

# EPA National Environmental Justice Community Engagement Call

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*May 17, 2022*

**Expanding the  
Conversation**



**working for  
environmental  
justice**

# Housekeeping



Please join by phone or computer, not both



You are on mute, please enter questions and comments into the Q&A pod



If selected to speak during dialogue, please limit comment to 1 minute



Recording and transcript will be available online in the near future

# En Español

Tenemos interpretación en español disponible para aquellos que prefieren escuchar en español.

- Cómo cambiar el canal de audio en español
- Las personas pueden agregar preguntas en español al módulo de preguntas y respuestas
- Los materiales de la reunión estarán disponibles en español.



*Spanish-language interpretation is available for those who prefer to listen in Spanish.*

- How to switch to Spanish language audio channel*
- Individuals can add questions in Spanish to the Q&A Pod*
- Meeting materials will be made available in Spanish.*

***MINDFULNESS  
MOMENT***



mindful  
EPA

# Agenda

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**Welcome**

**Mindfulness Moment**

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***EPA Leadership Updates***

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**Overview of EPA's Drinking Water System Infrastructure  
Resilience & Sustainability Grants**

**Regional Equity & Capacity Hubs (REACH) Program**

***Engagement and Dialogue***

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**Upcoming Engagement Opportunities**

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**Closing Remarks**

# Leadership Updates

***Matthew Tejada***

*DIRECTOR, EPA OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE*

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Conversation



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**justice**

# Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability Grants [SDWA 1459A (I)]

## Stakeholder Engagement

*May 2022*

# Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability Grants [SDWA 1459A (I)]

Authorized under the Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended by the America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) in 2018, the Resiliency Grant is under development:

- The grant is anticipated to take the form of a competition, a Request for Application (RFA).
- **Funding Amount**: OW anticipates making **\$15 million** in combined fiscal year funding available this year.
- **Objective**: Increasing drinking water resilience to natural hazards.
- **Target population**: Assisting underserved, small and disadvantaged communities.
- **Natural hazards covered under the grant program**: Activities such as earthquakes, tornados, floods, hurricane, wildfire, drought, and freezing or hydrologic change that threatens the functioning of a community water system.



# Resiliency Grant: Eligible Entities

The statutory language under SDWA section 1459A(l), as amended through AWIA, includes the following as eligible entities:

(1)

- a public water system;
- a water system located in an area governed by an Indian Tribe; or
- a State, on behalf of an underserved community

**AND**

(2) serves a community —

- (A) that is underserved; or
- (B) that, under affordability criteria established by the State under section 1452(d)(3), is determined by the State to be a disadvantaged community; or
- (C) with a population of less than 10,000 individuals.

# Resiliency Grant: Types of Activities

Eligible activities for funding include planning, design, construction, implementation, operation, or maintenance of a program or project that increases drinking water system resilience to natural hazards through –

- (A) the conservation of water or the enhancement of water use efficiency;
- (B) the modification or relocation of existing drinking water system infrastructure made, or that is at risk of being, significantly impaired by natural hazards, including risks to drinking water from flooding;
- (C) the design or construction of desalination facilities to serve existing communities;

# Resiliency Grant: Types of Activities (cont.)

- (D) the enhancement of water supply through the use of watershed management and source water protection;
- (E) the enhancement of energy efficiency or the use and generation of renewable energy in the conveyance or treatment of drinking water; or
- (F) the development and implementation of measures to increase the resilience of the eligible entity to natural hazards.

# Resiliency Grant: Justice 40 Impact

- The resiliency grant is a program covered under Justice40.
- Funding priority is for projects that increase drinking water system resilience to natural hazards in underserved communities.
- Under Justice40, the grant objective is committed to delivering 40 percent of the overall benefits of Federal funding to support clean, affordable, and safe drinking water and drinking water infrastructure to disadvantaged communities.
- The grant anticipates the following:
  - Ensuring investments reach the communities that need them most
  - Ensuring critical clean and safe drinking water is provided to these communities
  - Improving in the resiliency of drinking water infrastructure

# Resiliency Grant: Anticipated Timeline

- The grant RFA is currently under development
- Grants.gov announcement: Anticipated summer 2022
- Submission deadline: Anticipated fall 2022

# Available EPA Tools to Enhance Drinking Water Resilience

## Route to Resilience Interactive Tool

<https://www.epa.gov/waterresilience/route-resilience-2020-drinking-water-and-wastewater-utilities>

## Vulnerability Self-Assessment Tool

<https://vsat.epa.gov/vsat/>

## Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool (CREAT) Risk Assessment Application for Water Utilities

<https://www.epa.gov/crwu/climate-resilience-evaluation-and-awareness-tool-creat-risk-assessment-application-water>

**For additional information about enhancing drinking water resiliency, visit:**

<https://www.epa.gov/waterresilience/technical-support-products-and-services-list>



