

2014-2015 EPA Environmental Education Grant Program: EE Local Grants Request for Proposals (RFP)

February 2015 Webinar

The EE Local Grants webinar will begin at 1:00 pm eastern time.

This webinar provides a general overview of the 2014 EE Local Grants RFP and the Environmental Education Grant application process. Please consult the RFP/Solicitation Notice for complete details.



2014-2015 EPA Environmental Education Grant Program:

EE Local Grants Request for Proposals

February 2015 Webinar

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Note

Disclaimer: This webinar provides a general overview of the EE Local Grants RFP and the Environmental Education Grant application process. Please consult the RFP (also known as the Solicitation Notice) for complete details.

The EE Local Grants RFP is the second of two RFPs issued by EPA's Office of Environmental Education using Fiscal Year 2014 funds.

The deadline for proposals to the EE Local Grants RFP is March 6, 2015.

Webinar Logistics

- ❖ If you are listening through your computer, make sure your speakers are on and the **volume is turned up**.
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How to Submit Questions

To submit a question during this webinar:

- ❖ Please submit your questions during the presentation via the Q&A box in Adobe Connect. No questions will be taken through the phone lines or the computer audio.
- ❖ A limited number of questions will be addressed during the designated Q&A sessions. Only questions of universal interest will be answered during this session.
- ❖ Please send questions unique to your situation to eeegrants@epa.gov. We will do our best to respond over the next few days.
- ❖ The EE Grants program has a Frequently Asked Questions page online. Some questions posed today may be subsequently posted to the FAQs page with appropriate responses.

What We Will Cover Today

- ❖ The Basics of the Environmental Education Grant Program and the EE Local Grants RFP
- ❖ Who and What We Can and Cannot Fund
- ❖ Budget and Cost Items
- ❖ Contents of Proposals and Review/Selection for Awards, Including Helpful Resources and Tips for Success
- ❖ Where to Find More Information and How to Ask Questions After the Webinar

The Environmental Education Grant Program

The Environmental Education Grant Program, sponsored by EPA's Office of Environmental Education (OEE), Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education, provides financial support for projects which design, demonstrate and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods and/or techniques.



The Purpose of the Environmental Education Grant Program is to:

- ❖ Increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues;
- ❖ Promote environmental stewardship; and
- ❖ Provide the public with the skills needed to weigh various sides of an environmental issue and take responsible actions.

The EE Local Grants RFP: Basics

- ❖ Deadline **March 6, 2015**: hand delivered by COB, 3/6/15; post marked by 3/6/15; or submitted to grants.gov by 11:59 pm eastern time, 3/6/15.
- ❖ **Three awards** anticipated **from each** of EPA's 10 Regions under this RFP; none from HQ. **Thirty awards total** across the country.
- ❖ Approximate amount of each award: up to **\$91,000**.
- ❖ Proposals must be for **locally focused** EE programs.
- ❖ Proposals must include **both educational and environmental** priorities.
- ❖ Required: **matching funds and a sub-grant** program.

Locally Focused Projects:

Help develop informed, knowledgeable and responsible citizens in the community(ies) in which the project is located.



Educational & Environmental Priorities

❖ Educational:

- EE Capacity Building
- Educational Advancement
- Community Projects
- Human Health and the Environment
- EE Teaching Skills
- Career Development



❖ Environmental:

- Addressing Climate Change & Improving Air Quality
- Taking Action on Toxics and Chemical Safety
- Making a Visible Difference in Communities
- Protecting Water
- Launching a New Era of State, Tribal and Local Partnerships

Partnerships



- ❖ NOT required.
- ❖ **HOWEVER**, partnerships can strengthen recruitment plans by increasing potential numbers and diversity of audiences, can increase the variety of and accessibility to expertise needed to create a local project, and can assist in meeting the matching funds requirement.
- ❖ Up to 5 points given for Partnership Letters of Commitment in review and scoring of applications; or, if no partners, for explanation of how the project will be successful without them.

