

FINAL
FOR RELEASE OCTOBER 14, 2003

REQUEST FOR INITIAL GRANT PROPOSALS:

**SMART GROWTH NETWORK WEBSITE
(SGNWEB-04)**

OVERVIEW INFORMATION

Required Overview Content:

1. **Federal Agency Name** – US Environmental Protection Agency; Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation; Development, Community and Environment Division.
2. **Federal Funding Opportunity Title** – Smart Growth Network Website, Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP).
3. **Announcement Type** – This is an initial announcement of a funding opportunity.
4. **Funding Opportunity Number** – SGNWEB-04
5. **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number** – 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants, authorized under Delegation of Authority I-47.
6. **Dates** – Initial proposals must be submitted to US EPA by 5:00 PM December 15, 2003. Award announcement expected to be made in May 2004.
7. **Eligible applicants** – Eligible applicants include (1) incorporated nonprofit (or not for profit) agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States, and (2) public (state, county, regional or local) agencies, institutions and organizations. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Executive Summary – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is soliciting initial proposals for its funding opportunity entitled Smart Growth Network Website (SGNWEB-04). Under this solicitation US EPA intends to fund the development and subsequent maintenance of a Smart Growth Network (SGN) website. The SGN website is the on-line home of the Smart Growth Network and provides timely and targeted information, resources, and tools on smart growth and related topics. US EPA seeks

proposals for an SGN website that enhances the ability of developers, citizens, and government to create neighborhoods, communities, and regions that enhance economic competitiveness, promote community, and protect the environment and public health.

US EPA expects to have approximately \$50K available for proposals under this RFIP for this funding cycle, subject to availability of funding within the agency's final FY 04 budget. Final grants may be negotiated for project periods of up to five years, with a ceiling of approximately \$350K for a five-year agreement. US EPA will award one assistance agreement under this RFIP and employ a cooperative agreement as the funding vehicle. Cooperative agreements entail substantial Federal involvement in the project. Substantive involvement may include US EPA review and approval of project scope and phases; US EPA participation in and collaboration on, various phases of the work; US EPA review of all draft and final products; and regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls.

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

US EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division is seeking initial proposals for the development and maintenance of a Smart Growth Network website. Since 1998, US EPA has supported the development and maintenance of the SGN website, located at <http://www.smartgrowth.org>. Under this RFIP, US EPA is competing the development and maintenance of an SGN website.

US EPA intends to fund an SGN website that is the on-line home of the Smart Growth Network, provides timely and targeted information, resources, and tools on smart growth and related topics, and has a minimum of 40,000 visitor sessions per month. US EPA seeks proposals for an SGN website that enhances the ability of developers, citizens, government to partner and create neighborhoods, communities, and regions that enhance economic competitiveness, promote community, and protect the environment.

US EPA seeks proposals for a Smart Growth Network Website that, at a minimum, meets the following baseline website site functions and baseline website management responsibilities.

Baseline website function requirements:

- *Homepage of the Smart Growth Network*- provides information to the public on the Smart Growth Network (including its partners, partner publications/tools/databases); the SGN membership program and its benefits; and access to the SGN members section.
- *Smart Growth Resource Library* - serves as a comprehensive, searchable on-line library of no less than 4,000 smart growth resources. Resources should include, news clips; event information; funding sources; audio and video files of the smart growth speaker series; databases; powerpoints; weblinks and /or pdf's for

publications, guidebooks and tools. Library should contain a minimum of 4,000 resources.

- *Introduction to Smart Growth* - educates the public on the 10 principles of smart growth and the relationship of smart growth to issues, including, but not limited to housing, transportation, health, environment, economics, design, and community quality of life.
- *Smart Growth News Service* - manages a subscription based smart growth news service, serving a minimum of 3,500 persons.
- *Smart Growth Technical Assistance* - responds to public inquiries and requests for technical assistance and guidance on smart growth and related issues. It is expected that requests for assistance will average 20 per month.

