

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



**AGENCY:** ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)  
**TITLE:** CLIMATE SHOWCASE COMMUNITIES  
**ACTION:** Request for Application (RFA)  
**RFA No:** EPA-OAR-CPPD-09-08  
**CFDA:** 66.034  
**SUMMARY:** Formal Agency responses to questions regarding the subject RFA  
**DATE:** July 9, 2009

**Process and Legal Questions**

**Q1.** How do applicants submit their applications? Submission via grants.gov or to EPA directly?

**A1.** Applicants may submit their applications either by hardcopy or via email per the instructions outlined in the RFA in section IV. Part B. Form of Application Submission. Applications will not be accepted via grants.gov.

**Q2.** Will regional diversity be taken into account in the selection process (e.g., will grants be divided by EPA regions)?

**A2.** Yes, in making the final funding decisions, the Approving Official may also consider programmatic priorities and geographic diversity of applicants. Please refer to Sec. V.C. of the RFA for more information regarding 'Other Factors'.

**Q3.** How long after applications have been received will selected communities be announced? When will winners be notified? When will funds be available?

**A3.** EPA's Climate Protection Partnership Division (CPPD) anticipates notifying the initial list of recommended proposals by September 30, 2009. Proposals that are ultimately awarded will potentially have access to the grant funding as early as January 2010. A public announcement of selected applications will be made once funds are awarded.

**Q4.** Will there be future rounds each year?

**A4.** Funds supporting this RFA are for one-time grants only. It is not yet known if additional funding will be made available for another Climate Showcase Communities Grant RFA in 2010 or future years.

**Q5.** Are funds allowed to be used for implementation purposes instead of studies and demonstrations?

**A5.** Yes, under the Climate Showcase Communities authorizing statute, Public Law 111-8, grants may be used to support direct costs of approved planning activities, demonstrations, and project implementation, as well as allowable indirect costs in



accordance with established EPA policies and guidelines.

Please refer to Section I.B. Scope of Work of the RFA for more information on eligible activities.

**Q6.** Can an eligible entity partner with DoE labs as well as EPA labs?

**A6.** Applications may indicate a request for Federal Lab access and/or assistance. However, please be advised that such arrangements cannot count toward the applicant's match requirements. Applicants are solely responsible for initiating any such lab access and/or assistance.

**Q7.** Are there any restrictions planned (re: percentage) of the funds that could be used to cover local government staff time, or percentage of funds that could be directed to community-based non-profits for their work in the project?

**A7.** The RFA does not restrict the percentage or amount of grant funds that may be allocated toward applicant/recipient staff time. Similarly, the RFA does not restrict the percentage or amount of funding that may be granted via sub-award or as contracts to non-profit organizations- so long as the activities therein are eligible and responsive to the RFA.

**Q8.** Is it possible to get an extension so that we can submit after the July 22, 2009 deadline?

**A8.** No, CPPD is not granting any extensions to the July 22, 2009 application deadline.

**Q9.** How many applications does CPPD expect to receive in response to this RFA?

**A9.** CPPD cannot speculate on the number of applications. Per the RFA, prospective applicants are requested to submit an informal notice of Intent to Apply by **July 1, 2009**. Intent to Apply may be submitted via email to [ClimateShowcaseInquiries@epa.gov](mailto:ClimateShowcaseInquiries@epa.gov). We ask that the intent to apply include the applicant's name, contact information, and a 2-3 sentence description of the intended project. However, submission of Intent to Apply is optional and we therefore cannot forecast the amount of applications.

**Q10.** Is the program expected to be very competitive?

**A10.** Yes, CPPD expects to receive many quality proposals, and therefore anticipates a very competitive applicant pool.

**Q11.** Can one entity submit multiple proposals? And can the dollar amounts requested from EPA differ?

**A11.** Yes. There is no restriction on the number of applications a single entity can submit. Similarly, for entities submitting multiple applications, the RFA does not limit the dollar amount requests per each application.

**Q12.** If our entity applies for multiple awards, should we apply for large and small awards, or large or small awards?

**A12.** Each proposal will be evaluated independently based on the evaluation criteria identified in Section V.A. of the RFA. The number of proposals a single entity submits



and/or the differing dollar amounts therein, are not identified as factors in the evaluation table.

**Q13.** Do organizations that have no lobbying activities to disclose, still need to submit the disclosure form (SF-LLL) as part of our application?

**A13.** All applicants applying for \$100,000 or more in Federal funds from EPA that participate in lobbying activities for this particular award with non-Federal funds are required to submit SF-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying" in accordance with its instructions. Applicants should read the instructions carefully to determine whether or not they are required to provide additional information concerning lobbying activities, if applicable.

For more information please visit the link to the Part 34 concerning lobbying:

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=2a1089e756bf89a99b117d9bdf4f8b34&rgn=div5&view=text&node=40:1.0.1.2.31&idno=40>

**Q14.** On the SF-424, item 5b is asterisked- and therefore appears to be "required", but the accompanying form instructions indicate to leave that box blank for new applications.

