

Grant Overview for School Districts

U.S. EPA Environmental and Climate Justice
Community Change Grants

READINESS CHECK:
This document is part of a series of tools for school districts created by a collaborative of non-profit partners and funded with generous support from Flu lab.

GRANT OBJECTIVES AND AWARD AMOUNT

The information needed to apply for the Community Change Grant is contained in the U.S. EPA's [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO).

These grants are intended to address the diverse and unique needs of disadvantaged communities by:

1. Reducing and preventing pollution
2. Building resilience to climate change and mitigating current and future climate risks
3. Enhancing meaningful involvement in government processes related to environmental and climate justice
4. Expanding access to high-quality jobs and economic opportunity through workforce development
5. Bolstering community strength by ensuring that local residents receive the benefits of investments and could build on them for current and future generations

The Community Change Grants have two tracks. The non-profit partnership that is supporting school districts in pursuing this funding is providing technical assistance for projects under Track I. Awards under Track I are expected to be \$10-20 million each and cannot exceed \$20 million. EPA expects to award approximately 150 Track I awards, including those under the Target Investment Areas. A description of projects and requirements under Track I can be found in the following sections of the overview.

TIMELINE

EPA is accepting applications on a rolling basis until November 21, 2024, at 11:59 PM (Eastern Time) through Grants.gov. Applications received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted prior to the deadline may be able to obtain comments on their application from EPA if the application is submitted far enough ahead of the deadline and it is not initially approved. Only one resubmission is available of an application based on comments received from EPA.

Projects under this grant must be completed within three (3) years. EPA intends to execute [cooperative agreements](#) with the winning proposals. Cooperative agreements allow substantial Federal involvement with selected applicants to ensure the performance of the grant and for effective EPA oversight of grantee performance.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Among the requirements for projects, the grant stipulates that all projects must benefit a disadvantaged community, as defined through the [EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities Map](#).

Applicants must identify the specific census block groups designated as disadvantaged communities that the projects and supporting activities will directly benefit by submitting a Project Area Map using the tool that EPA has giving in the NOFO. The map combines multiple datasets (including CEJST and EJScreen) that determine whether a community is disadvantaged for the purposes of implementing programs under the IRA.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include (1) a partnership between two community-based non-profit organizations (CBOs), or (2) a partnership between a CBO and one of the following: a Federally recognized Tribe, a local government, or an institution of higher education (IHE), including Minority Serving Institutions as further described. For the purposes of this grant, public school districts are considered local government applicants. Other organizations and entities may participate in the Community Change Grants as Collaborating Entities through subawards, or as contractors selected in accordance with competitive procurement requirements.

Under this NOFO, A school district must apply with a CBO and can apply as either the Lead Applicant or the Statutory Partner.

LEAD APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

Either the school district or the community-based non-profit organization can be the Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant must be able to show experience in managing grants. The Lead Applicant is responsible for:

- Reporting under the grant
- Making subawards to Collaborating Entities
- Receiving federal funds from EPA and managing the proper expenditure of these funds
- Assuming liability for unallowable costs
- Managing compliance and legal issues
- Managing risks associated with the project
- Overseeing correct retention of records

COMMUNITY FOCUS

A key component of the NOFO is that the project be community driven.

To ensure that the community itself drives project development and implementation, applications must include a Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan, which should demonstrate how the applicant will inform, respond to, and engage community members throughout project development and implementation.

CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGIES

Each application for Track I must address one Climate Action Strategy. These strategies are listed in Appendix C in the NOFO (page 72). The non-profit partnership that is supporting school districts in pursuing this funding is focusing our guidance and coaching on Climate Action Strategy 3. In the NOFO, the information about Climate Action Strategy 3 includes:

Strategy 3: Energy-Efficient, Healthy, and Resilient Housing and Buildings

Strategy 3 supports investments in low- and zero-emission technologies and energy efficiency upgrades that can help decarbonize residential and commercial buildings, decrease energy burden, and increase resilience for communities. Many of these activities also contribute to positive public health outcomes by improving indoor air quality and the safety and comfort of buildings. Co-benefits associated with this strategy can be maximized by combining additional Climate Action and Pollution Reduction Strategies to improve indoor air quality and/or produce additional resiliency benefits.

Output Examples for Strategy 3 (selected)

- Natural gas appliances replaced with electric equivalents (#)
- Electrification, weatherization, and HVAC upgrades / replacements of low-income houses, apartments, small businesses, and other community buildings (#)

Outcome Examples for Strategy 3

- Lower consumption of [...] heating fuels (propane, heating oil, natural gas, and wood) and reduction in associated climate pollutants (e.g., black carbon, methane, CO₂), as well as ambient and indoor emissions of Hazardous Air Pollutants and PM_{2.5}.
- Decreased incidence of asthma

POLLUTION REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Each application for Track I must address one Pollution Reduction Strategy. These strategies are listed in Appendix D in the NOFO (page 79). The non-profit partnership that is supporting school districts in pursuing this funding is focusing our guidance and coaching on Pollution Reduction Strategy 1. In the NOFO, the information about Pollution Reduction Strategy 1 includes:

Strategy 1: Indoor Air Quality and Community Health Improvements

Activities under Strategy 1 can include education on air toxins / toxics and how to monitor them (e.g., curriculum development, outreach strategies, public education activities) and direct assessment and remediation to reduce harmful air pollution (e.g., installation of filtration systems, building retrofits that address multiple sources of pollution, replacement of wood heaters that do not meet EPA standards, asbestos abatement in schools).

Output examples for Strategy 1 (selected)

- [Type of] trainings implemented (#)
- Classrooms with air cleaners (#)
- Schools with upgraded / improved HVAC systems (#)

Outcome examples for Strategy 1

- Increased public and environmental health literacy
- Decreased incidence of asthma symptoms as measured by doctor visits or school nurse visits for asthma symptoms
- Reduced exposure to radon and risk of developing radon-induced lung cancer

Next, we recommend reviewing the *Application Outline* document.