

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)
TITLE: "Community-Scale Air Toxics Ambient Monitoring"
ACTION: Request for Proposals (RFP)
RFP NO: OAR-OAQPS-07-01
CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NO: 66.034
SUMMARY: Formal Agency responses to questions/comments regarding the subject solicitation.
DATE: February 6, 2007

Question 1: Regarding eligibility, what does "... air pollution control agencies...that are also eligible to receive grants under section 105 of the Clean Air Act" mean?

Answer 1: Section 302(b) defines the term "air pollution control agency" as any of the following:

(1) A single State agency designated by the Governor of that State as the official State air pollution control agency for purposes of this Act.

(2) An agency established by two or more States and having substantial powers or duties pertaining to the prevention and control of air pollution.

(3) A city, county, or other local government health authority, or, in the case of any city, county, or other local government in which there is an agency other than the health authority charged with responsibility for enforcing ordinances or laws relating to the prevention and control of air pollution, such other agency.

(4) An agency of two or more municipalities located in the same State or in different States and having substantial powers or duties pertaining to the prevention and control of air pollution.

(5) An agency of an Indian tribe.

Air pollution control agencies are eligible to receive a section 105 grant if they have substantial responsibility for carrying out an applicable state implementation plan per section 105(a)(1)(C) of the Clean Air Act. Substantial responsibility is determined according to state, territorial, or tribal laws, and, pursuant to the applicable laws, conferred on Clean Air Act section 302(b) air pollution control agencies. For Tribes with a Tribal Implementation Plan (TIP), then only the agency of the Tribe that has substantial responsibilities for carrying out that plan is eligible. Where a TIP does not exist, then the Agency of a federally recognized Tribe, as defined by section 302(b), is eligible.

Question 2: If an agency does not routinely receive a Section 105 grant, it is ineligible for funding under this RFP?

Answer 2: Not necessarily. Some state, local, and tribal agencies that are eligible to receive grants under section 105 may not routinely receive such grants.

Question 3: Last year in the RFP, agencies that had already received one of these grants were precluded from applying again. Does that hold again this year?

Answer 3: No. Applications will be accepted from all eligible applicants to include those which have previously received such a grant.

Question 4: Please clarify the eligibility requirements. I understand this competition is open to air pollution control agencies eligible for Section 105 grant funds; is that limited only to State and Tribal governments or are local units of government also eligible to apply?

Answer 4: Local air pollution control agencies that are eligible to receive section 105 grants are eligible to apply; for further detail, please see Answer 1.

Question 5: I understand that matching/cost-sharing is not required, but encouraged. Do successful awardees typically provide matching contributions toward their projects? If so, around what percent of total project costs do typical awardees generally provide?

Answer 5: You are correct in noting that cost sharing / matching is not required. That said, more than half of the past recipients have "leveraged" the grant dollars to some degree (though some have not). Successful prior year proposals are available for review at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/amtic/local.html>.

Question 6: I'm trying to get a sense of how competitive this program is; around how many applications does EPA typically receive in response to this program, and what percentage of those are approved for funding?

Answer 6: Two prior local-/community-scale air toxics monitoring grant competitions have been conducted; combined eligible applicants totaled 105 resulting in 37 grant awards.

Question 7: This program looks very similar to a grant program called "Local-Scale Air Toxics Ambient Monitoring" EPA offered back in 2005; is there a press release/list of the awarded applicants from the application cycle available?

Answer 7: Successful prior year proposals are available for review at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/amtic/local.html>.

Question 8: Are non-profits eligible for these grants? If not, can non-profits partner with an eligible organization like an air district?

Answer 8: Non-profits are not eligible to apply; for further detail regarding eligibility, please see Answer 1. Non-profits can, however, partner with an eligible organization; for further information see Section II.E of the subject RFP.

Question 9: The link provided in Section I.B.1.d of the Community-Scale Air Toxics Ambient Monitoring RFP does not work. Is it available elsewhere?

Answer 9: Yes - see <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/rrisk/rtrpg.html>.

Question 10: Are universities eligible to apply?

Answer 10: Universities are not eligible to apply; for further detail, please see Answer 1. Universities can, however, partner with an eligible organization; for further information see Section II.E of the subject RFP.

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Question 11: Section 5.B.1 of the RFP says that part of the final selection decision process will consider: "Whether the applicant proposes to retain a significant fraction of the project budget within their agency or a partner air pollution control agency."