**A14.** You may leave 5b blank. Please make sure you put the funding opportunity number and title in item 12.

**Q15.** Is EPA primarily interested in assessing programmatic capability through past performance solely based on previous participation in federal grants (in reference to Section IV.C2c.?

**A15.** Per Section IV.C. of the RFA, Past Performance evaluation is limited to Federally funded assistance agreements.

**Q16.** If an applicant only participated in three federal grants in the last three years, is it relevant to include information from state or regional funding opportunities that relate to climate change activities?

**A16.** You may provide a more inclusive discussion of your past performance from non-Federal sources, but per Section IV.C. of the RFA, Past Performance, evaluation is limited to Federally funded assistance agreements only.

**Q17.** Is there a cap on administrative/management expenses?

**A17.** No, EPA does not have a formal cap on administrative or management expenses.

**Q18.** If an applicant submits attachments which feature supplementary information, e.g. photos or reports, will they be considered in the evaluation?

**A18.** Proposals will only be evaluated according to the Evaluation Criteria described in Section V. Part A.

**A19.** What if an applicant missed the July 1, 2009 deadline to register an "intent to apply"? Can they still apply?



**A19.** Yes, Submission of an “Intent to apply” is optional only. It is a process management tool that will allow EPA to better anticipate the total staff time required for efficient review, evaluation, and selection of submitted applications.

Prospective applicants do not need to submit intents to apply following July 1, 2009. All prospective applicants, irrespective of whether they submitted an intent to apply or not, can still proceed to submit complete applications by the July 22, 2009 deadline.

**Q20.** Is this a reimbursement grant or are funds disbursed in advance?

**A20.** Climate Showcase Communities grants will be on an advance basis, provided that grantees maintain or demonstrate the willingness and ability to maintain procedures to minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of the funds and their disbursement by the grantee or subgrantee. Please be advised that grant recipients will be subject to Cost Principles outlined in OMB Circular A-87.

**Q21.** Are sole-source procurements permitted?

**A21.** Sole-source procurements are only permitted in certain circumstances. If selected for a grant, recipients will be required to follow all applicable procurement regulations, including 40 CFR 31.36. Generally, local governments must follow their own procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations, provided that the procurements conform to applicable federal law, the standards identified in 40 CFR 31.36, and if applicable, 40 CFR 31.38. Please note that contractors or consultants identified in applications will not count towards applicant scoring unless a description of the competition process is explained in the application. Furthermore, even when procurement expenses are under the small purchase threshold, grant recipients will still be required to maintain records showing prices and quotes from adequate sources.

#### **July 9, 2009 Update**

**Q22.** Will there be a fast track or special process for NEPA review, if required for projects that receive funding?

**A22.** EPA does not anticipate that any required NEPA reviews would substantially impact the funding review and award phases. EPA intends to make these grant awards in January 2010.

**Q23.** If grant funds were to be used to add features to a building project that will be constructed using non-federal funds and these features are all within the footprint of the non-federally funded construction, would EPA grant funds trigger a NEPA review of the entire building?

**A23.** Whether an action will trigger NEPA is a factual question that EPA intends to address on a case-by-case basis. For questions regarding NEPA, please refer to NEPA site listed in the RFA.

**Q24.** Does the Davis-Bacon Act apply to Climate Showcase Communities grants?

**A24.** EPA does not anticipate that the Davis-Bacon Act would apply to Climate Showcase Communities projects.



**Q25.** What, if any, indirect cost rate documentation is required if an applicant is not including indirect costs in their proposal?

**A25.** Verification of an approved Indirect Cost Rate is only required for applicants that are proposing charging indirect costs to their grant.

**Q26.** How is it recommended that we enter signatures in the electronic form? May we type them in?

**A26.** Electronic signatures may be entered using the "sign" function in the PDF file. Alternatively, you may print out the SF-424, and sign by hand.

**Q27.** How many "Intents to Apply" were received by July 1, 2009?

**A27.** EPA has received over 250 intents to apply.

**Q28.** In determining who classifies as a subgrantee or subawardee, can you provide more guidance than the distinction that is made?

**A28.** Please refer to Section .210 of OMB Circular A-133 for more information regarding subrecipients.

**Q29.** Do subawards to local agencies require a competitive process?

**A29.** The answer depends on the nature of the "subaward", and the terms of the scope of work in the grant proposal. Please refer to OMB circular A-133 .210 for more information.

**Q30.** Are Tribal applicants restricted to applying for the Tribal set-aside pool identified in the RFA? Or can Tribal proposals be considered for funding from the main applicant pool as well?

**A30.** There is no predetermined value for grants awarded to Tribal governments. EPA expects to award between 1 and 3 grants to tribal governments or intertribal consortia under the set-aside, and Tribal applicants may request up to \$500,000. Additionally, EPA may choose to award funds above the amount of the tribal set aside to tribal applicants subject to the number of meritorious tribal applications.

**Q31.** Can you give examples of types of projects funded in the past?

**A31.** This is the first year of the Climate Showcase Communities grant program, so no projects have yet been funded under this program.

