

Questions and Answers on USEPA 2006 State Innovation Grant Solicitation

The following is a list of questions that have been asked during the open solicitation period. The answer follows each question. For the readers convenience, the general topic for each question has been put in bold print. As questions continue to come in, this list will be updated during the solicitation period to provide equal access to potentially interested applicants. New questions will be located as the end of the list.

Q1. Are State **universities** eligible to apply for the grant ?

A1. Only the principal environmental regulatory agency from each State is eligible to apply for a State Innovation Grant. Universities may approach the State environmental regulatory agency with partnership proposal ideas, but the environmental regulatory agency will make the decision about the projects it wishes to propose. Projects that reflect partnership with a university or other agency within the State, or with other States and Tribes are encouraged. States may submit a single proposal from the agency alone, and may submit up to one additional partnering proposal.

Q2. Are **faith-based organizations** eligible to apply for the grant ? Specifically, we're interested in developing a video visitation program for inmates with minor children.

A2. No, only the principal environmental regulatory agency from each State is eligible to apply for a State Innovation Grant. The purpose of this grant program is to strategically encourage States to develop innovative programs to promote measurable ways of reducing environmental pollutants in the air, water, land. A key factor is that the proposal be linked to an existing environmental permitting program, or provide an alternative to a permit system with demonstrated benefits to the environment.

Q3. We are a **non-profit organization** that has previously worked with the State university and the State environmental agency. Can we apply for the grant ?

A3. No, only the principal environmental regulatory agency from each State is eligible to apply for a State Innovation Grant. Non-profit organizations may approach the State environmental regulatory agency with partnership proposal ideas, but the environmental regulatory agency will make the decision about the projects it wishes to propose. Projects that reflect partnership with other agency(ies) within the State, or with other States and Tribes are encouraged.

States may choose to include most any other organization that they believe would

strengthen their proposal, including a non-profit organization. If the State or proposal team wanted to subcontract or subgrant funding to a not-for-profit or other entity to accomplish the work, it would be acceptable from a grants management perspective. The proposal narrative and budget should be transparent about what is being proposed. The State (s) should retain a substantive involvement in the project. States may submit a single proposal from the agency alone, and may submit up to one additional partnering proposal.

Q4. I am a **consultant**. I've observed a great technical concept that is being developed and implemented in another State. I would like to bring that new technology to the State where I currently work and reside. Should I pursue this, or would it be a waste of my time ?

A4. Only the principal environmental regulatory agency from each State is eligible to apply for a State Innovation Grant. As a consultant, you may approach the State environmental regulatory agency with proposal ideas, but the environmental regulatory agency will make the decision about the project(s) it wishes to propose. Projects that reflect partnership with other agency(ies) within the State, or with other States and Tribes are encouraged.

If the State or proposal team wanted to subcontract or subgrant funding to a consulting firm or other entity to accomplish the work, it would be acceptable from a grants management perspective. The proposal narrative and budget should be transparent about what is being proposed. The State(s) must retain a substantive involvement in the project. States may submit a single proposal from the agency alone, and may submit up to one additional partnering proposal.

A key factor is that the proposal be linked to an existing environmental permit, or provide an alternative to a permit with demonstrated benefits to the public health.

Q5. I work for a **for-profit** organization. We'd like to apply for the grant. Would our organization be eligible ?

A5. Only the principal environmental regulatory agency from each State is eligible to apply for a State Innovation Grant. As a consultant, you may approach the State environmental regulatory agency with proposal ideas, but the environmental regulatory agency will make the decision about the project(s) it wishes to propose. Projects that reflect partnership with other agency(ies) within the State, or with other States and Tribes are encouraged.

If the State or proposal team wanted to subcontract or subgrant funding to a consulting firm or other entity to accomplish the work, it would be acceptable from a grants management perspective. The proposal narrative and budget should be transparent about what is being proposed. The State(s) must retain a substantive involvement in the

project. States may submit a single proposal from the agency alone, and may submit up to one additional partnering proposal.

