

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

[\(back to Contents by Section\)](#)

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Announcement Clauses](#).

A. MERIT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Eligible applications that meet the threshold eligibility criteria described in Section III. will be reviewed and scored by a review panel(s) comprised of EPA staff and subject matter experts using the criterion below. The maximum total number of points is 100. Please note that certain criteria are worth more points than others.

Applicants must ensure that their workplan and application materials address the evaluation criteria below. Applications will be scored based on how well they address the following ranking criteria:

Criteria	Category	Evaluation Criteria	Points 100
1.0	Program Objectives	Applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they address the following:	38
a.	Project Summary Page	<p>The one-page summary document includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant Information (Org Name, Main Point of Contact, address, contact info) • Environmental issues – e.g., Air, Land, Water related • Project Abstract -- Brief description (250 words or less) of the main objective, activities, and outputs/outcomes of the project, including the specific geographic areas of focus. • Project Type(s) – such as research, tool development, training, small-scale construction, and monitoring • Underserved Communities and Vulnerable Populations addressed by project (include geographic and location info, such as zip code, city, or county) • Special Considerations – If applicable to your project, which special considerations do you believe your project qualifies for? (Climate Change/Disaster Resiliency, Health Impact Assessment, Rural Areas, or any Other Factor described below in Section V) • List of Project Partners -- include partner name and stakeholder group. For example, Tribal Governments (tribe); State University (academic); CBOs; House of Worship (faith-based); Internet Technology contractor (business/industry); etc. • Will you need to develop a QAPP for your project? (See Appendix G) 	2
b.	Disproportionate Environmental	Applications will be evaluated on how clearly they describe the local environmental justice issue(s), underserved	12

	<p>and Public Health Issues Impacting Underserved Communities</p>	<p>communities, and vulnerable populations the project proposes to address and the communities that are impacted. Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they (maximum 4 points each):</p> <p>(1) Describe and characterize the underserved communities and vulnerable populations directly impacted by disproportionate environmental and/or public health issues and describe how those communities and populations are impacted by those issues</p> <p>(2) Describe the local environmental/public health issue(s) that the project seeks to address? Describe other recent efforts in the State, if any, that have sought to address those issues as well</p> <p>(3) Describe the local environmental/public health results the project seeks to achieve and how will the underserved communities and vulnerable populations benefit from those results?</p> <p>* The application must include relevant information such as demographics, geographic location, and community history. We encourage the use of EPA’s EJSCREEN tool and/or local screening and mapping tools to further help characterize and describe your target communities. Instructions and resources on how to use EJSCREEN are included at the hyperlink above. For any questions you have about EJSCREEN, please contact Tai Lung at Lung.Tai@epa.gov or 202-566-1296.</p>	
c.	<p>Organization’s Recent Efforts to Directly Support Underserved Communities</p>	<p>The application will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which it demonstrates the strength of its efforts over the last five years to provide direct support and build relationships with underserved communities and vulnerable populations involved with the proposed project. Applications will be evaluated based the extent and quality to which it addresses the following (maximum 4 points each):</p> <p>(1) Recent Efforts (within the last five years) that the applicant’s organization has made to provide direct support and build relationships with the underserved communities and vulnerable populations identified in your application, including the duration of involvement and circumstances that led to your organization’s involvement. Examples may include, development of new housing assistance programs, community workshops and public meetings, environmental justice programming, and neighborhood planning.</p>	12

		<p>(2) How the applicant organization has worked directly with community residents and/or CBOs of underserved communities to address local environmental and public health issues within the last five years and what are some of the results of that work.</p> <p>(3) How the residents were part of the decision-making process of past efforts. How those efforts increased capacity and resources for underserved communities to address public health and/or environmental issues. And, how the applicant maintained an ongoing relationship with those communities and populations.</p>	
d.	Project Linkages	<p>The application will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which it:</p> <p>(1) Supports EPA Strategic Plan Goal 2 (Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights), Objective 2.1 (Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels) (2 points)</p> <p>Refer to link Below: https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan</p>	2
e.	Partner and Collaborate	<p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated on the following sub criteria:</p> <p>a. The quality and extent to which the applicant provides a clear and concise description of how the proposed project promotes collaborations with partners from multiple stakeholder groups, such as CBOs, industry, business, academia, government, etc., to develop and implement solutions that will address environmental and/or public health issues at the local level. Under this criterion, EPA will evaluate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - planned roles of each partner listed on the Project Summary Page - how each partner will contribute to the project, - what resources each partner brings to the project - how the partner has a vested interest in working with this partnership (other than just getting income from a sub-award or contract) - how the applicant organization plans to sustain these relationships on into the future <p>(5 points)</p> <p>Eligible applicants who do not propose partnerships or collaboration with others will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate that they can effectively</p>	10