**Q32.** What constitutes the 15 single spaced typewritten page limit?

**A32.** The 15 page limit is defined in IV.C.1,2, and 3. of the RFA. Any items that falls within the components described therein would count towards the page limit.

**Q33.** Is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 a source of funding for this opportunity? If not, what is the source of funding?

**A33.** The Climate Showcase Communities grant program was authorized by Congress as part of The Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations Bill (PL-111-8). No, the Climate Showcase Communities program is not part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.



**Q34.** Do applicants need to go through their State Point of Contact under Executive Order 12372? Question #19 on the SF-424 form reads, "Is Application Subject to Review By State Executive Order 12372 Process?" The instructions for #19 say, "Applicants should contact the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for Federal Executive Order 12372 to determine whether the application is subject to the State intergovernmental review process." How do I contact the SPOC and answer #19?

**A34.** A list of states which are participating in the inter-governmental review process is available at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/) . If your State is on this list, then please check "yes" on the SF-424 box 19. However, compliance with E.O. 12372 is only applicable for awards resulting from this RFA. Please be advised the E.O. 12372 review is not required at the time of your initial application.

### **Eligible Applicants Questions**

**Q1.** Are private universities eligible?

**A1.** No, universities, whether public or private are not considered eligible to apply under this RFA. See Section III.A. Eligible Entities of the RFA for more information.

**Q2.** Is there any restriction as to size of town/locality?

**A2.** No, the RFA does not restrict population sizes.

**Q3.** Can a school district and local government in the same area apply separately?

**A3.** Yes, multiple entities from the same area may submit separate applications.

**Q4.** Can a city and county apply jointly as a "climate community"?

**A4.** Only one entity can formally submit an application for a particular project. However, the scope of work can reflect multi-jurisdiction collaboration. Also, please be advised that each collaboration would be limited to the maximum dollar amount of \$500,000 (e.g. you could not ask for a million dollars using the argument that you are two governments applying jointly).

**Q5.** Can a consortium of local governments apply jointly?

**A5.** Yes, a consortium of local governments may apply, but there must be one entity that formally signs the application. If selected that same entity would be the entity EPA enters into grant agreement and legally responsible for federal funds. Also, please be advised that each collaboration would be limited to the maximum dollar amount of \$500,000 (e.g. you could not ask for a million dollars using the argument that you are 2 governments applying jointly).

**Q6.** What about non-profits representing local governments?

**A6.** Non-profits are not eligible applicants under this RFA.

**Q7.** Are Council of Governments' eligible to apply?

**A7.** Yes. See Section III.A. Eligible Entities of the RFA for more information.

**Q8.** What is the eligibility status for Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia and US



Territories?

**A8.** The statutory authority for this program specifically states that "communities" are eligible entities. As a matter of policy, EPA has defined "communities" to include local governments (as defined in 40 CFR 31.3), federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and intertribal consortium.

The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and any territory or possession of the U.S. fall within the definition of "State" in 40 CFR 31.3 and do not constitute local governments. However, counties, municipalities, cities, towns, townships, local public authorities, school districts, special districts intrastate districts, council of governments, and any other regional or interstate government entity, or any agency or instrumentality of the 50 States, the District of Columbia., Puerto Rico, or U.S. Territories do fall within the definition of local governments and, therefore, are eligible to apply under this RFA. Please refer for Section III.A. of the RFA for more information.

**Q9.** Is a member-owned cooperative non-profit an eligible entity to apply?

**A9.** No. The RFA classifies eligible entities as local governments (as defined in 40 CFR 31.3), federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and intertribal consortium. In order to be eligible, your entity must qualify in one of those categories, as defined in Section III.A. Eligible Entities of the RFA.

**Q10.** Are foreign entities eligible?

**A10.** No. Foreign entities are not eligible. In order to be eligible you must meet the definition of eligible entities as defined in Section III.A. Eligible Entities of the RFA.

**Q11.** Can Metropolitan Planning Organizations apply?

**A11.** The statutory authority for the grant program provides that "communities" are eligible for funding. As a matter of policy, communities has been defined to include only local governments (as defined in 40 CFR 31.3), federally recognized tribal governments, and intertribal consortia. "Local governments" include a county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority (including any public and Indian housing agency) under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937), school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments, any other regional or interstate government entity, or any agency or instrumentality of a local government. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are transportation policy-making organizations made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. An MPO is eligible to apply to the extent it falls within the definition of "local government". In addition, an MPO might be also be an eligible contractor, providing services to a member local government. Likewise, an MPO may contribute staff time, resources, and/or money to the grant in the form of a third party partner.

Also concerning MPOs, please be advised that many cases a local government (as defined in the RFS Section III. Part A), MPO-member will have to apply on behalf of the MPO. Furthermore, regardless of how many entities make up the MPO, the maximum dollar amount that can be requested from EPA for each application is \$500,000.