A key factor is that the proposal be linked to an existing environmental permit, or provide an alternative to an environmental permit with demonstrated benefits to the public health.

- Q6. Would a **new technology** concept that reduces pollutants be eligible for this grant, or are there technology exclusions ?
- A6. Due to the funding limitations and other grant programs better suited to environmental technology development, the State Innovation Grant program will not be funding grants that develop a new environmental technology.
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- Q7. Are States allowed to **talk** to EPA people about their **grant ideas** or has that time already passed ?
- A7. Based on the EPA Grants Competition Policy, in general it would be inappropriate for EPA staff to provide advice or information that would give someone a competitive advantage. During the period of open solicitation, EPA can not guide or advise potential applicant's regarding their submittal of a proposal. EPA staff have been advised to be cautious about any discussions with States about potential projects and approaches during the competition so as not to adversely effect the fairness of the process. All questions should be directed to Sherri Walker (walker.sherri@epa.gov; 202-566-2186).

Potential applicants should review the language of the solicitation to see if their concept would be eligible and evaluated favorably under the evaluation criteria.

- Q8. Our proposal seems an appropriate fit with the theme "Innovations in Permitting", but we're not sure whether or not the proposal from our State falls within any of the three specific areas: Environmental Results Program model, Environmental Management Systems, or EPA's National Environmental Performance Track Program. Should we apply if our **proposed project doesn't quite fit into those 3 areas** ?
- A8. EPA interprets "innovation in permitting" broadly to include permitting programs, pesticide licensing programs, and other alternatives or supplements to permitting programs. We prefer that the proposal address our strategic focus areas, but we also want to encourage other truly innovative concepts. Our main concern would be the linkage to environmental permitting programs. The State would have to be clear about how their newly proposed innovative plan would benefit a permitting program aimed at better environmental results.
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- Q9. I am working with a **global organization** on biological and cultural diversity projects.

All of our sites are on small islands outside of the contiguous United States. We have applied for other grants, and are seeking additional funds for our project. Would research projects dealing with environmental conservation and community development be eligible for your grant program?

- A9. The EPA State Innovation Grants are available only to the principal environmental regulatory agencies of the 50 US States, the District of Columbia and the four US territories. A foreign entity would not be eligible. We don't know of any EPA program that would provide funding for an effort such as yours, however, you may want to inquire at the US embassy or consulate in any sovereign nation you are working in. U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) may be able to direct you to resources offered by the U.S. Government or perhaps by NGOs such as the World Wildlife Federation.
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Q10. Can you recommend **other grants** for me to apply for ?

- A10. Various programs within EPA have funding opportunities available for distinct purposes, throughout the fiscal or calendar year. There are so many grants opportunities available that it would be difficult to name them all. Depending on the subject area, there may be one or several grant opportunities for potential applicants to apply within EPA, as well as with other federal agencies. It is best for interested applicants to inquire about funding opportunities directly from the different offices (Headquarters, including media or program offices, and Regional office where you State is located) and to maintain a watchful eye towards grant opportunity publications. If you are not a regular reviewer of the federal register, a good place to routinely look for a synopsis of grant opportunities for all federal agencies would be <http://www.fedgrants.gov>.
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Q11. We have a great concept, but we are not sure that our State will be able to show **measurable results** in improving the environment. How important is it for our proposal to show measurable improvements

- A11. In compliance with EPA Policy Order 5700.7, applicants are required to fulfill EPA's strategic goals by addressing output or outcome environmental measurements in their proposals. EPA Order 5700.7, "Environmental Results under EPA Assistance Agreements," is a new policy intended to ensure accountability and productivity for public dollars. This new policy affects all providers and recipients of EPA assistance including public agencies and not-for-profit organizations. It requires that all agency competitions include a commitment to demonstrate results as a criterion for selection. Under the selection criteria (and the EPA Policy on Assistance Agreements and environmental results that drives that criterion), if the proposal does not demonstrate measurable environmental results it would not rate favorably during the evaluation.
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Q12. Does the proposal have to address **multi-media** issues ?