		<p>and efficiently perform the project without any collaborating partners.</p> <p>b. Letters of Commitment. Applications will be evaluated based on the quality of the letters of commitment submitted with the application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit at least three letters of commitment from three partners from three different stakeholder groups. The letters should explain the partners' role in the project, what resources (funding, in-kind, technical assistance, etc.) they are bringing to the effort, and their interest in the project and community. Generic letters of support will not be evaluated. Submitting fewer than three letters of commitment from three different stakeholder groups may negatively impact an applicant's score under this criterion. (5 points)</p> <p>NOTE: Only partnerships supported by a commitment letter will be evaluated using the above sub criteria. Partnerships with no commitment letters will not be evaluated. Partnerships and collaboration with other interested stakeholders in performance of the project are integral to the success of this program. If an applicant does not demonstrate such partnerships or collaboration as described in Section IV, applications will be evaluated on how well they demonstrate in their application that they can effectively perform the project without any partners or collaboration. Given the nature of this program, failure to demonstrate effective partnerships or collaboration with other stakeholders or having fewer partners/collaboration than recommended above, will likely adversely impact the applicant's scoring under this criterion and render the application less competitive than others that include partnerships and collaboration. If an application has no commitment letters and does not demonstrate how the applicant can effectively perform the project without partners or collaboration, they may receive a zero for this criterion.</p>	
2.0	Project Activities/ Milestone Schedule/ Detailed Budget Narrative		28
	Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the following:		
a.	Project activities	Clearly identified steps that the applicant will take that will reasonably progress towards achieving the program objectives and a clear description of the detailed project activities or components and the anticipated products/results associated with each activity as described in Section IV.	12
b.	Milestone schedule	A clearly articulated and realistic milestone schedule,	4

		<p>including timeframes and major milestones to complete significant project activities.</p> <p><i>It is recommended that you insert a table in your application narrative to help organize your milestone schedule</i></p>	
c.	Itemized Budget Sheet / Budget Narrative	<p>Reasonable and allowable costs for each component/activity. Applicants must itemize costs into the following budget categories: personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs, and total costs. Describe itemized costs in sufficient detail for EPA to evaluate the reasonableness and allowability of costs for each workplan component/activity. (6 points)</p> <p>Total EPA funding awarded to partnering CBOs. Applications will be evaluated on the percentage of the total funds proposed to be awarded to the applicant that are to be subawarded to partnering CBOs. Applicants are strongly encouraged to budget a <u>minimum</u> of 20% of their proposed budget for partnering CBOs. For example, for a \$1M award, a minimum of \$200,000 would be budgeted for partnering CBOs. Subaward funds should be accounted for in the “Other Costs” budget category. (6 points)</p> <p><i>Applicants are permitted to submit the itemized budget sheet using the “Other Attachment” form so the sheet will not count against the 18-page workplan limit.</i></p>	12
3.0	Environmental Results—Outcomes, Outputs and Performance Measures (Logic Model) - Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated on the following elements:		18
a.	Environmental Results- Outputs/Outcomes	The extent and quality to which the expected project outputs and outcomes identified in the application are demonstrated to be effective in achieving the Program Objectives listed in Section I, including developing strategies for addressing local environmental and public health issues, educating and empowering the community about those issues, and developing approaches to building consensus and setting community priorities in the underserved community.	10
b.	Performance Measurement Plan	The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates a sound plan for tracking progress towards achieving the expected outputs, outcomes, and associated timeframes for achieving those results.	4
c.	Sustainability Plan and Environmental Justice Integration	The extent and quality to which the application demonstrates plans to utilize the results and momentum of the proposed project to further integrate environmental justice principles in	4

		all operations of State and/or local government work.	
4.0	Programmatic Capability Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project, taking into account their:		10
a.	Organizational experience	Organizational experience related to the proposed project, and plan for building relationships with underserved communities, community groups, and vulnerable populations to successfully perform the project.	4
b.	Staff Experience / Qualifications of Project Manager (PM)	The applicant will be evaluated on the ability to clearly demonstrate that the selected PM and other staff associated with the project are qualified to successfully perform the project. This will be determined through evaluating the following: (1) How the PM and staff are qualified to undertake the project successfully; (2 points) (2) Illustrating the PM's experience building relationships with community residents and community organizations in a professional capacity. Please include detailed descriptions of similar activities and programs that the PM has worked onto improve local communities (2 points) (3)	4
c.	Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds	Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.	2
5.0	Past Performance Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account their: (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV of the solicitation (3 points) , (ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV of the solicitation including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not (3 points) . Note: In evaluating applicants under this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information		6

	<p>from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items i and ii above—a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.</p>	
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B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed and scored under the following process:

1. **Threshold Eligibility Screening Process** – All applications will be evaluated for eligibility using the threshold eligibility criteria described in Section III.C by EPA Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR) staff.
2. **Panel Review and Evaluation Process** – EPA will convene a review panel(s) to review, score, and rank all eligible applications that pass the threshold eligibility review based on the merit evaluation criteria listed above in separate ranking lists for **each** of the set-aside categories described in Section II. The review panel(s) will include EPA staff and may include external subject matter experts.
3. **Final Selection Process and Other Factors** – The review panel will present final rankings and selection recommendations to the Selection Official, who will then make the final selections for award in each set-aside category. In addition to this information, the Selection Official may also consider any of the following “other factors” in making final selection decisions from among the high-ranking applications:
 - Projects addressing Climate Change, Disaster Resiliency, Health Impact Assessments, Rural Areas, and/or Emergency Preparedness.
 - Geographic Diversity – EPA may consider the mix of high-ranking projects located in urban and rural areas or different regions of the country when making final selections, as well as the geographical nature or impact of the project.
 - Programmatic Priorities – OEJECR, EPA National Programs, and Regional Offices develop annual goals and priorities that may focus on certain environmental and/or public health issues (e.g., lead contamination, safe drinking water, and risk management). These overarching goals and priorities may be a consideration when making final selections among high-ranking applications.
 - Availability of funds

Accordingly, in making the final funding decisions, the Selection Official will consider the review panel rankings and recommendations, OEJECR staff input based on their call with the review panel(s) and may also consider the other factors identified above. The “other factors” may only be considered by the Selection Official when determining final selections after the scoring and ranking process is complete.