**Q12.** Are applicants from each EPA Region (1-10) eligible to apply?

**A12.** Yes, all eligible entities as stated in section III of the RFA may apply.

### **Cost Match Questions**

**Q1.** We have already spent 2,000+ all-volunteer hours on a greenhouse gas inventory and creation of a Climate Action Plan and are now looking to implement our initiatives and would like to apply for money to help implement one of the initiatives in our plan. Can the volunteer hours we already put in to this effort be applied as part of the match?

**A1.** In some limited circumstances CPPD may grant pre-award cost approval, but generally these costs are of a limited scope. The example above would appear to exceed the general CPPD limits on pre-award cost approval.

**Q2.** Are state funds an eligible match? Or do they have to be local?

**A2.** Only Federal funds are specifically prohibited from use for matching funds.

**Q3.** Can you give more examples of other “in-kind” matching possibilities other than cash?

**A3.** Personnel/staffing costs and volunteer hours may also be counted toward the match requirement. Please refer to Section III.B. Cost Share or Matching of the RFA for more information.

**Q4.** Will applicants providing more than the required match percentage receive any special consideration?

**A4.** No. The evaluation criteria table in Section V. Part A does not include a ranking factor for applicants who propose to contribute more than the required match amount. Please refer to Section V.A. of the RFA for more information.

**Q5.** Can Recovery Act (ARRA) funding for DOE’s Energy and Environmental Block Grants (EEBG) be used as part or all of the 50% match required for this showcase grant, or is that prohibited?

**A5.** At this time EPA is not aware of a statutory provision which would allow ARRA/EEBG funding to be used for matching funds for the Climate Showcase Communities grant program. Please check with DOE if your proposal would have a statutory exception allowing for such a case, and then please notify EPA (via email to [ClimateShowcaseInquiries@epa.gov](mailto:ClimateShowcaseInquiries@epa.gov)) of any provisional approvals in this regard. For questions regarding any other previous Federal funding as potential matching funds for Climate Showcase Communities grants, applicants must check with the cognizant agency that issued the grants to determine whether those grant programs include statutory authority for those grant funds to be applied as match to other federal grants. If there is no statutory authority, under 40 CFR 31.24, funds from other federal grants cannot be used to satisfy the match requirement for Climate Showcase Communities grants.

**Q6.** Can HUD/CDBG funding be used as part or all of the 50% match required for this



showcase grant, or is that prohibited?

**A6.** HUD's community development block grant (CDBG) authority does provide that CDBG funds can be used to satisfy match requirements of other federal grants, but the CDBG funds must be used in accordance with the statutory authority for which they were awarded.

**Q7.** Can third-party funds be used to satisfy the match requirement?

**A7.** Yes. Please refer to 40 CFR 31.24(a) (7) for third party "in-kind" contributions.

**Q8.** Does an applicant's match component need to be officially determined in order to apply?

**A8.** There is some flexibility post-submission for applicants to finalize their match arrangements. However, applicants recommended for funding must confirm to EPA the final match details when notified of their recommended status. EPA will not make any awards to applicants that cannot verify in writing their ability to comply with the match requirement.

**Q9.** Can the applicant's proposed match come from prior expenses?

**A9.** Recipients may incur pre-award costs 90 calendar days prior to award provided they include such costs in their application, the costs meet the definition of pre-award costs and are approved by the EPA Project Officer and EPA Award Official. The definition of pre-award costs are those costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the award where such costs are necessary to comply with the proposed delivery schedule or period of performance and are in conformance with the appropriate statute and cost principles. The approval of pre-award costs should be reflected in the budget period on the assistance agreement and if applicable, under a term and condition of the assistance agreement. Pre-Award costs incurred more than 90 calendar days prior to award require the approval of the EPA Award Official. Recipients incur pre-award costs at their own risk (i.e., EPA is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive an award or if the award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs).

**Q10.** Does the EPA have a standard "value" for volunteer services that we could use in determining the value of volunteers towards our cost share requirement? If not, do you have any suggestions on determining that value?

**A10.** Unpaid services provided to a grantee by individuals will be valued at rates consistent with those ordinarily paid for similar work in the grantee's organization. If the grantee does not have employees performing similar work, the rates will be consistent with those ordinarily paid by other employers for similar work in the same labor market. In either case, a reasonable amount for fringe benefits may be included in the valuation.

#### **July 9, 2009 Update**

**Q11.** Can local governments (county, town, city) partner with a Tribe who resides in the county? And if yes, would this remove the requirement for 50% matching funds from all partners?



**A11.** Yes, local governments and Tribes may collaborate on grants. The answer would depend on which entity is the applicant, and what role the other entity would have in the project. Please note that "partnering" can be interpreted as a contractual relationship for procured service, a subgrant, or a sharing of project costs. If the applicant was an eligible Tribal entity, then there would be no cost-share required by EPA. Therefore, in such a case, a local government acting as a subgrantee would not be required to contribute a cost-share, unless otherwise expressed in the terms of the subgrant from the awarding Tribal entity.