A12. For the State Innovation Grant competition, EPA is interested in all environmental media (e.g., air, water, land, etc.). All projects are evaluated against several criteria as indicated in Section 5.2 of the solicitation. Multi-media proposals will receive preference in scoring but that does not guarantee that a project will be selected. A proposal that addresses only one environmental media does not mandate an automatic non-selection.

Q13. The budget that we've come up with for our proposed project is easily twice that of projects that have been awarded in your grant program in previous years. We would still like to submit our proposal and be considered. How firm is your **funding limit** ?

A13. EPA anticipates available funding of \$800,000- \$1,100,000. EPA also anticipates award of 4-8 assistance agreements. For Environmental Results Projects (ERP) and Environmental Management Systems (EMS) -related projects, EPA anticipates funding for projects between \$50,000 - 250,000. For Performance Track projects, EPA anticipates funding for up to three (3) projects in the range of \$55K to \$75K per year per grant depending on the scope of the pre-proposal and the availability of funds.

Outside of these stated funding ranges, a greater amount will not be awarded to a sole applicant. Applications exceeding the funding limits described in Section 2.2 of the solicitation will be returned without review.

Q14. We received a grant under a previous round of the State Innovation Grant competition. Does this decrease our chances of being selected for this year's innovation grant, or is a **previous winner** eligible to apply for a new grant ?

A14. State pre-proposals will be evaluated and selections made based upon the criteria published in the 2006 solicitation. All other things being equal, if the decision comes down to a first time winner and previous winner, we may be somewhat inclined to select a State that has not received a SIG award in the past to address the geographic diversity criterion identified in the solicitation. States should be advised, however, that while EPA considers geographic distribution in making selections, there is no rule that will disqualify a previous winner -- especially if they have a superior proposal. In fact, two states have been selected in sequential competitions in the past, Massachusetts in the 2002 and 2005 competitions, and Indiana in the 2004 and 2005 competitions.

Q15. We are considering submitting a proposal for innovative **technology** which we believe would provide environmental benefits to a specific business sector. Will the SIG program fund technology projects or are there technology exclusions?

A15. In Section 1.1 of the solicitation, the Innovation Strategy identifies four major elements. Element Three seeks to "diversify environmental protection tools and approaches", including environmental technology. Due to funding limitations and other grant

programs better suited to environmental technology development, Section 4.6 (Areas for Consideration) states that the SIG program will not be funding grants for the “development or demonstration of new environmental technologies”. If the State chooses to submit a proposal for this competition, all State pre-proposals must address the program criteria described in Section 5.2 (Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria). Pre-proposals will be evaluated based on the extent, and how well, they address the specific criteria.

Q16. Is there a time length for the **project duration**?

A16. The average project lasts 1-3 years. If you are unsure of your proposed project duration, applicants are encouraged to err on the side of a longer time frame (within a three year period). It is easier to terminate a project early than to get an extension, even when no additional money is being sought from us.

Q17. I am unfamiliar with electronic submittal of proposals through <http://www.grants.gov>. Our State would like to submit a proposal using <http://www.grants.gov>, but I have one specific question about the **Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)**. The instructions suggest that the AOR should be the Deputy Commissioner or Certified Funding Official. These individuals are often not available or are unfamiliar with uploading of documents into this computer program. Would it be okay for our project manager to fill out the application on [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) with all of the attachments and save it there so that the AOR can enter/approve/submit ?

A17. Yes, the project managers can fill everything out, save the package, and e-mail it or share it with the AOR who only has to open the completed package and click on the submit button, then enter the ID and password to complete the process. In fact, an organization may register the name of their AOR, then anyone who has the Grants.gov ID and password could complete the submission and the name that was registered as AOR would appear in the signature block.
