

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

AGENCY: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

ACTION: Notice of Solicitation - Questions and Answers dated May 22, 2003

**Office of Transportation and Air Quality
"Voluntary Diesel Retrofit Program Assistance Agreements"
(Solicitation# OTAQ-03-04)**

Following are formal Agency responses to questions/comments regarding the subject solicitation received prior to the established cutoff date of May 22, 2003:

1. What is the definition of "financial contribution" or "participation?" For example, if a fleet is using their vehicles (trucks, buses, etc.) does the value of the bus constitute the entities match? Also is there some amount of match that is considered sufficient? 20%, 40%?

Financial participation could include any contribution to the project of value including administrative, project management, matching funds, cost of new vehicles, etc. If a fleet is proposing replacing vehicles with newer, cleaner vehicles that might not be replaced otherwise, the cost of the new vehicles could be considered a financial contribution to the project.

Although there is no requirement for a specific contribution or matching funds, the higher the contribution by the applicant, the more points the application may earn, of the maximum 20 points possible for this factor, in an evaluation of its proposal.

2. If more than one agency is interested in applying, would it be better to get one application from say the State Department of Environmental Quality for funding of retrofits at several entities like the airport (owned by the City), and Transit Authority, etc. or get two or three: One from the city, one from the State DOT, and one from county?

It depends on the amount of funding being requested and the strength of the individual projects relative to the criterion in the announcement. A really good project within a series of projects might be pulled down by other weaker projects if they are grouped together. On the other hand, a State agency involved in air quality improvement that has a strong commitment to reducing emissions and a demonstrated involvement in transportation air quality issues and human health may be able to significantly improve a proposal's chances of funding if it is willing to actively coordinate and support any proposed project.

3. For a retrofit to be considered verified, will you accept the unit even if Ultra-Low Sulfur Fuel (ULSD) is not being used with the retrofit kit that is on the EPA verified list as requiring ULSD or, does ULSD have to be used for it to be considered verified?

The conditions of verification have to be met to be acceptable under the funding announcement. Therefore, any PM filters would have to be using ULSD fuel to qualify for the funding.

4. There is an indication of a future grant for school buses. Is it better for us to participate now with the others to improve participation and cooperation in our area, should we wait for the school bus grant, or should we do both?

We anticipate that projects under the current announcement will be funded in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range for a variety of different fleets. The \$5 Million school bus funding will be potentially (but not necessarily) for larger projects in the \$500,000 to \$1M range and will be strictly for school bus projects. Offerors are permitted to submit proposals under both solicitations.

5. Does the application have to come from us, the local agency or can it come from our City's Fleet Management?

Proposals may be submitted by any local, city, State, multi-state or tribal agency that is a nonprofit governmental agency.

6. Is the County Transportation Authority an eligible applicant? We are governed by a board of ten local elected officials - three from the county board of supervisors and seven from the cities in the county. We are a special district created by the state legislature.

Proposals may be submitted by any local, city, State, multi-state or tribal agency that is a nonprofit governmental agency.

7. We are interested in applying for funds under this grant to retrofit public school bus exhaust systems. As I read the grant packet, I'm not certain that funds from this grant can be used for public school buses because the grant application packet talks about "state, local, tribal controlled diesel fleets." Does this include vehicles owned and operated by a public school district? Can you please tell me whether a school district itself is considered a "local government" for purposes of the solicitation?

The retrofit money may be used for school buses owned and operated by a public school district. A public school district that is part of a State or local public agency may qualify for the funding; however, the proposal must be submitted by the State or local public nonprofit governmental agency.

8. Should a school district apply directly for EPA funds to retrofit school buses, or is it preferable to have the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) apply for the funding and pass through the funds to the school district?

Either entity may apply. There is no preference. In some cases, a proposal may be strengthened if the DEP applies to support and administer the project and to include the element of a stake in air quality improvement and partnership in the proposal. In such cases, the proposal should clearly demonstrate the cooperative relationship between the partners as it relates to the fleet.

9. Section III, EPA states that "The best candidates involve technologies that use special fuel and centrally controlled fleets." Does EPA mean the ULSD fuel and/or biodiesel fuel? While this area does have access to biodiesel fuel, we do not have access to the ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel. So we would be limited to biodiesel only. Can we use biodiesel as part of a proposed project?