Can EPA be more specific as to what % of the project budget must or should be retained within the agency or partner APC agency in order to not compromise chances of a technically good proposal being funded? In the past (previous RFPs under this category), some grants were funded that were 90 to 98% "pass-throughs" to non-eligible partners (Universities for example). I realize that level of pass-through will likely disqualify a proposal under this RFP, but am unclear how to interpret "a significant fraction" -- does that mean retaining 40%? 25%? Or if it's a continuum of increasing risk beyond a certain point, can a numeric starting point be provided for guidance?

Answer 11: First, as a point of clarification, the RFP states that the Selection Official may (*not will*) also consider funds retention. Second, your statement "In the past (previous RFPs under this category), some grants were funded that were 90 to 98% "pass-throughs" to non-eligible partners (Universities for example)" is somewhat misleading. Note that for awards in the community-scale assessments category of the prior competition, the largest percent of funds to non-eligible partners was approximately 70%. Our interest in funds retention is not as strict for methods work and (the new category) analysis of existing data. Regarding specific percentages of project budget that "must or should" be retained, there are no predetermined thresholds; as you stated, it's more of a "continuum of increasing risk" with the objective being that, to the degree practicable with proposal-specific consideration, funds be retained for use by an eligible entity.

Question 12: Do sub-grantees or sub-awardees have to be air pollution control agencies as does the primes?

Answer 12: No. The applicant may enter into such "partnerships" with any CFDA 66.034 eligible entity (e.g., university, non-profit, etc.). See RFP Section II.E, second paragraph, for further discussion of this matter.

Question 13: We are planning on submitting a proposal to analyze existing air toxics data. However, there is a minor (~5% of budget) monitoring component that would be necessary to assess the representativeness and quality of some of the existing data that would be used in this data analysis project. Since this work technically falls into 2 bins (monitoring, data analysis), would this mixture of analysis and monitoring disqualify the proposal as described in section 1.B of the RFP? We could submit 2 proposals, but they would depend on each other, and the monitoring proposal would be for less than the minimum funding amount of \$25k, so this is not a viable solution.

Answer 13: If it's clear in your proposal that the two components are integrally linked / interdependent and critical for project success, the proposal will not be disqualified based upon the work technically falling under two bins.

Question 14: For a tribe to be eligible to apply for this grant (EPA-OAR-OAQPS-07-01), do we have to have Treatment As State with regards to air?

Answer 14: Whether or not a Federally-recognized Tribe is currently treated as a State with regard to receipt of 105 funds does not determine eligibility. The answers to questions 1 and 2 provide further insight into this matter. In particular, from Answer 1: "For Tribes with a Tribal Implementation Plan (TIP), then only the agency of the Tribe that has substantial responsibilities for carrying out that plan is eligible. Where a TIP does not exist, then the Agency of a federally recognized Tribe, as defined by section 302(b), is eligible."

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Question 15: Can a single proposal under this RFP have multiple projects? For example, would a single proposal with three unrelated projects (all in the same category or bin) that are all responsive to the RFP be fund-able under this RFP?

Answer 15: Multiple disparate projects, even if from the same applicant and within the same category or bin, should be proposed separately such that each discrete project may be evaluated on its own merits.

Question 16: I'd like to include supplemental material in the narrative as web links to existing pages, such as some presentations from last fall's monitoring conference: <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/amtic/2006present.html>. Would such web-based material be included in the review of the proposal, or must all material be included as part of the proposal's narrative pages?

Answer 16: No supplemental material beyond the stated page limit will be reviewed. Recommend you cite the main point(s) conveyed by the supplemental material within the narrative and include the source as a reference.

Question 17: I have a question about eligibility for the Community-Scale Air Toxics Ambient Monitoring RFP (RFA NO: EPA-OAR-OAQPS-07-01). In the RFP, it states that only those who are eligible for Section 105 funding may apply for this grant. My agency is a council of governments covering a large metropolitan area. The Q&A document states who is eligible in Question 1,(4), however it is still unclear if it applies to my agency: "An agency of two or more municipalities located in the same State or in different States and having substantial powers or duties pertaining to the prevention and control of air pollution." Please help to clarify this matter.

Answer 17: Whether or not your agency qualifies as an Air Pollution Control Agency (APCA) is one aspect of eligibility; the other is whether or not your agency is eligible to receive Section 105 funding, which is a separate matter. From Answer 1 (dated 2/5/07): "Air pollution control agencies are eligible to receive a section 105 grant if they have substantial responsibility for carrying out an applicable state implementation plan per section 105(a)(1)(C) of the Clean Air Act. Substantial responsibility is determined according to state, territorial, or tribal laws, and, pursuant to the applicable laws, conferred on Clean Air Act section 302(b) air pollution control agencies." Recommend you work with your agency's legal counsel and your state-level APCA to determine whether or not you meet both APCA and Section 105 eligibility requirements.