**Q12.** Can funding from an on-going related work effort being undertaken by our agency be used as a partial match? Can ongoing related work being undertaken by organizations we might partner with in our application be used as match funds?

**A12.** Ongoing costs, such as equipment purchases and installations already in use, may not be used to meet the required cost-match. However, ongoing costs (ex. insurance, lease, maintenance, etc) integral to the work performed under the grant agreement may be included as a cost-match. Please see Q&A #9 under Cost Match Questions for additional information.

**Q13.** Can other Federal funding be used as a cash match?

**A13.** For questions regarding any other Federal funding as potential matching funds for Climate Showcase Communities grants, applicants must check with the cognizant agency that issued the grants to determine whether those grant programs include statutory authority for those grant funds to be applied as match to other federal grants. If there is no statutory authority, under 40 CFR 31.24, funds from other federal grants cannot be used to satisfy the match requirement for Climate Showcase Communities grants. Please notify EPA (via email to [ClimateShowcaseInquiries@epa.gov](mailto:ClimateShowcaseInquiries@epa.gov)) of any provisional approvals in this regard.

**Q14.** How does one go about obtaining "pre-award cost approval"?

**A14.** Pre-award cost approval will be handled on a case-by-case basis for applications selected for funding and must be approved by EPA. Pre-award costs must be incurred 90 days prior to the project start date listed in the EPA grant award document. Applicants must keep in mind that EPA does not guarantee pre-award cost approval

### **Project Questions**

**Q1.** What about non-direct GHG savings (scope 3 emissions), such as embodied energy in water or waste recycling?

**A1.** As long as a case for these emissions reductions can be documented, then they would be considered eligible.

**Q2.** Is there a multiplier that would relate to the size of the grant, dollar wise, as it relates to the desired GHG reduction? So for instance a 250,000 grant must reduce "X" GHG and must be calculated by a specific multiplier?

**A2.** No—there is no predetermined level of reduction by dollar amount requirement.

**Q3.** Do you consider the potential multiplier effect of a project in the ranking of the



application? Specifically, if the local government project breaks down market barriers to the use of products that provide a larger CO2 mitigation than the mere project itself, does that get included in the ranking?

**A3.** The outcomes/outputs portion of your proposal allows you to highlight any "multiplying" features of your project approach. And projects may receive higher scores in this section for demonstrating the likelihood of ongoing reductions. Please refer to Section I. Part B. Scope of Work and Section V. Part A. Evaluation Criteria of the RFA for more information.

**Q4.** Is the EPA GHG calculator the only acceptable calculator to measure reductions?

**A4.** No. Applications may demonstrate any "reasonable" approach to estimate reductions or activities that lead to reductions. CPPD will work with the selected applicants on quantification metrics as needed.

**Q5.** What does EPA want to see to make the project a "showcase"?

**A5.** Please review Section I. Part B. Scope of Work and Section V. Part A. Evaluation Criteria of the RFA for information regarding the goals of the Climate Showcase grant program. The overall goal of this program is to implement programs, projects, and approaches, which demonstrate documentable reductions in greenhouse gases and are replicable elsewhere.

**Q6.** What portion of the funds does EPA anticipate using for development of climate action plans or other program development activities vs. for specific projects with more direct GHG reduction benefits (e.g., energy retrofits to particular facilities)?

**A6.** All projects must have a GHG reduction benefit, though a portion of each applicant's funding can be used for planning and program development. The allocation of funds for development vs. implementation will be dependent on the variety and quality of applications received.

**Q7.** What kind of "readiness" are you looking for? e.g. climate inventory completed? Could funding be for planning? research? or implementation?

**A7.** CPPD is seeking a diversity of community and project types. This includes funding projects from communities that are just starting to address climate change as well as those that have long-standing programs. There are no specific prerequisites that an applicant must have in place to apply and receive funding.

**Q8.** Are community workshops an eligible activity? What about training and/or development of green building guidance?

**A8.** Within the context of a proposal that is otherwise responsive to the RFA, workshops, training, and guidance development would be considered eligible activities.

**Q9.** How do we know if our proposed project is a good idea? Can someone from EPA or CPPD give me any guidance before we apply?

**A9.** Please refer to Section I.B. of the RFA. There you will find a description of priority areas, goals, and types of projects CPPD is authorized to consider for funding. It is up



to each applicant to make the case to EPA in their proposal how their project best responds to the RFA. As stated in Section IV. Part H. Pre-application/Application Communications and Assistance of the RFA, EPA staff will not “discuss draft applications, provide informal comments on draft applications, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications.”

**Q10.** Does the mention of "upgrading lighting systems in city buildings" as an example of a complementary activity exclude exterior lighting?

**A10.** No- exterior lighting/illumination would also be viewed as an example of a complementary activity.

**Q11.** Does energy saving qualify as an acceptable co-benefit?

**A11.** Yes, due to the economic savings associated with energy reductions, it would be deemed an acceptable co-benefit. Please refer to Section I.B. of the RFA for more information.