# Resiliency Grant: Staff Contact

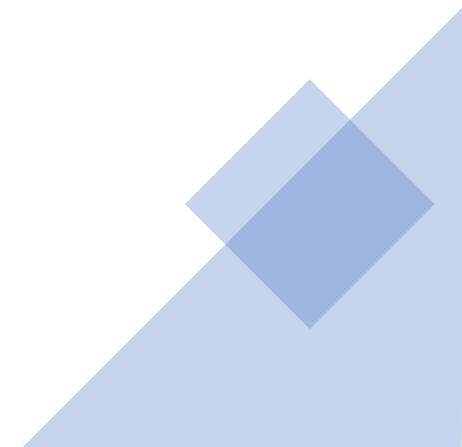
**Yvonne-Veronica Gonzalez**

Team Lead, Drinking Water Grants Program

Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water

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Phone: (202) 564-2912





# Regional Equity & Capacity Hubs (REACH) Program

Larissa Mark, PhD  
OEJ – BIL Coordinator



# What is REACH ?

- Technical Assistance program with a special emphasis on underserved communities (i.e., communities with Environmental Justice (EJ) concerns) where multiple hubs (e.g., grantees, contractors) provide support on a wide range of environmental equity, capacity, funding and training concerns.
- Depending on funding availability, multiple hubs to be deployed across the U.S. for access by communities in all states, Tribes and territories
- Hubs may be grouped by region
- Start with a set of hub locations and build out over time

# Why REACH ?

- Many stakeholders have shared ideas over the years for how to fill this longstanding need/gap in federal support
- Historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding and investments in infrastructure (approx. \$60 billion at EPA)
- Historic fiscal year 2022-2023 appropriation for EJ program at EPA
- Administration priority to advance equity and justice across this infrastructure spending
- Multiple Federal agencies and EPA programs are interested in pooling efforts to develop “one-stop shop” technical assistance (TA) programs

# Goals of REACH Program

## Meaningfully engage and collaborate

- Focus on community-driven goals and needs

## Interagency Collaboration and Coordination

- Provide federal place-based commitments and pooling of resources

## Community-centric collaborations

- Provide technical assistance to local communities and regions

# Goal 1: Meaningfully engage in Community-Driven Goals and Needs

- Deploy place-based and regional infrastructure resource opportunities.
- Hubs will proactively reach out to communities and local organizations about the services they provide and how to access those services
- Provide targeted need-based technical assistance
- Use of online tools and resources technology to facilitate access to information
- Deploy community-based engagement activities to assess project progress and community needs
  - Training
  - Tools and resources
  - Economic development support

# **Goal 2: Interagency Collaboration and Coordination**

- **Centralize participating federal partner opportunities**
- **Pool interagency technical assistance funding and resources**
- **Provide federal place-based and regional commitments**
  - Place-based interagency technical assistance
    - Include ground-floor, low-capacity assistance opportunities and training
  - Interagency funding opportunities

# Goal 3: Community-Centric Collaborations

- **Example Technical Assistance to communities and local organizations:**
  - One-on-one counseling services with communities on EJ (**free of charge**)
  - “How to” assistance on writing competitive grants
  - Financial resource management assistance
  - Community engagement
  - Tracking and analyzing results
  - Environmental justice analysis of communities (EJSCREEN analysis, on-the-ground problem site identification, and/or interviews of community residents detailing their EJ concerns)
  - Coordination and/or facilitation services for meetings between local stakeholders (community residents, local elected officials, port authority, industry, etc.)
  - Translation and interpretation services for meaningful engagement with Limited English-Speaking participants

# Short Term Outlook (Pilot)

- **In 2022, EPA plans to pilot REACH by providing funding to a handful of hubs**
  - Each of the pilot hubs would be responsible for providing technical assistance to communities and organizations on a nationwide and/or regional basis
- Timeline for release of Request for Applications (RFA): **Summer 2022**
- **Eligible entities to serve as hubs:** public/private universities, nonprofits (large), Intertribal Consortia
- **Who can receive services from REACH hubs:** All stakeholders and applicants interested in EPA grant programs, including communities, community stakeholders, nonprofits, grassroots organizations, local government entities, and state governmental entities

# Example REACH hub: Technical Assistance Hub for Communities in EPA Regions 1 and 2

- **Purpose:** Allocate EPA and BIL resources as technical assistance to communities, community organizations, and other levels of government located in EPA Regions 1 and 2
- **Areas of Service:** New England, New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, and Region 1 and 2 Tribal Nations
- **Goal:**
  - Provide capacity building resources to eligible applicant communities, especially to underserved communities and those facing EJ challenges.
  - Provide technical and financial assistance opportunities to both governmental partners and communities
  - Provide “ground floor” level assistance to lower capacity communities and partners in need (training, counseling, meeting coordination, tools and resources, capacity development and support)



# Discussion and Feedback on REACH and Access to EPA Grants

- **EPA is seeking feedback on the REACH concept prior to releasing the Request for Applications in summer 2022**
  1. What are your general impressions of the objectives of the REACH concept?
  2. Generally, what types of technical assistance services would you like to see provided by REACH hubs?
  3. What do you generally view as the most effective means of communicating with and engaging underserved and EJ communities?