Baseline website management responsibilities

- *Content management*- the webmaster has primary responsibility to gather and manage site content and design. Additionally, it is the primary responsibility of the webmaster to ensure that site content is timely, accurate, accessible, consistent with smart growth and responsive to the needs of site users.
- *Website Outreach and Marketing*- develop and implement strategies to increase use of the SGN website. Examples of strategies include registering domain name with prominent search engines, speaking at conferences, developing and distributing marketing materials (flyers and brochures; letters and press releases; Postcards/E-cards, media/public service announcements, email updates).

US EPA encourages the submission of applications that propose innovative uses of the Internet, web technology and that build upon these baseline requirements. Examples of possible innovations include dynamic database driven website structure, real-time updates of content, and/or ability to customize site content to various types of prospective site users. Applications that provide services and functions in addition to the baseline will be rated higher than applications, which do not.

US EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation, Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED) is issuing this request for initial proposals. DCED focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental goals by protecting sensitive habitats and watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices and reducing heat island effects, and encouraging cleanup and sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields.

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, public health and the environment. Smart growth is often characterized by a common set of development principles:

- Mix land uses;
- Take advantage of compact building design;
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
- Create walkable neighborhoods;
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas;
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities;
- Provide a variety of transportation choices;
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective;
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

The Smart Growth Network (SGN) is a partnership of national and state level organizations. The US EPA has facilitated and supported the efforts of the Smart Growth Network since 1996. Since that time the SGN has grown to more than 30 organizations from a diversity of backgrounds, sizes and constituents. The purpose of the Network is multi-fold. The SGN educates stakeholders in the development process on the relationship between quality of life and the built environment; promotes smart growth best practices; cultivates strategies to address barriers to environmentally responsible development; and helps advance opportunities for smart growth. Ultimately, the Smart Growth Network responds to public and private sector demand for information on development practices that serve the economy, the community, public health and the environment, through information sharing and networking.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

US EPA expects to have approximately \$50K available for proposals under this RFIP for this funding cycle; this is subject to availability of funding within the agency's final FY 04 budget. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$50K or less. Final grants may be negotiated for budget and project periods of up to five years, with funding for future years dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funding is available. A ceiling of approximately \$350K for a five-year agreement is suggested. *US EPA expects to award one assistance agreement under this RFIP.*

The assistance agreement awarded will be in the form of a cooperative agreement and thus will include substantive involvement on the part of US EPA. Substantive involvement may include US EPA review and approval of project scope and phases; US EPA participation in and collaboration on, various phases of the work; US EPA review of all draft and final products; and regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls.

The expected project and budget period for this cooperative agreement will be May 2003- May 2008. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible applicants - Eligible applicants include (1) incorporated nonprofit (or not for profit) agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States, and (2) public (state, county, regional or local) agencies, institutions and organizations. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Cost Sharing or Match - There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However the degree to which the project budget effectively uses US EPA funds and/or leverages matching funds will be considered as an evaluation criterion. Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards a match must be for costs that US EPA can fund. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87.

Other - There are no limits on the number of applications that an applicant may submit.

Other: Threshold Criteria - To be eligible applicants will need to meet all of the following threshold criteria. Threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Failure to meet any one of the five criteria will deem an application ineligible. Ineligible applications will not be reviewed.

Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth Focus

The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must focus on the issues, subjects, and activities targeted by this RFIP and explained under *Funding Opportunity Description*. The proposal must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project, and the applicant must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues. US EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in *Funding Opportunity Description* to apply this criterion.

Threshold Criterion 2: Allowable Activities

The project must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following US EPA grant authorities: Clean Air Act section 103 (b)(3); Clean Water Act section 104 (b) (3); Solid Waste Disposal Act section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act section 20, as supplemented by P.L.106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act sections 1442 (a) and (c). Most of the statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and

studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of the pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

Threshold Criterion 3: Environmental Focus

In order to be funded, the project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above. For most statutes a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution. In the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, the project must "[carry] out the purposes of the Act." The overarching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authority, in most cases "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, or habitat protection should describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Threshold Criterion 4: Serve a Public Purpose

Projects should be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at large. Proposed projects should clearly and directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long-term goals.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

How to get application Materials - This announcement contains all application materials. A pdf and html version of this RFIP will be posted on US EPA's Smart Growth website (<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth>) on October 13, 2003. Applicants can request a paper copy of this RFIP by calling 202-566-2846. Applicants should submit initial proposals following the format under IV B.