**Q12.** Is there a minimum requested funding amount? Can we apply for less than \$100K of EPA grant funding?

**A12.** There is no formal requirement concerning a minimum request for EPA funding. The range listed in the RFA is intended to provide enough funding to make a substantive difference to a community. Applicants may request less than \$100,000 in federal funding if they feel they can be fully responsive to the RFA with a lower dollar amount.

**Q13.** Can a project that is submitted with an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) application also be submitted for EPA showcase funding?

**A13.** Yes, projects submitted to DOE for EECBG grants can also be submitted to EPA's Climate Showcase Communities grant program, provided that the proposed project fits within the statutory authority for the Climate Showcase Communities program and within the scope of the Climate Showcase Communities RFA.

**Q14.** If an applicant is awarded both EECBG and EPA grant funding, can the grantee move funds around to offset the other Agency's award?

**A14.** No, grantees must account for and track EPA grant funding separately from DOE grant funding. EPA funding must only be used for the project that the grantee submitted to EPA under the RFA (EPA selects and awards funding based on the applicant's proposal - the funding must be used for this proposal that EPA has approved and selected for award). Note also that, under 40 CFR 31.24, funds from EECBG grants cannot be used to satisfy the match requirement for Climate Showcase Communities grants. In addition, please be advised that under no circumstances may a recipient of multiple Agency funding "double-bill" - that is bill more than one Agency for the same costs expended.

**Q15.** Can EPA provide any information on potential non-profit organization and local government partnerships?



**A15.** It is the sole responsibility of applicants to organize and set up any partner arrangements. EPA will not assist in organizing applicant partner arrangements. "Partner" arrangements between non-profit organizations and local governments would generally fall under the one of the following classifications:

- 1) The proposed non-profit organization would actually be a contractor. In this case, the local government is proposing contracting some of the work to the non-profit organization for a fee. This relationship is governed under the procurement regulations defined 40 CFR 31.36.
- 2) The proposed non-profit organization would actually be a sub-awardee. In this case, the local government is proposing subawarding to a non-profit organization for eligible subaward activities. This relationship is governed under the subaward regulations defined 40 CFR 31.37.
- 3) The proposed non-profit organization has offered to share in the costs of the grant. This relationship is governed under the regulations defined 40 CFR 31.24.

In addition, please refer to Section IV. Part D. of the RFA for more information.

**Q16.** Can funding be used to acquire services or fund partnerships?

**A16.** Please refer to Section IV. Part D. of the RFA for a detailed explanation to this question.

**Q17.** How will an applicant's proposed subawardees/subgrantees and contractors be considered during the evaluation process?

**A17.** Please refer to Section IV. Part E. of the RFA for an explanation to this question, and to Section V for further information regarding the evaluation scoring.

**Q18.** Can an applicant's proposal include several components? Or does the proposal need to concentrate on one project?

**A18.** Proposals may include several components. The RFA does not restrict applications to only one component or project. However, please remember that irrespective of how many components are included in a single proposal, the maximum amount an applicant can request per application is \$500,000.

**Q19.** Can applicants submit proposals that estimate that certain aspects of the project will not begin until after the first year of funding?

**A19.** Yes. The ensuing award document will define the project and budget periods. Generally, these periods will be the same. EPA anticipates the three-year project/budget periods for many Climate Showcase Communities grants. In such circumstances, all eligible activities may occur at any time during the project/budget period.

**Q20.** The RFA for the Climate Showcase Communities states that the budget description must include travel expenses for the annual conference. In order to accurately estimate costs, how many days and nights should we plan for?

**A20.** For purposes of travel planning, please assume that each annual conference will



run for 3 days. If necessary, applicants may include additional days to allow for travel time. For example, in year 1, the conference will be held in Washington, DC. Applicants coming from distant locations may choose to arrive in DC the night before the conference begins in order to participate the next morning. For subsequent years, conference locations have not yet been selected, but applicants are encouraged to base future annual conference attendance budgets based on year 1 figures.

**Q21.** Can Climate Showcase Community grant funding be used for construction of model energy efficient homes adopting different technologies?

**A21.** Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q22.** Can proposals include the cost of building of green facilities, such as a green fueling station with biodiesel and ethanol?

**A22.** Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q23.** If selected for a grant could consultants that assisted in writing the grant proposal, be hired to work on the grant?

**A23.** Yes, but please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the application solely based on the firm's role in preparing the application. In awarding procured services, grantees will be required to follow all applicable procurement regulations (include part 31 and part 35 procurement regs).

**Q24.** Do non-profits have to meet the same competitive process for subcontractor selection?

**A24.** Yes, Federal tax status is not a determining factor in whether or not the services rendered are defined as procurement.

**Q25.** Can EPA provide examples of eligible solid waste projects?

**A25.** Any waste related project that results in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions would be eligible under the solicitation. EPA prefers to not endorse specific proposed solid waste projects for this grant competition. However, prospective applicants may find the following document regarding State action plans to improve solid waste management useful. <http://epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/waste/downloads/stmit.pdf>

**Q26.** Can Climate Showcase Communities grant funding be used to subsidize an Environmental Impact Report?

**A26.** Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA. Using grant funding under this program to solely fund a report would not be considered fully responsive.