While retrofits must use verified technology, the use of ULSD or any special fuel is not required. ULSD is an enabling technology for the use of PM filters. The use of ULSD is only required for technologies requiring it. Biodiesel has also been verified as a generic fuel subject to the conditions listed on our verified technology list. Using biodiesel with or without other appropriate technology is acceptable.

10. Section III, "B. Scope of Work," the first element listed is air quality; "EPA will focus on areas that have air quality concerns, such as criteria pollutants." Is it EPA's intention that only projects that have problems with particulates will receive grant money?

No. The purpose of these projects should be to address air quality concerns irrespective of whether the area is in non-attainment for various pollutants. The proposal should demonstrate the connection between the emissions reductions and the air quality concerns in the area where the engines operate.

11. We do not currently have any ongoing retrofit projects, our proposal would be using Table H(2) to determine the criteria for the grant. In the first section, EPA wants the project to "...achieve significant reductions..." in pollutants. What does EPA consider to be "significant"? Would this be a significant

portion of the emissions from the fleets used in the projects, or would it be significant in terms of emissions for the total area airshed?

Significant reductions refers to the use of technology to get the most reduction from the vehicles or engines being retrofitted, not in relation to the total airshed.

12. From the EPA website, listed in the solicitation, it appears that this program is not for private industry organizations. Please confirm.

Proposals may be submitted by any local, city, State, multi-state or tribal agency that is a nonprofit governmental agency. A partnering relationship between any of these eligible entities and a private organization to fund a project involving privately owned vehicles is permissible.

13. Is this proposal subject to review in California under this Executive Order 12372? If this proposal is subject to review in California, but initial applications are not subject for review, how should question 16 on Standard Form 424 (Rev. 7-97) be answered?

California is subject to the requirements of EO 12372. A list of those states subject to the requirement may be accessed at: (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>).  The review only applies to those applications selected for funding. Applicants may leave question 16 blank at the time of application. If selected for funding, the applicant will have an opportunity at a later time to complete the question.

14. What is the title associated with the CFDA number?

The CFDA Number and associated title are: 66.034 Surveys, Studies, Investigations, Demonstrations and Special Purpose Activities Relating to the Clean Air Act.

15. What is the EPA Project Control Number on several of the federal application forms?

The EPA Project Control Number refers to the Grant Number assigned, by EPA, to the resultant grant or cooperative agreement. For application purposes, please leave this area blank.

16. Do supporting letters from project partners factor into the 10-page maximum on the narrative?

No.

17. Should the detailed budget information (SF-424A) also be included in the narrative portion or just referenced to the federal grant application package?

No, it is not necessary to repeat the budget information an applicant provides on the SF-424A, in the narrative. The SF-424A provides only summary data regarding an applicant's proposed budget. The narrative, however, should clearly explain how the funds will be used, and how the applicant plans to allocate the funding to each of the categories (i.e., Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment...).

18. If we apply for fuel differential funding, must it be limited to the '04 budget period or can it extend out for multiple years?

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation is September 1, 2003 through September 30, 2005. Applicants should propose funding to be used within the estimated project period.

19. If we apply for funds to cover maintenance costs, must they be limited to the '04 budget period or can they extend out for multiple years?

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation is September 1, 2003 through September 30, 2005. Applicants should propose funding to be used within the estimated project period.

20. Can we apply for funding for air quality curriculum in the school system under this?

No. This program is designed to provide funds for retrofit projects to reduce diesel vehicle-related emissions. Elements that EPA is particularly interested in seeing addressed in proposals are included under Section III of the Statement of Work.

21. Are school administrative costs for implementing and managing this program allowable under this grant application?

Yes.

22. If so, what level of detail is needed (i.e., salary, hourly rates, supplies, etc.)?

Detailed instructions for preparation of proposals are provided under Section VII of the Statement of Work..

23. Under VII Proposals, you state that binders or spiral binding should not be included. What is your preferred form of submission?

There is no preferred form for submission of proposals.

24. What form is the application receipt letter supposed to be in? Are you looking for a SASE? Do you want it on our letterhead or just a blank page for copying onto yours?

A copy of the "Application Receipt Letter" is included in the Application Kit for Federal Assistance (Page 17). Applicants who wish to receive notification of receipt of their proposals must complete the "Application Receipt Letter" and include a self-addressed envelope with submission of their proposals.