# Discussion and Feedback on REACH and Access to EPA Grants cont.

4. Generally speaking, what are your thoughts on the greatest barriers and challenges facing applicants, especially those who are new to EPA programs and those from underserved and/or EJ communities, in obtaining EPA funding?
5. What are your ideas on ways EPA can invest and build trust and confidence between underserved communities and those facing EJ challenges and EPA in addressing environmental and EJ issues?
6. What are your ideas on the actions EPA could take to rectify inequalities in access to EPA grants, involvement in environmental program decision-making, and engagement with EPA on environmental and EJ issues through things such as targeted outreach, training and technical assistance?

**Please provide any written feedback and general impressions about REACH and EPA Grants to this email address: [OEJGrants@epa.gov](mailto:OEJGrants@epa.gov)**

# Engagement Session & Dialogue

## WRITE

WRITE ANY  
COMMENTS/QUESTIONS  
IN THE Q&A POD

## RAISE

WHEN PROMPTED,  
RAISE YOUR HAND TO  
ASK A QUESTION OR  
PROVIDE INPUT

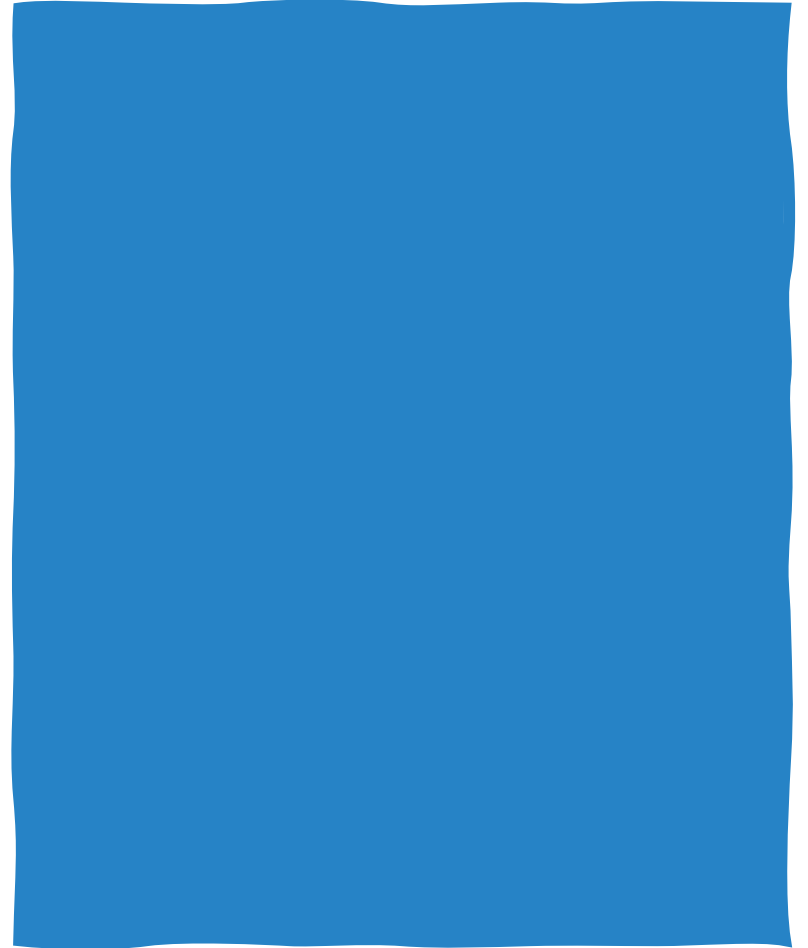
- USING A PHONE? PRESS  
\*9 TO RAISE YOUR HAND

## LIMIT

PLEASE LIMIT  
QUESTIONS OR  
COMMENTS TO 1  
MINUTE

# Upcoming Engagement and Training Opportunities

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# Closing

- ❑ **Next National EJ Community Engagement call:**
  - June 21, 2022, at 2 p.m. Eastern  
<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls>
- ❑ **Subscribe to EPA's Environmental Justice listserv:**
  - For up-to-date information about EJ funding opportunities, events, and webinars:
  - Send a blank email to: [join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov](mailto:join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov)
- ❑ **Follow us on Twitter:**
  - @EPAEnvJustice
- ❑ **Send follow-up questions or comments to:**
  - [Environmental-Justice@epa.gov](mailto:Environmental-Justice@epa.gov)