Expanding Our Reach

EPA funds projects that focus on a variety and range of educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences.

- ❖ Dealing with environmental challenges requires a population that is diverse, informed, and environmentally literate.
- ❖ Every community needs citizens of all ages willing and able to use critical thinking skills to solve problems to protect their local environment.
- ❖ Includes low income, minority, and tribal communities.
- ❖ Includes communities more likely to be adversely affected by environmental risks.

Questions?

Q: The RFP says that the grant awards will be made at each of EPA's 10 Regions. Will there be any grants awarded from Headquarters this year? If so, will they be for locally-focused projects as well?

A: For Fiscal Year 2014 there are 2 RFPs. The other RFP, for EE Model Grants, was for proposals to be funded by the Headquarters Office of Environmental Education; that RFP is now closed. All awards for EE Local Grants will be made in the Regions.

Q: Do funded projects in this grant program need to focus on just teachers and/or students or could they include other community members as well?

A: Community members of any age could qualify as audience members in a project funded by this grant program – and not just community members who are teachers and/or students. See Section I(B) of the RFP, quoting the National Environmental Education Act: “The Office of Environmental Education shall...support development and the widest possible dissemination of model curricula, educational materials, and training programs for elementary and secondary students and other interested groups, including senior Americans.”

Who is Eligible to Apply?

- ❖ Any local education agency, college or university, state education or environmental agency, or a tribal education agency*.
- ❖ A nonprofit organization as described in Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- ❖ A noncommercial educational broadcasting entity as defined and licensed by Federal Communications Commission.
- ❖ Applicant organizations must be located in the United States or Territories and the majority of the educational activities must take place in the United States; or in the United States and Canada or Mexico; or in U.S. Territories.

*“Tribal education agencies” that are eligible to apply include a school or community college which is controlled by an Indian tribe, band, or nation, which is recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians and which is not administered by the Bureau of Indian Education.

What Else Affects Eligibility?

- ❖ March 6 deadline must be met.
- ❖ Work Plan, Budget, and Appendices must be complete.
- ❖ Budget must include: request for approximately, but no more than \$91,000; minimum match of 25% of total budget; exactly 25% of EPA funds spent on **sub-grants** of \$5000 or less.
- ❖ Proposal must include both educational and environmental priorities.
- ❖ Applicants must demonstrate that proposed project **has not been previously funded** by EE Grants Program – or is being significantly changed, expanded, broadened or enhanced.
- ❖ **Multiple proposals** accepted so long as each is for a different project and each is separately submitted.

What the EE Grants Program Can & Cannot Fund:



Funded:

- ❖ Environmental education projects based on sound science that teach or enhance critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that lead to responsible actions to protect human health and the environment.

Not funded:

- ❖ Projects that advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action about environmental issues or simply disseminate information.
- ❖ Lobbying or political activities.
- ❖ Non-education-related research or development.
- ❖ Technical training of environmental professionals.
- ❖ Construction projects.

Questions?

Q: Can local government agencies (e.g., municipal utilities, waste management agencies, health departments, etc.) be applicants for EE grants? Only local education agencies seem to be listed as eligible in the RFP.

A: Section III.A. of the RFP states that "any local education agency...may submit a proposal." The Environmental Education Act does not define a "local education agency". The term is defined in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. If there is any question as to whether you are a local education agency, you can check with the state department of education in the state in which you are located. For purposes of applying for a grant through this RFP, make sure it is clear in your application that you have the authority to conduct education programs. You can demonstrate this authority by providing documentation from your state department of education, referencing the law or bylaws that established your agency, quoting your current official mission statement, and/or showing us proof that your authority has been set by practice of education programs in the past. Be sure to include this information in a succinct statement in the Project Summary and in the Detailed Project Description, as well as in detail in the Programmatic Capability and Past Performance section of the application.

More Questions...

