



EPA Community Change Grants Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria summarized in the table below correspond to the Track I Application Project Narrative components described in [Section IV.B. Applicants](#) should reference the index number and title of these components in their Project Narrative to facilitate the evaluation process.

Track I Written Application Criterion

Section	Possible Points
Part 1. Community Driven Investments for Change	80 total
1.1 Community Overview	10
1.2 Selected Strategies	45
1.3 Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan	15
1.4 Community Strength Plan	10
Part 2. Program Management, Capability, and Capacity	35 total
2.1 Performance Management Plan, Outputs / Outcomes	6
2.2 Project Linkages to the EPA Strategic Plan	4
2.3 CBO Experience and Commitment	5
2.4 Programmatic and Managerial Capability and Resources	15
2.5 Past Performance	5
Part 3. Readiness to Proceed, Feasibility, and Sustainability	40 total
3.1 Readiness Approach	8
3.2 Feasibility	9
3.3 Sustainability	5
3.4 Program Budget Description	8
3.5 Compliance Plan	10
TOTAL	155

Evaluation Criteria for Track I Written Applications (155 points total)

Part 1. Community Driven Investments for Change (80 points total)

1.1 Community Vision Description (10 points):

- **Community Description:** Applicants will be evaluated based on their description of the community to benefit from the projects in the application, consistent with the Project Area map submitted, and the quality and extent to which they describe the community's resources, assets, and local characteristics, and the type of benefits the grants will provide to the community. **(3 points)**
- **Community Challenges:** Applications will be evaluated based on how well they describe the challenges and needs the community are facing, including climate impacts, climate change risks / exposures, and / or localized pollution, and the impact these challenges have on priority populations within the Project Area who are acutely exposed to and impacted by climate, pollution, and weather-related threats, and / or who exhibit acute vulnerabilities or susceptibilities to the impacts of environmental pollution. See footnote 3 for more information on priority populations. **(4 points)**
- **Community Vision:** Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they articulate a clear vision for the impacts and benefits this grant would have on the community in the near and long term, as described further in Section IV.B. **(3 points)**

1.2 Selected Strategies (45 points)

- **Strategy Overview (15 points).** Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they:
 - Provide an overview of the strategies and associated projects and describe how they will be implemented during the grant term. **(6 points)**
 - Describe how the strategies and associated projects in the application are integrate and / or designed to complement each other to benefit the disadvantaged communities, **(6 points)**
 - Explain how the amount / proportion of the requested funding was determined for each strategy and aligned project in the application. **(3 points)**
- **Climate Action Strategies (15 points).** Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they:
 - Describe how the associated projects will address the identified climate impacts and/or climate change risk(s) / exposure(s) within the Project Area and explain how the project(s) will decrease GHG emissions within the Project Area and / or increase overall Project Area resilience to current and anticipated climate impacts. **(8 points)**
 - Describe how the selected Climate Action Strategies and associated projects help meet the needs and challenges of the community as articulated in the Community Vision. **(7 points)**
- **Pollution Reduction Strategies (15 points).** Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they:
 - Describe how the associated project(s) will address the identified localized pollution challenges and will make substantial and measurable (e.g., quantifiable) progress towards preventing, reducing, and / or mitigating future sources of pollution to benefit the Project Area. **(8 points)**
 - Describe how the selected Pollution Reduction Strategies help meet the needs and challenges of the community as articulated in the Community Vision. **(7 points)**

1.3 Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan (15 points): The Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan described in Section I.G will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which it demonstrates:

- **Past Community Outreach and Engagement Conducted:** How the applicant's past engagement with the Project Area community impacted the Strategy and associated project selection and implementation approach included in the application, including the outreach and engagement methods used for the Project Area and specific neighborhoods or groups within the Project Area. **(4 points)**
- **Community Engagement Plan Implementation:** The specific community engagement methods used by the applicant, as well as how they will mitigate barriers and involve relevant governmental stakeholders necessary to support overall project implementation. **(6 points)**
- **Collaborative Governance Structure:** The details regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Applicant, Collaborating Entities, and community residents and / or community-selected representatives for implementing, managing, and overseeing the application's project activities, including how regularly they will meet to discuss project implementation. **(5 points)**

1.4 Community Strength Plan (10 points): The Community Strength Plan as described in Section I.G will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which it demonstrates:

- **Maximizing Economic Benefits of Projects:** How the projects included in the application are intended to provide economic benefits for individuals in the Project Area, including priority populations as defined in footnote 3. **(5 points)**
- **Displacement Avoidance:** The measures for mitigating potential near-term and long-term risks associated with the proposed projects to residents, small businesses, nonprofits, and other community members, the vulnerability the community faces to rising costs attributable to their proposed project, and the potential project impacts to households, small businesses, and other existing groups. **(5 points)**

