

TRI University Challenge Questions and Answers

General

☐ **What are the benefits of partnering with TRI University Challenge?**

TRI University Challenge offers students practical experience working on environmental issues with EPA, and gives faculty the opportunity to advance their research applications. TRI University Challenge projects can also serve as a capstone project for students.

As a partner, you will receive direct support from EPA TRI staff experts to answer questions and assist you with TRI tools and approaches to data analysis. Additionally, partners will receive national recognition and promotion through the TRI University Challenge website and speaking opportunities at conferences and events.

☐ **How will EPA typically collaborate with partners on a project?**

EPA TRI staff will tailor the types of interaction based upon project proposals, providing the support needed to successfully complete each project. Examples of collaboration include bi-weekly phone calls and webinars with involved students and staff, regular email contact, and report status updates to proactively address any issues. In certain instances EPA is also available to provide technical support to help partners use available TRI tools, facilitate connections that strengthen project outcomes, or direct partners to other important data sources and opportunities.

☐ **Do I need to have a strong scientific background to get involved?**

TRI University Challenge aims to make scientific data more understandable to the public, a goal that is supported by many types of skills and knowledge sets. Even without scientific expertise, you could offer creative insight into reaching communities, relating to the general public, and crafting new tools.

We encourage interested parties to design a proposal that applies your unique skills and interests to any of the key project themes: Promoting Broader Use of TRI Data by Academics and Other External Users, and Using TRI to Measure Program Effectiveness. There are a number of opportunities to apply creative communication skills or data analytical skill to bear for the themes. To promote broader use of TRI data, teams could develop products that increase awareness and use of TRI data, bring together data from several EPA programs, including TRI, to conduct statistical analyses of the effects of toxic chemical releases, or create a replicable methodology to help community members and industry communicate around and through TRI data. Options for using TRI data to measure program effectiveness include comparing document effects of state and national environmental regulations to show the efficacy of state programs, creating a process that captures the impacts of pollution prevention (P2) initiatives on TRI measured releases, or

analyzing the effectiveness of P2 programs at the local, national, and international level.

☐ **What funding is available for partner projects?**

Although we don't have any direct funding for selected projects, there are a number of resources, including both EPA and non-EPA grants, that TRI staff can direct you to. Applicants are also encouraged to reach out to their communities or other organizations for additional financial support, if needed. If funding is required and unavailable, EPA staff may be able to help project teams adapt their approach to allow the project to be successful with limited funds.

☐ **Are all TRI data public?**

Yes, all TRI resources are public information and can be cited in any published literature.

Application Process

- **Who can submit a project proposal and apply to be a TRI University Challenge partner?**

Anyone affiliated with an accredited college or university can submit a proposal. This includes undergraduate/graduate students, Ph.D. candidates, and academic faculty and researchers. Applicants must be a current student or faculty member to be eligible.

- **How can I apply?**

To apply, complete the Partner Application Form and send your completed application to the TRI University Challenge at TRIUniversityChallenge@epa.gov by midnight on March 27, 2016. Applications should address all stages of the proposed project, from the approach you will take, to the specific timeline, and completion of the project.

- **How will the project proposals be reviewed?**

A review panel of EPA staff will individually assess and assign scores for each application based upon the evaluation criteria. After the scoring process, the review panel will meet together to reach a consensus on the selected proposals. The evaluation criteria include: clarity and effectiveness of proposed approach (40%), project outcomes (40%), and partner capabilities (20%). Additional criteria details are available on the TRI University Challenge website: <http://www.epa.gov/tri/university/>.

- **How many project proposals will be accepted per region?**

There is no set number of proposals that will be accepted per region. Geographic diversity in proposals is helpful because environmental data differs greatly by location. However, the top evaluation criteria will be the quality of the project proposal.

- **How many project proposals will be selected overall?**

EPA will select two to four applications to partner with TRI University Challenge.

- **When will I find out if my proposal has been selected?**

EPA will notify applicants of the proposal decisions in May of 2016.

- **If my proposal is selected, when will my project begin?**

Selected projects will be launched at the beginning of the fall semester of 2016, starting in August or September.