Q: We are part of a collaboration of non-profit environmental education organizations that run EE camps for school kids. Can we apply as a consortium and split the grant funds among us?

A: You must select one organization who is eligible as defined in the RFP (e.g., a non-profit, designated as 501C3) as the applicant, and the rest of you would be partners on the project. The applicant should be sure to get partnership letters of commitment from the other organizations in the consortium. The letters can be worth up to 5 points total in the review process (see Section V of the RFP). Partners who are eligible as defined in the RFP can receive sub-grants to help conduct the project.

Q: What do you mean by the “training of environmental professionals”? Would the training of staff in a wastewater treatment plant be ineligible? What about training of staff at businesses to educate them on reducing storm water run-off on their property?

A: Training staff at a waste water treatment plant would almost assuredly be ineligible. Educating businesses to adopt more environmentally friendly practices could qualify, under the appropriate conditions. We would have to have more information about such a program to make the final call.

Budget and Cost Items

❖ SF-424A and Detailed Budget:

- Both required. Make sure dollar amounts match each other exactly.

❖ Contracts vs Sub-grants:

- Contracts are for purchasing services not directly tied to the accomplishment of the goals of the project; e.g., buses for transporting students to field sites.
- Generally, contractual services in funded projects must be competed.
- Sub-grants generally do not have to be competed; but they may not be used to avoid competing contractual services.
- Sub-grants should go to eligible entities who will help plan or implement the main tasks of the project that directly accomplish the goals set forth in the proposal; e.g., non-profit organizations who provide naturalists to guide students on field studies.

❖ Indirect Costs:

- E.g., rent and admin/office support.
- Cannot be reimbursed without indirect cost rate agreement.
- EPA can allow flat 10% rate for non-profit organizations.

Budget and Cost Items: Matching Funds & Sub-grant Funds



❖ Matching Funds:

- Minimum of **25%** of Total Project Budget
 - For example, if the funding request to EPA = \$91,000, and the Total Budget = \$121,333, the minimum Match = \$30,333
 - Must not be federal funds

❖ Sub-grants:

- Exactly 25% of EPA funds **must** go to sub-grants of \$5,000 or less.
 - For example, if the funding request to EPA = \$91,000, the total of sub-grants of \$5k or less = exactly \$22,750

Budget & Cost Items: Program Income & Food/Beverage Costs

❖ Program Income:

- Money a grant recipient earns as a direct result of a grant-supported activity (e.g., workshop fees).
- Usually used to pay for eligible, allowable costs that further project goals.
- May also help finance the required matching funds.

❖ Food/Beverage Costs:

- Allowed for “working” breakfast or lunch, or light refreshments during breaks.
- NOT allowed for evening receptions, banquets, or events where alcohol is served, entertainment is provided or funds are solicited.

Questions?

Q: Is there any limit to the percentage of matching funds that can be in-kind contributions, such as salaries or volunteers' time?

A: No, there is no limit. All of your match could come from in-kind contributions.

Q: If our organization does not have an indirect cost (IDC) rate agreement in place, should we adjust the budget in our application to allow the addition of IDC later, if awarded?

A: An applicant can begin the negotiations for an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement at the same time that they apply for a grant to this program, or within 90 days of the date of an award of a grant under this solicitation. However, recipients are not allowed to seek reimbursement for indirect costs until an approved indirect cost rate is obtained, so if you want to charge indirect costs to the grant, it's best to start getting that in place now. If you are a 501C3 non-profit, and if you choose EPA as your cognizant agency, EPA can allow you to charge a flat indirect cost rate of 10% of salaries and wages (see 2 CFR Part 230, Appendix A). Note, however, that recipients who opt to use the 10% flat rate are obligated to use the flat rate for the life of the grant award. Either way, if you don't have an IDC right now and think you will be asking for one, then, yes, factor that into your budget.