Part 2. Program Management, Capability, and Capacity (35 points total)

2.1 Performance Management Plan and Outputs / Outcomes (6 points): Applications will be evaluated based on:

- Whether the application describes an effective plan, with associated timeframes, for tracking and measuring progress in achieving the expected project outcomes and outputs including those identified in Appendix F, as appropriate, and any additional ones identified in the application. **(2 points)**
- The quality and specificity of the proposed outputs and outcomes and how they will lead to improvements to the environmental conditions and public health of the disadvantaged communities in the short and long term. **(2 points)**
- Whether, and how, the applicant has incorporated program evaluation activities (e.g., utilizing proper evaluation tools and personnel / organizations with experience in evaluating program and project progress / success) from project initiation through project completion to meaningfully document and measure their progress towards achieving project goals and how they will use the results of the evaluations to meet the project goals within the required timeframes. **(2 points)**

2.2 Project Linkages to the EPA Strategic Plan (4 points): Applications will be evaluated based on 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).

In addition, applications, depending on the projects included in them, will also be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they also support and advance the following EPA Strategic Plan Goals as applicable:

- Goal 1 - Tackle the Climate Crisis
- Goal 4 - Ensure Clean and Healthy Air for All Communities
- Goal 5 - Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities
- Goal 6 - Safeguard and Revitalize Communities; and
- Goal 7 - Ensure Safety of Chemicals for People and the Environment

2.3 CBO Experience and Commitment (5 points): The CBO(s) that are either the Lead Applicant and / or Statutory Partner for the proposed grant will be evaluated based on their history and experience as a CBO and the depth of their commitment, connections, and relationships with the disadvantaged communities the application is intended to benefit.

2.4 Programmatic and Managerial Capability and Resources (15 points): The Lead Applicant and Statutory Partner will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete, oversee, and manage the award considering:

- Their organizational experience and capacity related to performing the proposed project(s) or similar activities (e.g., experience in managing projects and activities like those in the application). **(4 points)**
- Their resources, capacity, capabilities, staff (e.g., project manager and other key personnel), expertise, and skills to perform and manage the award activities effectively during the three-year award period. For Lead Applicants submitting two applications under this NOFO, this includes how they demonstrate they have the above attributes to perform, manage, and oversee two awards effectively within the three-year award period **(4 points)**
- The milestone schedule for the proposed projects (up to three years) including the breakout of the project activities into phases and timeframes for completion of tasks, and the approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that the award funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner while ensuring that costs are eligible, reasonable, and allowable. **(3 points)**
- Their financial stability, controls in place, and capacity to manage taxpayer dollars ethically and efficiently as well as the policies and controls for project oversight and program risk. This includes the extent and quality to which the application includes controls to identify waste, fraud, and abuse, and reduce the potential for waste, fraud, and abuse by including plans and policies for program oversight, including confidential reporting (e.g., whistleblower protections). **(4 points)**

2.5 Past Performance (5 points): The Lead Applicant will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed projects considering their:

- Past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.B. **(3 points)**
- History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section IV.B 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. **(2 points)**

Note: The focus of this criterion is on the Lead Applicant's past performance and not that of any other Collaborating Entities or contractors / consultants who may be assisting the applicant with performance of the award. In evaluating the Lead Applicant under these factors, EPA will consider the information provided in the application and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current / prior grantors. If the Lead

Applicant does not have any relevant or available past performance related to federal or non-federal grants, this should be stated explicitly in the application (e.g., our organizations have no relevant past grants experience). Including this statement will ensure you receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). Failure to include this statement may result in your receiving a score of 0 for these factors.

Part 3. Readiness to Perform, Feasibility, and Sustainability (25 points total):

3.1 Readiness Approach (8 points): Applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability and readiness to proceed with grant performance for the projects in the application, based on the Readiness Approach Requirements described in Section I.G, upon receiving an award, or generally no later than 120 days after award, to ensure that the projects can be completed within the statutory three-year grant period. As appropriate, this may include evaluating the description of the completed project planning and design phases related to the project(s) as well as demonstrating that the applicant has obtained and / or complied with the necessary approvals, permits, permissions, and any other applicable requirements, to commence project performance upon award, and if not generally within 120 days of award.

