

Assessing Perchlorate Occurrence on Ambient Waters Following the Usage of Fireworks Request for Application (RFA)

Informational Webinar Questions and Answers

August 18, 2022

Application Information

- **On an application, can there be only one principal investigator (PI) per university or only one PI for the project?**

Answer: There can be only one lead PI on the application. Other investigators who are considered to be key personnel can be listed as co-PIs or Investigators.

As stated in the RFA: “Multiple Investigator applications may be submitted as: (1) a single Lead Principal Investigator (PI) application with Co-PI(s) or (2) a Multiple PI application (with a single Contact PI). If you choose to submit a Multiple PI application, you must follow the specific instructions provided in Sections IV and V of this RFA. For further information, please see the [EPA Implementation Plan for Policy](#) on Multiple Principal Investigators.”

- **Can universities submit a joint application (e.g., from 2 universities)?**

Answer: Yes, universities can submit a joint application. One university must serve as the applicant/lead institution and the other universities would be subawardees. In addition, applicant institutions and PIs may submit more than one application if each application is significantly different.

As stated in the RFA: “Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subrecipients of the recipient (the “pass-through entity”). *Subawards* must be consistent with the definition of that term in 2 CFR 200.1 and comply with EPA’s [Subaward Policy](#). The pass-through entity that administers the grant and subawards will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 CFR 200.332, subrecipients are accountable to the pass-through entity for proper use of EPA funding.”

- **Should foreign national PIs be listed as Co-PIs or Service Providers?**

Answer: Foreign institutions cannot be the lead institution on an application, and investigators at foreign institutions cannot serve as the lead PI. Investigators at foreign institutions can participate as Co-PIs. Foreign nationals who are affiliated with an eligible American institution may serve as PIs.

- **Where can I find similar funding opportunities?**

Answer: You can search for funded grants under [research recipients](#) and [research results search pages](#). You can also find links to previous RFAs on our [Past Research Funding Opportunities page](#). To be notified of grant opportunities, please sign up for our [listserv](#). You can also search for other funding opportunities at [grants.gov](#).

- **Are there limits to how many projects a faculty member can join?**

Answer: No.

As stated in the RFA, "If you wish to submit applications for more than one STAR funding opportunity you must ensure that the research proposed in each application is significantly different from any other that has been submitted to the EPA or from any other financial assistance you are currently receiving from the EPA or other federal government agency."

- **What is the difference between fellowship application and federal application?**

Answer: A fellowship is to support a student's academic education, not to support research per se. The fellowship award pays their tuition. We do not have a fellowship program at this time. This grant is supplying an award to a university or non-profit organization for support research and not directly funding a student.

- **Is there a page limit for the research plan?**

Answer: The research plan should not exceed fifteen pages. Appendices may be included but must remain within the 15-page limit.

- **Can the research focus on foreign populations?**

Answer: Research on foreign populations is allowed as long as the results of research under this RFA benefit the U.S. and are applicable/transferrable across the U.S.

- **Would a proposal addressing only one state, or a limited region be considered competitive?**

Answer: As described under Research Area 1, research should cover a wide range of waterbody types, precipitation levels and environments across the United States. While we do not expect research in all areas of the U.S., your application should describe how information from one area is transferrable to other areas across U.S.

- **How will EPA choose awardees?**

Answer: Eligible applicants are evaluated through a two stage competitive review processes, including an external peer review to evaluate scientific merit and an internal relevancy review to evaluate relevance/responsiveness. Final funding decisions are made by the EPA selection official based on the results of the review panels, past-performance history review, and the evaluation of the Scientific Data Management Plan. In addition, in making the final funding decisions, the selection official may also consider program balance and available funds. Please see section V. of the RFA for more information on the application review process.

- **Can you address this issue of "cooperative agreements" versus conventional grants? How will EPA determine when to fund as a cooperative agreement?**

Answer: Applications will be funded as grants. After the award is made, if there is a need from the grantee that EPA can address, and there is capacity and interest within EPA to collaborate, then EPA will consider a request to convert the grant to a cooperative agreement.

- **Is cost-sharing required?**

Answer: No, cost sharing is not required.

- **Will this be only one grant awarded to an entity, with maximum \$2.5M awarded, for a max duration of 3 years? Any chance more than one award may be made?**

Answer: As stated in the RFA, "It is anticipated that a total of approximately \$2.5 million will be awarded under this announcement, depending on the availability of funds, quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. The EPA anticipates funding 1 award under this RFA. Requests for amounts in excess of a total of \$2.5 million per award, including direct and indirect costs, will not be considered. The total project period requested in an application submitted for this RFA may not exceed 3 years.

The EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards under this RFA. The EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection decisions.

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund an application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process. Awards may be fully or incrementally funded, as appropriate, based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.”

Research Projects

- **Could you explain your definition of 'analytical models', i.e. what are you expecting as for level of detail?**

Answer: The objective of developing analytical models described under research area 2, is to produce a model that simulates perchlorate transport through a watershed so that levels of perchlorate can be estimated at points downstream. The level of detail in the model should allow utilities and states to estimate perchlorate concentrations (in ug/L) along with timing of those concentrations in various areas of water bodies used as drinking water sources.

- **Has consideration been given about the distance from the fireworks and the water source?**

Answer: Yes, one aspect of Research Area 1 is gaining new information on spatial patterns of perchlorate at different points downstream from perchlorate sources. Complex atmospheric modeling from distant sources is not a major focus and would need to be relatively simplistic. However, different variables listed in the RFA in waterbodies close to where fireworks are used likely control perchlorate attenuation (e.g., dilution/dispersion, temperature) so those aspects will most likely also be important factors in determining perchlorate fate and transport.

- **Can I use runoff sampling?**

Answer: Yes, if fireworks are used in neighborhoods or areas with impervious surfaces, runoff sampling may be useful to evaluate how and at what concentration, perchlorate is transported by stormwater runoff to water bodies.

- **Given what we know about the fate and transport of perchlorate, would we need an East and West Coast project?**

Answer: Depending on your research, we want to make sure the information is transferable to other areas across the U.S. while taking different environments into account.

Eligibility

- **Are small businesses or for-profit firms eligible to apply? Are they eligible to receive subawards?**

Answer: No, small businesses are not eligible to apply and may not be a subawardee. Small businesses should consider applying for the Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIR)

(<https://www.epa.gov/sbir>). If you are interested in doing business with EPA, please read [Resources for Small Businesses](#).

As stated in the RFA: “Profit-making firms and individuals are not eligible to apply. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable. The regulations at 2 CFR 1500.10 contain limitations on the extent to which EPA funds may be used to compensate individual consultants. Refer to the [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#) for guidance on competitive procurement requirements and consultant compensation. Do not name a procurement contractor (including a consultant) as a “partner” or otherwise in your application unless the contractor has been selected in compliance with competitive procurement requirements.”

- **Can a single state agency or group of agencies apply?**

Answer: State and local government agencies may apply and may serve as subawardee organizations. There is no limit to the number of state and local government agencies that may receive subawards.

As stated in the RFA: “Public and private nonprofit institutions/organizations, public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), and hospitals located in the U.S. and its territories or possessions; state and local governments; Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments; and U.S. territories or possessions are eligible to apply. Profit-making firms and individuals are not eligible to apply”

- **Can international organizations apply?**

Answer: Foreign entities are not eligible to apply to this funding opportunity. However, foreign universities and non-profit organizations may be subawardees to an eligible U.S.-based institution.

- **Are international students eligible to apply for EPA's research funding?**

Answer: Universities not located in the U.S. cannot apply for this research grant. However, funding awarded to eligible U.S. institutions through this RFA can be used to support the research of students enrolled in a university outside the U.S. if they are a subawardee listed on the application. Foreign students legally present in the United States and enrolled in an eligible U.S. institution may be supported by research funds if their university is awarded a grant.

- **Can researchers outside the U.S. participate by partnering with U.S.-based PIs?**

Answer: Yes, universities outside the U.S. can participate as a subawardee.

- **Can an EPA employee be part of the application as a co-PI or advisor?**

Answer: No, EPA employees are not allowed to participate in any application. In addition, letters of support or intent from EPA employees are prohibited; however, Federal employees from other agencies may submit letters of support or intent.

- **Can individuals from academia partner with other consultants?**

Answer: A lead institution from academia may propose consultants in their application, but the grant recipient must follow the competitive procurement procedures described in the RFA. Consultants are not to be listed as PIs or co-PIs.

As stated in the RFA: “Any procurement of services from individual consultants or commercial firms (including space for workshops) must comply with the competitive procurement requirements of 2 CFR Part 200.317-200.327. Please see <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses> for more details. EPA provides detailed guidance on procurement requirements in the Agency’s [Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).”

