

A. Merit Evaluation Criteria

Eligible applications that pass the threshold eligibility review described in Section III.C 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 sections 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	Total Points 100
1.0	<p>Program Objectives Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they address program objectives (Section I of the RFA) by demonstrating:</p>		44

a.	<p>Program Design: Community Application In- take and Evaluation Processes</p>	<p>How well the applicant designs the processes described in Section I of the RFA to operate as a Grantmaker. This includes evaluating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The applicant’s plan and approach for designing competitive community application in-take and evaluation processes and ensuring those processes include submission options accessible to all Eligible Subrecipients throughout the entire geographic area covered. Applicants should describe how they plan to compete and evaluate applications received for both the Phase I (Assessment), Phase II (Planning), and Phase III (Project Development) subgrants. Applicants should also describe how they will make clear the three different phases of subgrants available to Eligible Subrecipients. Applicants should describe their plan to provide an open call for applications where Eligible Subrecipients can submit applications to the pass-through entity when they are ready. (8 points) ● The applicant’s plan and approach to develop a timely and efficient subaward process where all EJ Thriving Communities Subgrants can be awarded to selected subrecipients efficiently and effectively. (4 points) ● The applicant’s approach to managing awarded subawards including developing a Project Management Tracking and Reporting System for all subrecipient funding and projects and ensuring that subawards are managed in compliance with 2 CFR 200.332 and EPA’s Establishing and Managing Subawards General Term and Condition. (4 points) ● How the applicant will obtain, and incorporate as appropriate, feedback from Eligible Subrecipients and prospective subrecipients including those from underserved communities, including urban, rural and remote communities on the effectiveness of the pass- through entity and ways to improve the subaward program (2 points) ● How the applicant will make the subaward process described in Section I accessible to those not fluent in English (2 points) 	20
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Criteria	Category	Evaluation Criteria	Total Points 100
b.	<p>Outreach to Underserved, Urban, Rural, Remote, Tribal and Capacity Constrained Communities throughout the Geographic Area</p>	<p>The applicant’s approach for ensuring that the subaward process described in Section I is accessible to underserved communities, communities in urban, remote and rural areas, and community stakeholders with the highest degree of burden and capacity constraints throughout the entire Geographic Area (see Section I.4.D) the applicant is applying to cover. This includes evaluating the quality and extent of the applicant’s plan and approach for making these communities and community stakeholders aware of the existence of the Grantmaker and the subgrants program, how to access them, and how the program can be used to address local environmental and public health issues impacting underserved communities and marginalized populations throughout the Geographic Area. Applicants will also be evaluated on their plan to ensure that subgrants are equitably distributed and on their plan for ensuring that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) are highly prioritized elements in their outreach plans.</p> <p>(6 points)</p> <p>NOTE: Under this criterion an applicant will only score well if they demonstrate how all the entities described above, including communities in urban, rural and remote areas, will be made aware of the Grantmaker and the subgrants program and how to access them. Applications that focus on outreach and accessibility solely to, for example, underserved communities in metropolitan areas, will not score as well as applications that address all the communities and community stakeholders identified above.</p>	6

c.	Partnerships / Collaboration / Participatory Governance / Letters of Commitment	<p>How the proposed project for the Grantmaker includes collaboration with one or more community-based nonprofit organization partners (where required by the IRA statute) and other partners to operate an efficient and effective subgrants program to meet the objectives of this RFA and address environmental justice challenges facing Eligible Subrecipients and specifically underserved communities and communities in urban, rural, and remote areas throughout the Geographic Area. Applicants will be evaluated on the degree to which their proposed Grantmaker application demonstrates participatory governance where one or more community-based nonprofit organizations is involved in the design and decision-making of the subgrants program. Example participatory governance activities could include advisory bodies composed of community-based nonprofit organizations that oversee and provide thought partnership on the development of the subgrants process subject to policies that prevent actual or apparent conflicts of interest in the selection of subrecipients. This criteria will evaluate the planned roles of each partner listed in the application, how each partner will contribute to the effectiveness of the project, what resources and/or expertise 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), and the strength of the overall participatory governance approach. (6 points)</p> <p>Eligible Applicants who do not propose partnerships or collaborations with others will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate that they can effectively and efficiently perform the project and operate a pass-through subaward program on their own without any collaborating partners.</p> <p>The quality of the letters of commitment submitted with the application. The letters will be evaluated with respect to whether they explain the partners' role with the Grantmaker and how it contributes towards the effectiveness of the pass-through subgrants program, what resources (funding, in-kind, technical assistance, support, expertise, etc.) the partners are bringing to the effort, how their participation will be financed, their interest in the pass-through subgrants program, and their</p>	8
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		expertise/experience in helping underserved communities and communities in urban, rural and remote areas. Generic letters of support that do not commit an organization or individual to specific activities will not be evaluated. (2 points)	
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Criteria	Category	Evaluation Criteria	Total Points 100
		NOTE - If no letters are submitted and the applicant proposes to perform the activities of the Grantmaker without any partners, they will be evaluated based on how well they demonstrate that they can effectively and efficiently perform the project and operate a pass-through subgrants program on their own without partners.	
d.	Applicant's Historical Connection to Underserved Communities throughout the Geographic Area	The applicant will be evaluated on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their past and current work, collaborations, and relationships with underserved communities and communities in urban, rural and remote areas throughout the Geographic Area to address community challenges. The description should include some of the results of those efforts, and any current programs and initiatives the applicant is currently involved with to address the concerns of underserved communities and populations. (4 points) 	4

e.	Noncompetitive Fixed Amount Subawards and Limiting number of subawards to a single entity	<p>The applicant will be evaluated on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their plan to reserve a limited number of fixed amount subawards for severely capacity constrained Eligible Subrecipients who may not be able to submit competitive grant applications. Applicants should describe the scope of these projects and the types of activities that these subawards will fund (2 points) • Policies and procedures they plan to develop that will limit the number of EJ Thriving Communities Subgrants that a single entity may receive within a certain time period with the goal being to achieve the highest diversity and number of different subrecipients possible (2 points) 	4
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Criteria	Category	Evaluation Criteria	Total Points 100
f.	Project Linkages	<p>The extent and quality to which the proposed project activities support and advance 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:</p> <p>https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan</p>	