Following selection, applicant will be required to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal.

Content and Form of Application Submission - Proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, section 508 compliance statement, and confirmation of partner participation (if applicable). Project descriptions should not exceed 10 pages (see below for additional details). The following format is required for all proposals:

Cover letter (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter used to submit your proposal must be signed by an official with

the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

Summary Information Page (does not count against page limit)

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

- the title and number of this Request for Initial Proposals (i.e., Smart Growth Network Website, SGNWEB-04)
- project title and location
- applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address
- name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)
- type of applicant organization (e.g. nonprofit, local government, state government, etc.)
- summary budget information (amount requested from US EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)
- 5 to 10 line abstract of proposal

Project Description (no longer than 10 page sides)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and include a workplan outlining the project's tasks, timetable, and outreach activities; technical specifications, design and contents of the proposed SGN website. The workplan must demonstrate how the project will meet baseline requirements for website function, and management as outlined under the *Funding Opportunity Description* section.

The narrative must also address how the proposal meets threshold criteria (see *Eligibility Information*), and evaluation factors (see *Application Review Information*). If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be defined (see requirement for confirmation of partner participation below). Proposals must discuss the mission of the applicant's and contributing partners, and relevant applicant and partner successes in supporting public, private and citizen efforts to make informed land use and development decisions that balance economy, community and environment. Additionally, applicants should include information on past or current website development and maintenance activities that they, or partner organizations contributing to their proposed project, have been or are responsible for.

The project description must be no longer than five pages double-sided or 10 pages single sided, must use no smaller than 10-point type and should have page margins all-around of at least one inch. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages beyond the first 10.

Budget (does not count against page limit)

The project budget should include costs for the duration of the five-year project period. The budget should break out project costs by year, task and object class. Object classes include personnel (broken out by project staff), fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other. If not self-evident, entries under each object class category should be explained in the budget itself or in the project description.

Documentation of Qualifications (does not count against page limit)

The applicant must include short bios of all principal staff, including principal staff from partner organizations, if applicable, who will have a major role in the project. Bios must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues and their areas of expertise related to website development and maintenance or project management.

Section 508 compliance statement (does not count against page limit)

The proposal must discuss how you will ensure that the website and all materials that it hosts will comply with requirements on accessibility found in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act — see www.section508.gov for more information.

Confirmation of partner participation (does not count against page limit)

Applicants who are partnering with other organizations, agencies or institutions must include a letter from the partner, on partner letterhead, indicating the partners commitment and role in the development and maintenance of the SGN website. Partner letters must be signed by an individual with the authority to commit the partner to the project. Letters confirming partner participation will not be accepted separately and must be included in the initial proposal package.

Submission Dates and Times- Applicants must submit one original and 4 copies of your full proposal (your full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget and documentation of qualifications, section 508 compliance statement, and confirmation of partner participation, if applicable). US EPA must receive proposals by 5pm East Coast time Monday December 15, 2003. No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on-time delivery. Please also note that there may be substantial delays in mail service to US EPA, due to heightened security requirements. The delivery address varies depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery.

If you are sending your proposal via hand delivery (e.g., Federal Express, Courier, UPS), send it to:

Adhir Kackar
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
1301 Constitution Avenue N.W.
US EPA West, Room 1417 F
Washington, D.C. 20004

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Adhir Kackar
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mail code 1808T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Intergovernmental Review - All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Applicant's should contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC's) for further information. A list of SPOC's can be accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>

Funding Restrictions- Funding is only available for activities authorized under one or more of the US EPA grant authorities stated in Section III, *Eligibility Information, Threshold Criterion 2*, and costs deemed allowable under *OMB Circular A-122, Cost principles for Non-Profit Organization*, accessible at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a122/a122.html>.