Question 18: My agency is no longer able to regulate recycled and used Freon disposal. Would my agency be eligible to receive funding under this program for monitoring and regulating Freon discharge in our jurisdiction?

Answer 18: Freon is a chlorofluorocarbon or CFC; CFCs are not considered as Hazardous Air Pollutant or HAPs (see <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/188polls.html>). Monitoring Freon discharge is therefore not an eligible activity under this program.

Question 19: Is EPA willing to fund partial salaries for staff of state agencies?

Answer 19: Yes, provided the staff for which salary is sought is/are directly involved in the proposed project and that the percent of salary sought is proportionate to the time to be spent working project-related matters.

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Question 20: Would monitoring Radon or analysis of such test results qualify as an acceptable project proposal under this RFP?

Answer 20: Radon is not considered a Hazardous Air Pollutant or HAP (see <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/188polls.html>). Monitoring Radon or monitoring or analysis of such results would therefore not qualify as an acceptable project proposal under this RFP.

Question 21: Part of the application process for the available air toxics grant requires us to document that we are indeed an air pollution agency as defined in section 302(b) of the CAA, and eligible to receive grants under section 105. I am not sure what documentation would qualify other than our current cooperative agreement for the 105 funding.

Answer 21: Recommend you work with your agency's legal counsel and your state-level APCA to identify the applicable documentation whereby your agency has been designated by appropriate state authority as an air pollution control agency responsible for implementing all or a portion of the applicable state implementation plan for your jurisdiction.

Question 22: In Section II, paragraph E of the RFP, 40 CFR Part 31 is cited as the foundation for funding requirements. Please clarify if there is a minimum dollar threshold for determining if contracts and services must be competed and what is that amount.

Answer 22: Per the second paragraph of Section II.E, subgrants or sub-awards may be used to fund partnerships with universities, non-profit organizations, or other state, local, or tribal entity. These partnerships need not be competed. Regarding acquisition, § 31.36 of 40 CFR Part 31 addresses procurement. The following is excerpted:

(a) States. When procuring property and services under a grant, a State will follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds. The State will ensure that every purchase order or other contract includes any clauses required by Federal statutes and executive orders and their implementing regulations. Other grantees and subgrantees will follow paragraphs (b) through (i) in this section.

Recommend you consult your agency's contract staff to determine the applicable procurement policies and procedures.

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Question 23: The dates say to plan for the money to be ready in July. Does this mean that we need to start our timeline in July or do we need to start it in another month?

Answer 23: July was cited in Section IV.B.3.f as it's anticipated to be the earliest month in which grant awards may be made; award dates will likely vary considerably as a function of several factors (e.g., availability of funds, duration of pre-award negotiations between the applicant and their EPA Region, etc.). An applicant may propose a tentative project start as early as July 2007, but must be prepared to adjust actual project start date based upon the grant award date which, again, will likely vary considerably.

Question 24: It says in the training part that we need to attend at least one of the National EPA Monitoring Conference. We do not have any dates for this to put in our training budget or where it is to be held at.

Answer 24: The requirement you cite is not related to training but rather presentation of project results (see Sections IV.B.3 and VI.D.3 of the RFA). Dates and locations of appropriate workshops or conferences that would apply to grants arising from this competition are not yet determined; this information will be communicated to each grant recipient by their EPA Project Officer as the time approaches. For the purpose of your proposal, cite an appropriate dollar amount (e.g., one or two people at \$1500 per person) for presentation of results at TBD workshop or conference.

Question 25: We are considering using TO-17 instead of TO-15 to measure ambient concentrations of BTEX. It appears that Method TO-15 has been more commonly used than TO-17 in NATA. Does EPA prefer/require the use of TO-15 over TO-17? Are diffusive passive sampling methods acceptable for collection and quantification of ambient BTEX?

Answer 25: First, the ambient concentrations used in NATA (National Air Toxics Assessment) are modeled, not measured (see <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/nata/>); perhaps you're referring to NATTS (National Air Toxics Trends Stations) in which case the answer is yes, TO-15 is the method used for measuring ambient VOC concentrations as it's considered to be the standard for providing good accuracy at relatively low detection limits. Regarding which to propose in your study, both have advantages and disadvantages and may be appropriate for use in some scenarios and not as appropriate for use in others. Recommend you familiarize yourself with the strengths and limitations of each; the TO methods are available at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/amtic/airtox.html> and the results of some passive studies are available at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/amtic/passive.html>. Determining the most appropriate method for your particular study depends on your study objectives; carefully and clearly determine and articulate your study objectives, then decide, based

upon the objectives and your understanding of these methods, which may be more appropriate. It's conceivable and acceptable that both methods may have a place in your study design.