3.2 Feasibility (9 points): Applications will be evaluated based on whether it is demonstrated that all the projects in the application can be successfully and effectively performed within the three-year grant period of performance, and the degree of risk that they cannot be. This includes also evaluating how the strategies and associated projects can individually and collectively be completed within three years.

3.3 Sustainability (5 points): Applications will be evaluated based on whether it is demonstrated that the benefits and outcomes from the projects in the application can be sustained after the three-year grant period of performance based on factors including but not limited to whether (i) the Applicant will leverage funding and / or resources from other sources to ensure the sustainability of the projects beyond the three-year grant term and (ii) the description of an operations and maintenance approach including the plans and commitments to ensure there is continued funding available for operation and maintenance activities of infrastructure activities for the projects after the grant term is over (e.g., are there demonstrated commitments for continuing operation and maintenance funding / resources from the appropriate parties after the three year grant term is over) including coordination with appropriate responsible parties.

3.4 Program Budget Description (8 points): The program budget will be evaluated based on:

- The reasonableness of the budget and allowability of the costs for each component / activity of the projects in the application. This includes evaluating whether funding is well balanced and equitably distributed to project partners, including sub-awardees, commensurate with their role in the project, and whether funding is categorized into the proper budget categories providing clarity, accuracy, and granularity on the applicant's planned use of the grant funds during the project period. **(4 points)**
- The cost effectiveness of the budget / project in terms of maximizing the share of funds used for the delivery of benefits to disadvantaged communities (both the direct costs of funds passed through for financial assistance as well as associated indirect costs to the greatest extent practicable). **(4 points)**

3.5 Compliance Plan (10 points): Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which the Compliance Plan addresses the elements for the Compliance Plan described in Section I.G.

Track I Oral Presentation (45 points total)

The oral presentation is intended to supplement the written application, and provide an opportunity for applicants to further explain their projects. The oral presentations will be conducted through video teleconferencing; however, requests for a telephone-only conference will be considered, provided the applicant describes why video teleconferencing is a barrier that cannot be overcome with technical assistance provided through EPA as noted in Section I.E. Pre-recorded presentations that lack real-time interaction will not be allowed. EPA will also provide interpretive services for the oral presentation upon request.

Further instructions and details about the oral presentation (e.g., date, time, requirements, limitations and / or prohibitions on the use of written material or other media to supplement the oral presentations, the time permitted for each oral presentation) will be provided to those applicants selected to participate in an oral presentation. EPA will maintain a record of the oral presentation (e.g., transcription) and relevant information from the oral presentation may be incorporated into the grant award terms and conditions as appropriate.

Applicants are responsible for determining who will represent them at the oral presentation, but it must include a representative(s) of the Lead Applicant and should include Collaborating Entity and community representatives as necessary. Contractors, including consultants, cannot attend the oral presentation for the applicant.

The oral presentation will be approximately 45 minutes including an introduction and closing. It is expected it will be conducted by two EPA and / or external reviewers who will evaluate the oral presentation based on the criteria below. The reviewers may ask clarifying questions during the presentation to enhance their understanding of the application, but they will be limited to clarifying issues related only to the areas listed below. The oral presentation cannot be used to change the scope of the applicant's written application, make any substantive changes to it, cure material omissions in the written applications, and / or otherwise revise the written application. The oral presentation will be evaluated on the below criteria.

Oral Presentation Criteria (45 points total)

- **Community Overview:** How was the Project Area, as defined in Appendix A, chosen to be the beneficiary of the projects in the application? What are the greatest needs for the communities within the Project Area, and, if your application is not selected for funding what would be the adverse consequence to those communities? **(9 points)**
- **Strategy Rationale:** Why did you select the strategies and projects within the application, and how will they (collectively and individually) transform the Project Area to address environmental and climate justice challenges now and in the future (beyond the three-year grant term)? Also, when the three-year grant term is complete, how will you assess whether the grant was successful in achieving its objectives to benefit the Project Area and what will success look like? **(9 points)**
- **Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance:** Describe your commitment, as well as that of the Collaborating Entities as described in Section III.A of the NOFO, to efficiently and effectively perform the projects in the application within three years and describe how all entities will work together to achieve the project objectives within the three-year grant performance period. **(9 points)**
- **Management Capacity:** Explain how you have the programmatic, technical, administrative, and managerial capability, experience, and resources to properly manage the grant consistent with grant regulations and requirements including those in 2 CFR §200 **(9 points)**
- **Performance Challenges:** What do you anticipate are the greatest challenges to completing the projects in the application within the three-year time frame, and what are your plans for overcoming them? **(9 points)**