

Cumulative Health Impacts at the Intersection of Climate Change, Environmental Justice, and Vulnerable Populations/Lifestages: Community-Based Research for Solutions

Informational Webinar Questions and Answers

October 5, 2021

1. What is meant by or expound upon "cumulative health"?

Answer: Cumulative health mainly means health impacts from pollutant exposures and non-chemical stressors. Because climate can cause people to be more susceptible to other things, it can also be referred to as multiple stressors.
2. Is there any upper limit on how much of the budget can go to community partners?

Answer: There is no quantity specified in the RFA.
3. Can the work be completed internationally or only in the United States?

Answer: Applicants can conduct research outside of the United States. Please keep in mind, the main benefits should be applicable to the US. Extra justification is required if funds will be spent on international travel and/or work. One of relevancy criteria is to benefit the United States.
4. Can universities submit a joint application (e.g., from 2 universities)?

Answer: Yes, universities can submit a joint application. In addition, applicants may submit more than one application if each application is significantly different from the others submitted.
5. Can non-Federal partners provide additional funding?

Answer: Cost-sharing is not required. But, a non-federal partner may provide additional funding. Any additional funding will require EPA review and approval of justification.
6. What is meant by the importance of addressing existing "acts" or statutes?

Answer: The EPA STAR research funded under an RFA must address pollution or contaminants (exposure, mitigation, control, etc.) under the governing statutes listed in the Section I.C. Authority and Regulations. Therefore, non-chemical stressors such as heat or humidity alone cannot be considered in applications under this RFA.
7. What information does the application ask for around the diversity of the project team? In other words, is it looking for diverse disciplines (e.g., social science) or demographics?

Answer: Diversity of the academic research team refers to Scientific Disciplines (toxicology/epidemiology, physical sciences, social sciences, etc.). There is some wording in the RFA about collaborating with appropriate partners such as MSIs, states, tribes, academia, industry groups, nonprofit organizations, associations, and underserved communities/community-based organizations.
8. Many Environmental Justice (EJ) communities have trust issues with researchers, with good reason. Can you extend the deadline by a month to give us more room to have meaningful conversations with community partners?

Answer: No, the deadline cannot be extended.

9. Can US based organizations with liaison office in other Low and Medium Income Country (LMICs) apply?
Answer: Eligible applicants may partner with analogous organizations in other countries as subawardees. Please email, hahn.intaek@epa.gov, if you have specific questions about your situation.
10. Does EPA have a list of what it considers/defines to be pollutants and contaminants?
Answer: Any contaminants or pollutants from air and water pollution, land contamination, or pesticides, to only name a few. The RFA is open to all chemicals that are pollutants or contaminants.
11. How are you determining what an EJ community is? That is, are there criteria that our community needs to meet? If so, what are those criteria?
Answer: There are no set criteria. An EJ community is any community with elevated risks, excluded by municipality, high exposure to chemicals. The communities with EJ concerns would have overburdened with higher exposure to contaminants, disadvantaged with health disparities or existing health conditions, or underserved in terms of essential infrastructures or ecosystem services. A more detailed definition of an EJ community is listed the RFA.
12. What is sam.gov and is it a registration for the institution or the Principal Investigator (PI)?
Answer: All applicants institutions must have SAM.gov registration "Active" prior to submitting applications via grants.gov. Otherwise, grants.gov will not accept the application. If you are experiencing an exigency that prevents you from submitting your application by the deadline, please be sure to contact the grants.gov helpline at 1-800-518-GRANT (4726), obtain a case number, and submit the information to Debra Jones (jones.debram@epa.gov) by 11:59 PM on the deadline date. We will consider each incident on a case-by-case basis.
13. Does research need to include pollutants/contaminants components, or can it include climate change stressors with EJ and vulnerable populations only?
Answer: Climate change stressors alone cannot be and will not be considered as pollutants or contaminants. For example, heat can cause health effects in vulnerable groups such as the elderly, but heat is a non-chemical stressor. The RFA states non-chemical stressors should be integrated into the chemical stressor context.
14. We have a consortium including universities and Community Based Organization (CBOs) and are thinking of assessing how heat islands impact a specific ethnic population in an identified county. Is this too narrow a focus?
Answer: For questions pertaining to this please contact Project Officer Intaek Hahn directly at hahn.intaek@epa.gov.
15. Are solid waste facilities or waste transfer stations in EJ communities considered as important sites?
Answer: Yes, they are considered as important sites.
16. Can animal studies be used to translate to health level effects in humans?
Answer: Animal studies would be considered only as a supporting component of human health research.

17. Is there a benefit and/or disadvantage of working with a community that has received STAR funding?

Answer: For the purposes of the EPA evaluation, there is no advantage or disadvantage in partnering with another organization that has received an EPA STAR grant in the past.

18. Is co-PI allowed?

Answer: Principal Investigators can have co-PIs. The co-PIs may be from their own institution or from other institutions.

19. Do you need a university partner to be eligible? Can this proposal be submitted solely by tribal organizations, community-based organizations, and nonprofits that do research?

Answer: Any eligible applicant may apply on its own. However, consider partnering with another organization if you feel you need additional experience or expertise in the subject area and/or writing and submitting grants.

20. Will EPA consider smaller scale projects with lower budgets?

Answer: This is not like a “low bid” contract. Applications must cover research topics specified in the RFA to be considered responsive in the peer review evaluations. If the research project can achieve this by asking for fewer federal dollars than the maximum, it is up to the researchers. Researchers must demonstrate they can accomplish the research using the funding for which is asked.

For further questions about the RFA and processes, please contact:

Technical Contact: Intaek Hahn, Project Officer (hahn.intaek@epa.gov)

Eligibility Contact: Ron Josephson, Eligibility & Peer Review Officer (josephson.ron@epa.gov)

Electronic Submissions: Debra Jones, Administrative Officer (jones.debram@epa.gov)