) pages will not be read by the Review Panel. The pages of the workplan should be letter-size (8 1/2 X 11 inches) and the text should be single-spaced. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

**24) What is the smallest font size I can use for the proposal?** The minimum font size is 11 pt. The preference for font is Times New Roman.