Question 26: Is this grant funding limited to ambient sampling? We are considering an assessment of the effectiveness of a particular control strategy on reducing overall exposures to benzene. This strategy will likely have an effect on both ambient and indoor concentrations. Is indoor sampling for air toxics eligible for funding under this grant if concurrent outdoor/ambient sampling is also being performed?

Answer 26: The grant funding is limited to ambient sampling. If concurrent outdoor / ambient and indoor sampling is proposed, the latter must be funded separately.

Question 27: Submission of the SF 424 is required per Section IV.B.1 of the RFP. Item 12 ("Funding Opportunity Number/Title") on this form is a required field; what should an applicant put here?

Answer 27: The RFA number and title: EPA-OAR-OAQPS-07-01 / Community-Scale Air Toxics Ambient Monitoring.

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Question 28: Would a list of references or bibliography be included in the 12-page limit for the narrative proposal?

Answer 28: In deciding whether or not to include a list of references or bibliography as part of your narrative, keep in mind that the reviewers will only see the SF424, SF424A, and *the first twelve pages* of narrative as described in Section IV.B.3 of the RFP. Without exception, any narrative that exceeds this limit will be truncated at twelve pages.

Question 29: We are considering proposing a method by which we sample for mercury in snow and then analyze the samples as water via a TO method or mass spectrometry. Would a proposal to prove and use this method under the Bin 2 meet the requirements for "ambient" monitoring?

Answer 29: No. What you're proposing is deposition monitoring, not ambient air monitoring, and will not be considered for funding. Further information on mercury deposition monitoring is available at <http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu/mdn/>.

Question 30: Will EPA accept e-mailed copies of the application (PDF files containing the entire application: SF 424, 424A, and the Narrative Proposal)?

Answer 30: No. As stated in the RFP, the only acceptable *electronic* submissions are through grants.gov.

Question 31: We are considering using portable/handheld monitors for measuring ambient HAP levels. Does EPA have a specific requirement on the nature of the monitors in terms of them being stationary at a defined location? Also, is the EPA more interested in short term (weeks/months) monitoring of spills/accidents or longer term (years) monitoring of a point source of pollution.

Answer 31: Aspects of any monitoring plan such as siting (to include stationary vs. mobile monitors), sampling and analysis methodology, and duration must be carefully considered so as to optimally meet the study objectives. An applicant may propose whatever they wish but it must be technically sound with appropriate and compelling justification as to why certain approaches were selected; again, the study design must be tailored to meet the study objectives. For additional insight, recommend you carefully read the RFP in its entirety, taking particular note of Section I.B, Scope of Work.

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SUMMARY: Formal Agency responses to questions/comments regarding the subject solicitation.

DATE: April 10, 2007

Question 32: With a multi-agency project – we have one main proposal being sent by the lead agency. Can the other agencies send and attach the same proposal with only its workplan and budgets, separately?

Answer 32: No, the reviewers will not evaluate two (or more) proposals for the same work. In the scenario you describe, only the main proposal will be evaluated and considered. If each eligible participant agency's portion of the larger project can "stand" on its own merits as a discreet project, then the participating agencies may discuss and determine whether to submit one main proposal addressing the collective project or individual proposals submitted by each eligible participant agency.

The following prefaced Questions 33-35:

When EPA Published this RFP opportunity it advertised an estimated \$10,000,000 would be available for awarding an anticipated 20-30 proposals. Great uncertainty has surrounded the Federal budget for FY07 and how a continuing resolution would be implemented. EPA recently promulgated an FY 07 operating plan that contained large reductions in funding for air programs.

Question 33: Has there been any impact on the availability of funding to support proposals received under this RFA? If so, how much is available for awarding prior to 01 Oct 2007?

Answer 33: The available amount of recertified FY06 funds available for funding CSATAM grants under this solicitation is anticipated to be between approximately \$2.6 million and \$3.1 million. An additional \$4.4 million (approximate) of FY08 funds are anticipated for awards arising from this competition; total anticipated available funding for CSATAM projects is between \$7 million and \$7.5 million. The recertified funds are currently available; the earliest that FY08 funds are likely to be available is January 2008.

Question 34: When does EPA plan to complete the final selection process?

Answer 34: The steps leading to final selection include initial administrative processing / eligibility determination, distribution of eligible proposals and evaluation guidance to reviewers, review and scoring, compilation of review information and distribution to the review / selection panel, panel convenes to discuss the proposals and make recommendations, selection recommendations provided to Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards and Office of Air and Radiation Senior Management, and selection decisions made. These steps are expected to be completed by the end of July 2007; applicants will be notified at this time.