**Q27.** How will innovation, as described in Section I.D, be evaluated and under which evaluation criteria (point system)?

**A27.** The Climate Showcase Communities grant program aims to develop a knowledge base of best practices local governments can implement to achieve greenhouse gas reductions. With this in mind, projects that go beyond simple



implementation of existing technologies or practices are likely to receive higher scores under criteria 1--Project Summary and Approach. Innovation may apply to the technology or policy being implemented, the way the applicant builds capacity or involves stakeholders, the linkages made with co-benefits, or whether the program has innovative ideas that can be replicated in other communities.

In response to part 2 of the above question, proposed "innovation" efforts will be scored under Criteria 1- Project Summary/Approach. See Section V. Part A for more information.

**Q28.** Does collaboration among a County and its cities count as "multiple stakeholders" or does it need to include other entities, such as community groups, private sector or academic institutions? (In reference to Criteria 1ii).

**A28.** Collaboration among a County and its cities would count as "multiple stakeholders". "Multiple stakeholders" is meant to include different entities- other than grant applicant that may have a part in the proposed grant project. Please keep in mind that the partial points may be awarded for collaboration with a limited number of stakeholders and full points to applicants who involve a broad array of stakeholders.

**Q29.** Do proposed stakeholders need to be sub-grantees to be considered partners?

**A29.** Stakeholders are people, groups, or organizations who affect or can be affected by the proposed project. Partnerships with stakeholder groups may be formal (ie as contractors, grantees, or providers of services) or informal (through community outreach, public forums, or other mechanisms).

**Q30.** What constitutes "community action"?

**A30.** Any action being taken within the boundaries of a local or tribal government that has an impact on emissions from that community may be considered "community action." This could include actions taken to reduce emissions from government operations as well as from residential, commercial, agricultural, or industrial activity within the boundaries of an applicant's community.

**Q31.** Can EPA Climate Showcase Communities funding be used for seed funding - planning, outreach, legal work, etc - leading to the implementation of a revolving loan fund similar to California's AB811 loans (allowing loan repayment on property tax bills for renewable and/or efficiency upgrades), with the understanding that funding cannot be used to capitalize the loan fund itself?

**A31.** Climate Showcase Communities grant funding may be used for the administrative management and outreach associated with a loan program that would otherwise be deemed an eligible component of a proposal that fully responsive to the RFA. However, this grant funding may not be used to directly capitalize a loan fund.

### **July 9, 2009 Update**

**Q32.** What if most of the GHG emissions reductions associated with a proposal come after the completion of the 3 year project term?

**A32.** Projects that achieve reductions after the term of the project are eligible and in



line with EPA's strategic goals. Proposals will be scored on their potential to achieve ongoing reductions as well as how well the applicant documents short and long term outputs, outcomes, and measures of progress. Proposals where the predominant emissions occur after the project period must still include discussion and rationale of the expected reductions.

**Q33.** Can an applicant partner with an entity that would not be eligible to apply directly for a Climate Showcase Communities grant (ex. universities, non-profits, trade associations)?

**A33.** Q&A #15 under Project Questions addresses potential partnership arrangements with non-profits. These principles can be applied to other entities also not eligible to apply directly for Climate showcase Communities grants. Please refer to OMB circular A-133 .210 for more information.

**Q34.** Can a project be general, such as, "we will select a project that is cost-effective and reduces GHG emissions based on the results and recommendations of our Climate and Energy Action Plan?"

**A34.** Yes, applicants may propose finalizing some aspects of their prospective grants following initial consulting and/or assessments. However, applicants in this category are strongly encouraged to propose a range of likely projects and areas of interest.

**Q35.** Are applicants locked into the topic identified in their intent to apply emails?

**A35.** No, applicants are not restricted to apply for their projects identified in their notice of intent to apply emails.

**Q36.** If we are awarded for our application, when will the award need to be spent by?

**A36.** EPA anticipates that the majority of the initial project periods for Climate Showcase Communities grants will be three years. However, the exact start and end dates will be negotiated by selected applicants and their designated EPA Project Officers. Grantees will then be required to spend the grant funds by the specified end date. Future time extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

**Q37.** How closely do projects need to be tied to reducing emissions?

**A37.** Proposals must address a GHG reduction component tied directly to the funding. It is up to each applicant to make the case to EPA in their proposal how their project best responds to the RFA. EPA personnel will not pre-screen proposals before the deadline.

### **Is My Project Eligible?**

**Q1.** Can the grant include money for sustainability coordinators, or NGOs working as advisors, to assist communities in their development of programs?

**A1.** Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q2.** Would hiring a consultant to help prepare an implementation plan for carbon reduction be an eligible project?

**A2.** Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.



**Q3.** Would solar photovoltaic projects be eligible?

**A3.** Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q4.** Is geothermal (pipes in ground, not hot water) conversion an eligible activity?