Content of Applications/Proposals:

Standard Forms

- ❖ Standard Federal Application Form (SF-424)
- ❖ Budget Form (SF-424A) - Section B only – request to EPA, matching share, and total

Work Plan (8 page limit)

- ❖ Project Summary (should be concise) – maximum **5 points***
- ❖ Detailed Project Description (use headings: what, why, how, who) – max **45 points***
- ❖ Project Evaluation (how you will measure success) – max **10 points***

Detailed Budget – Same order and categories as 424A, but with much greater detail. Check against Form 424 and Form 424A to ensure amounts are same. – max **10 points***

Appendices

- ❖ Timeline – Major activities and milestones over project period – max **5 points***
- ❖ Logic Model - Shows outputs and outcomes – max **5 points***
- ❖ Partnership Letters of Commitment – Explain tasks or funding partners to provide – max **5 points***
- ❖ Programmatic Capability and Past Performance – max **15 points***

*Possible maximum points that could be given by reviewers for each part of the proposal.

Review & Selection for Funding

- All eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of reviewers assembled by each Regional Office; includes experts in EE.
- Section V assigns points to factors; possible score of up to 100.
- Applications are ranked from highest to lowest score.
- EPA Regional Selection Official is briefed on score, ranking and other factors* that may be considered for final funding selection.

*Other factors may include the EPA educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences that are addressed in the highest ranked proposals.

Helpful Resources for Conducting Projects:

- ❖ If you are training educators: *Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators*.
- ❖ If you are developing materials: The “*Guidelines for Excellence in EE*” series of publications.

Both are available at: <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-publications>

- ❖ When you set up an evaluation of your project, consult the site, My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant (MEEERA): <http://meera.snre.umich.edu/>

Tips for Success:

- ❖ Show that proposal fits the criteria of the EE grants RFP.
- ❖ Demonstrate past successes.
- ❖ Show your qualifications.
- ❖ Include culturally-diverse and/or under-served populations, when possible.
- ❖ Demonstrate partner support, when appropriate.
- ❖ Demonstrate adequate match and exact sub-grant amounts.
- ❖ Write simply and clearly – do not leave out important details; but stick to page limit.
- ❖ Do not assume reviewer knowledge.
- ❖ Explain acronyms/terms.
- ❖ Check your math – and check it again.
- ❖ Organize application around scoring criteria.
- ❖ Include plan to measure and evaluate success.

And...

- ❖ Start early – Leave time to review and edit your proposal.
- ❖ Read the RFP (solicitation) and online FAQs thoroughly before beginning your proposal/application – and as many times as you need during the writing process.
- ❖ If using grants.gov to submit your proposal, have your Authorized Organization Representative register now, and make sure you are current in SAM and DUNS.
- ❖ Send questions to EEGrants@epa.gov – after you read the RFP and FAQs thoroughly!

Questions?

Q: Would it strengthen our proposal if we were to do ____ rather than ____?

A: We cannot comment on the merits of a proposal idea.

Q: Could you give us some examples of programs that have been funded in the past?

A: All the projects we have funded since 1992 are listed with short descriptions on our website.

Where Do I Find More Information?

<http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>

At the EPA Environmental Education Grant website you will find:

- ❖ Frequently Asked Questions
- ❖ Helpful Resources
- ❖ Past Grants Awarded by the EE Grants Program

Frequently Asked Questions

- ❖ Please review the FAQ's online at:
<http://www2.epa.gov/education/frequently-asked-questions-about-environmental-education-grants-program>.
- ❖ Send all additional questions to: eeegrants@epa.gov

This webinar is intended to provide a general overview of the Environmental Education Grant Program and application process. A PDF of the presentation will be posted to our website. Nothing in the presentation is meant to supersede anything in the RFP/Solicitation Notice.

- For general information about the Environmental Education Grant Program please contact Karen Scott at **scott.karen@epa.gov**
- For questions about the current Environmental Education Grant Solicitation/RFP please contact: **eegrants@epa.gov**