Question 35: When does EPA anticipate funding to be available to successful organizations and communities so that work may commence?

Answer 35: A limited number of recipients could possibly be awarded grants as early as September 2007; however, most awards will likely be made in early 2008.

Question 36: Will the grant open period be extended beyond the current April 17, 2007 deadline?

Answer 36: No.

Question 37: I have found that it is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss an organization's eligibility using only citations to rules and statutes available on the Internet. Yes, the citations are available, but without some explanation one would be left just saying, for example, X organization is a section 105 eligible organization and the citation to the Clean Air Act can be found at http://_____. I think you may want and may need more than that, but I am concerned about page length, e.g., an explanation as to how an organization does fit/meet the requirements of the cited rule or statute. Certainly, we can provide organization name, address and contact information and realize that would count against the page limit, but can you give some more guidance about what would count and what would not? It may be that I am trying to more clearly state why I believe we are eligible than is really necessary. Should this be distilled down to a URL for the EPA site that discusses STAG grants and what organizations are eligible and the URLs for section 302(b) and section 105 of the Clean Air Act? I am concerned because I don't think I'm being too wordy at all, but the eligibility explanation I've developed is two single spaced pages long.

Answer 37: At any level of government, an official agency (and their responsibilities and duties) are established by statute. For an agency to be considered eligible, its duties and responsibilities, as described in the appropriate statute(s), must be consistent with one of the five particular definitions of an air pollution control agency under Clean Air Act section 302(b), and having substantial responsibilities for carrying out the applicable State Implementation Plan. Cite this (these) statute(s). If your agency is determined to be ineligible, you may appeal this finding per Section VI.E of the RFP.

Question 38: The RFA says 12 pages and also says no smaller than 11 pt. font, but I don't see that it says anything about a requirement to double space. Is single spacing acceptable?

Answer 38: Single spacing is acceptable.

Question 39: In attempting to complete the Environmental Results Past Performance and the Programmatic Capability I find my self at a loss. We haven't in the past had grants of this size or scope and in particular relevance. I am unsure as to what to file to fulfill this part of the grant. But I also realize that if I don't have something under this header I am working under a disadvantage and most likely won't be awarded a grant this cycle. Historically we have been running large 103 and 105 grants for monitoring of criteria pollutants. We have had a small air toxics section but we have been funding that out of commonwealth funds. I could use a little guidance.

Answer 39: Environmental Results Past Performance is not constrained by size / scope / relevance (re-read Section IV.B.3.i). For Programmatic Capability, follow the guidance in Section IV.B.3.j which states "If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for this factor under Section V."

Question 40: With regard to air toxics risk assessment, what does "screening limit" mean and what are the screening limits for the various species of air toxics pollutants?

Answer 40: In one of the simplest forms of risk assessment, air toxic concentrations (developed by monitoring or modeling ambient concentrations at potential points of exposure) are compared to conservative health-based concentrations. These health-based concentrations, sometimes referred to as "screening levels", are typically developed by combining toxicity data with a variety of conservative exposure assumptions to develop a "screening-level ambient concentration". These concentrations are designed specifically to avoid "screening out" chemicals of potential concern. Chemicals that fail the screen are usually the focus of a more refined assessment. The "Air Toxics Risk Assessment Reference Library" (http://www.epa.gov/ttn/fera/risk_atra_main.html) discusses the various tiers of risk assessment, ranging from screening-level assessments to more robust analytical approaches. With regard to available "screening levels", the Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) has not published a specific list for the national air toxics program. Instead, OAQPS has developed a hierarchical list of chronic toxicity (dose-response) values for numerous air toxics for use in Agency risk assessments (see <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/toxsource/summary.html>; this link also provides a selection of available acute toxicity values). Risk assessors can use these toxicity values to develop screening level concentrations which are suitable for their particular needs. For example, US EPA Region 4 has used the OAQPS toxicity values to develop a set of screening levels for evaluating air toxics monitoring datasets. These screening levels are published in a Region 4 document entitled "A Preliminary Risk-Based Screening Approach for Air Toxics Monitoring Data Sets" (<http://www.epa.gov/region4/air/airtoxic/Screening-041106-KM.pdf>). It should be reiterated that EPA currently does not have an established set of screening values that are required for evaluating air toxics monitoring datasets. Instead, the Agency has provided on its website the set of toxicity values it uses in its air toxics regulatory program (the OAQPS toxicity values noted above). Region 4 has taken these OAQPS toxicity values and converted them into a set of screening-level concentrations which are useful (but not required) for assessing air toxics monitoring datasets.