Would broadband to increase telecommuting be a possibility? What about broadband to reduce standing "in line" by going "online."?

**A4.** Yes all of the above activities listed in Q4 are eligible Yes, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q5.** Can we propose using grant funding from this RFA to further study the viability of a project (whether already started or for future planning purposes only)?

**A5.** Proposals must address a GHG reduction component tied directly to the funding. So if your proposal is purely to study viability, then the answer would be no.

**Q6.** Are adaptation projects eligible?

**A6.** No- adaptation projects are not eligible. The Climate Showcase Communities grants are designed to fund climate mitigation projects that directly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While EPA recognizes the value of preparing to address the impacts of climate change, this particular grant program is not targeting adaptation.

**Q7.** How do I know if my project is eligible?

**A7.** Please refer to Section I.B. of the RFA. There you will find a description of priority areas, goals, and types of projects CPPD is authorized to consider for funding. It is up to each applicant to make the case to EPA in their proposal how their project best responds to the RFA. CPPD personnel will not pre-screen proposals before the deadline. If after reviewing the RFA, you are still unsure, then you may submit a request for clarification. A good example is the previous Q & A in this section which addresses adaptation projects.

**Q8.** Can funds be used to upgrade equipment and/or appliances (for example, replacing existing appliances with Energy Star qualified appliances)?

**A8.** Equipment and appliance upgrades are an allowable expense, but please make sure your proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q9.** Can Climate Showcase Communities grants go toward funding for AB811 loans? (AB811 is a California bill that allows cities and counties to allow loan repayment on the property tax bill for renewable and/or efficiency upgrades to the property.)

**A9.** No. Climate Showcase Communities Funds can only be used for project that fit within the statutory authority for the Climate Showcase Communities program and within the scope of the Climate Showcase Communities RFA. AB811 loans may result in greenhouse gas emissions reductions. However, under AB 811, residents financing AB 811 projects repay the loans through their property taxes and interest and penalties from the loans constitute liens against the residents' properties. Under EPA's grant regulations applicable to local governments, repayments of loan principle and interest on loans made with grant funds are considered program income and would have to be



added to or deducted from total allowable costs to determine the net allowable costs. To the extent that the repayment of AB 811 loans could not be added or deducted from the program because they are collected by the State as a tax, EPA Climate Showcase Communities funding cannot be used for AB 811 loans.

**Q10.** Is there any restriction on using funds for revolving loans?

**A10.** Climate Showcase Communities funds cannot be used to capitalize a revolving loan fund. Climate Showcase Communities Funds can only be used for project(s) that fit within the statutory authority for the Climate Showcase Communities program and within the scope of the Climate Showcase Communities RFA.

**Q11.** Is there any restriction on using funds for staff time?

**A11.** Funds can be used for allowable costs as defined in 40 CFR 31.22 and OMB Circular A-87, subject to the statutory authority of the funding in PL 111-8. Appendix B to Part 225 at Section 8 addresses employee compensation, which can be an allowable cost under the grant. Furthermore, applicants may propose hiring a new position with Climate Showcase Community grant funding (ex. Environmental Manager). However, the activities of the position must still be reasonable, allowable and allocable in order to be deemed eligible expenses under any potential Climate Showcase Communities grant. Likewise, the proposed position and any activities therein must be fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q12.** Can applicants propose using grant funds to pay for consultants to perform an assessment of their environmental needs, and then anticipate finalizing a final demonstration or implementation project later on in the life of the grant?

**A12.** Yes, applicants may propose finalizing some aspects of their prospective grants following initial consulting and/or assessments. However, applicants in this category are strongly encouraged to propose a range of likely projects and areas of interest.

**Q13.** Is creating a form-based code considerable an eligible proposed grant activity?

**A13.** Yes, creating a form-based code would be an eligible proposed grant activity, so long as the grant proposal is fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q14.** Question 11 asks: "Can Metropolitan Planning Organizations apply?" I find the response somewhat ambiguous, perhaps because there is a wide range of MPOs, with different types of organizational structures.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) serves as the MPO for the 9 counties and 5.5 million residents of Greater Philadelphia. Is DVRPC eligible to apply for and receive a grant under this funding opportunity?

**A14.** Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is eligible because it is a regional government entity that falls within the definition of "local governments" in 40 CFR 31.3.

#### **July 9, 2009 Update**

**Q15.** We are considering distributing free employee transit passes as part of an employee trip reduction program to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Could we apply EPA



grant funding to cover this employee benefit of a free transit pass?

**A15.** Yes, this would be considered an eligible activity, so long as the proposal was otherwise fully responsive to the RFA.

**Q16.** Regarding Q&A #10, under the "Is My Project Eligible" section, What does "capitalize" specifically mean in this context? Could Climate Showcase Communities Funds be used to "seed" a revolving loan program?

**A16.** Climate Showcase Communities funds may be used to conduct analysis, pay for staffing, or other administrative costs associated with planning and implementing a revolving loan program. However, no funds from the Climate Showcase Communities grant program may be used to issue loans.