- **Can research university employees with federal government affiliation serve as key personnel on a project?**

Answer: Federal employees are not allowed to participate as PIs in any application.

As stated in the RFA: “Federal employees are not eligible to serve in a principal leadership role on an assistance agreement. Federal employees may not receive salaries or augment their Agency’s appropriations through awards made under this program unless authorized by law to receive such funding.

The applicant institution may enter into an agreement with a Federal Agency to purchase or utilize unique supplies or services unavailable in the private sector to the extent authorized by law. Examples are purchase of satellite data, chemical reference standards, analyses, or use of instrumentation or other facilities not available elsewhere. A written justification for federal involvement must be included in the application. In addition, an appropriate form of assurance that documents the commitment, such as a letter of intent from the Federal Agency involved, should be included.”

Peer Review

- **Are there any minimum requirements for a peer reviewer?**

Answer: Peer reviewers should have a depth of experience in at least one of the research areas of the RFA. The panel will be composed of experts with a variety of expertise and cannot be directly or financially involved or have certain other types of conflict of interest with a submitted application. Peer reviewers also cannot be EPA employees. If you are interested in becoming peer reviewer, please contact Julie Wanslow (wanslow.julie@epa.gov).

- **Can we be involved with an application as well as be involved in peer-review?**

Answer: No. Peer reviewers cannot be directly or financially involved with any application or have a certain type of conflict of interest with a submitted application, including submitting a letter of support or intent. If someone else from your institution is applying for the grant, and you do not otherwise have a conflict of interest with this application, you can still be a peer reviewer; however, you cannot participate in discussions involving that application.

SAM.gov/Grants.gov

- **What is SAM.gov?**

Answer: The System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is an official website of the U.S. Government. There is no cost to use SAM.gov. You can use this site to:

- Register to do business with the U.S. Government
- Update, renew, or check the status of your entity registration

- Search for entity registration and exclusion records
- Search for assistance listings (formerly CFDA.gov), wage determinations (formerly WDOL.gov), contract opportunities (formerly FBO.gov), and contract data reports (formerly part of FPDS.gov).
- View and submit BioPreferred and Service Contract Reports
- Access publicly available award data via data extracts and system accounts

All applicant institutions must have SAM.gov registration “Active” prior to submitting applications via Grants.gov. Otherwise, Grants.gov will not accept the application. Not having a SAM.gov registration active is not considered a valid reason to have a late submission to our grant programs.

- **Are SAM.gov registrations required for individual PIs or their institutions?**

Answer: For the purposes of this funding opportunity, applicant institutions are required to be registered in Sam.gov, not individuals. If you have further questions or need assistance with the SAM.gov registration process, please contact Debra Jones (jones.debram@epa.gov)

- **If non-governmental organizations are co-PIs, do they need to be registered at SAM.gov?**

Answer: No, organizations of co-PIs do not have to be registered. Only the lead institution submitting the application needs to be registered at SAM.gov.

- **What if I have technical difficulties with submitting my application through Grants.gov?**

Answer: All applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. EPA will make decisions concerning acceptance of each application submitted outside of Grants.gov on a case-by-case basis. EPA will only consider accepting applications that were unable to submit through Grants.gov due to Grants.gov or relevant SAM.gov system issues or for unforeseen exigent circumstances, such as extreme weather interfering with internet access. Failure of an applicant to submit prior to the application submission deadline date because they did not properly or timely register in SAM.gov or Grants.gov is not an acceptable reason to justify acceptance of an application outside of Grants.gov.

If you are experiencing problems resulting in an inability to upload the application to Grants.gov, it is essential to call Grants.gov for assistance at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov before the application deadline. Be sure to obtain a case number from Grants.gov. Report this information to Debra Jones (jones.debram@epa.gov) before the close of the funding opportunity.

Budget

- **What can the budget go towards? How does budget justification work?**

Answer: Grant funds can be used to cover costs for personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, other, and indirect costs. The budget justification should identify the amount requested for each of the above budget category (i.e., categories in Section B of SF-424A) and describe the basis for calculating the total request in each budget category. Please refer the RFA or contact the Technical Contact listed in the RFA for more guidance.

- **How can the budget go towards subawards?**

Answer: Subawards, such as those with other universities or nonprofit research institutions for members of the research team, should be included in the “other” category. The budget justification should provide the total costs proposed for subawards as a separate line item in the budget justification and brief description of the activities to be supported for each subaward or types of subawards if the subrecipients have not been identified. Subawards may not be used to acquire services from consultants or commercial firms.