Funding will not be permitted for construction activity, lobbying and entertainment expenses. Pre-award costs and equipment costs are allowable only with the written consent of the designated EPA Project Officer.

Other Submission Requirements - Both proposals and formal requests for funding are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive, copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential and US EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40 CFR part 2, subpart B.).

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Criteria - Eligible applications will be evaluated against the following evaluation factors:

1. Expertise of organization and project staff (including partner staff) in web development and management.
2. Degree to which the applicant is an appropriate representative for the issue addressed in the assistance agreement, is likely to be viewed as an authority on the subject, or is partnering with an organization that meets these requirements.

3. Degree to which project funds are sufficient and appropriate for the successful completion of proposed project tasks. Degree to which the project budget effectively uses US EPA funds and/or leverages matching funds.
4. Degree to which the proposed Smart Growth Network website will be a learning tool that meets the needs of a broad range of development stakeholders - both novices and smart growth experts.
5. Quality and appropriateness of the method whereby the applicant will collect site content and ensure that it is accurate, accessible, consistent with smart growth and responsive to the needs of site users.
6. Applicant expertise (including partners) in the delivery of environment, smart growth and related information to public, private and citizen stakeholders.
7. Degree to which the proposal meets and exceeds baseline requirements for an SGN website. For baseline requirements see section 1, *Funding Opportunity Description*.
8. Time required for applicant to launch a smart growth network website that meets baseline conditions. For baseline requirements see section 1, *Funding Opportunity Description*.

Proposals will be scored high, medium or low against each of the evaluation factors using a numerical scale of 1 through 5. All factors will be weighted equally.

Review and Selection Process - In addition to the factors above, US EPA will carefully consider the applicant's past performance administering federal financial assistance and carrying out projects supported by US EPA and other federal agencies. This may include the results of audits conducted by US EPA's Office of Inspector General, other federal agencies, or state, local or tribal oversight entities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their performance history in their proposals and to provide contacts for US EPA to obtain additional information. In making final selections, factors such as overall excellence, geographic diversity, project diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization) may also be considered.

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR Part 30 or 31, depending on the applicant. US EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates - US EPA expects to select and invite one applicant to submit a formal grant application for development and maintenance of an SGN website during January 2004. Upon successful completion and processing of the grant application, US EPA expects the award announcement to take place in May 2004.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices- Following evaluation US EPA will select one applicant to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that if selected, they will need to submit a formal request for funding within four weeks or less after being contacted by US EPA.

Upon receipt and processing of the formal grant application, US EPA will announce recipients through the posting of the award recipient on the US EPA Smart Growth Website. This information will be posted 30 days after US EPA's Grants Administration Division issues a written offer of award to the recipient. US EPA anticipates that awards will be announced in May 2004.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements- Applicants must comply with standard EPA assistance agreement requirements. Funded activities must be allowable under EPA statutory authority (see Section III, *Eligibility Information, Threshold Criterion 2*).

Reporting - The recipient of this financial award will be subject to post award monitoring by a designated US EPA Project Officer. A Project Officer will be designated at the time of award of this cooperative agreement. To comply with standard US EPA post award monitoring requirements, the recipient must submit progress reports quarterly, and participate in an annual review of the project with the US EPA Project Officer. Annual reviews may take place on or off-site. Quarterly progress reports detail the project status, tasks completed during the reporting period, compliance with the workplan, anticipated goals and tasks for the upcoming quarter, expenditures, remaining grant funds, and website statistics. During annual reviews, the designated US EPA Project Officer will evaluate the progress of the grantee in completing tasks detailed in the workplan, ensure that the grantee is meeting all programmatic requirements, and spending federal funds on allowable activities under the cooperative agreement.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants with questions about this solicitation should contact:

Adhir Kackar
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mail code 1808T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Phone: (202) 566-2846
Fax: (202) 566-2868
Email: kackar.adhir@epa.gov

Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the US EPA web site at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth. The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFIP.

10/9/03