



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACADEMY

Strengthening Communities from Within



2023/24 APPLICATION



Hosted by:

U.S. EPA Region 5,
The Kapal Foundation, and Southern Illinois
University Edwardsville

Overview

Application Opening Date:	September 15th, 2023
Application Closing Date:	March 1st, 2024
Program Dates:	March 2024 – January 2025

Who May Apply:

Age 16 and older, community, non-profit and environmental leaders who are engaged and active in their communities and have a vested interest in improving the overall quality of their community. Generally, applicants must live or work in the Metro East, IL area.

For application assistance, email R5environmentaljustice@epa.gov. Information sessions schedule will take place on the following dates:

Date	Time (Eastern)
Monday, September 20 th , 2023	6:00 – 7:00 p.m. CDT
Wednesday, September 27 th , 2023	11:00-12:00 p.m. CDT

Attending the information sessions is optional and not required when applying to this program. Recordings of the virtual information session are available on our website <https://www.epa.gov/il/ej-academy>

Program Focus:

Through a series of nine modules, the Environmental Justice Academy (EJ Academy) will cultivate skills so that participants may successfully identify their environmental challenges and accomplish their communities' environmental improvement goals. Through the participation and cooperation of residents, EJ organizations, and grassroots community organizations, the EJ Academy will encourage collaborative problem solving with local government, small businesses, academic institutions, and industry, to create a shared vision among different stakeholders so that all who are a part of the community can have a voice. The EJ Academy is primarily based on EPA's Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Model, which is a seven-step process for bringing about positive change and community revitalization by having community leaders, community members, and their stakeholders working together. More information on the CPS Model can be found in the [EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model](#).

The teachings of the EJ Academy will focus on showing what is working well, analyzing why it is working well, and then doing more of it.

The main topics addressed in each module include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Setting goals
2. Advocating for your community
3. Dealing with differences
4. Partnering and leveraging resources
5. Identifying financial sources
6. Sustaining organizational efforts
7. Assessing progress

Program Goals:

- Gain a basic understanding of environmental justice - its principles, concepts, and history.
- Find and address communities' environmental; public health; equity; and/or revitalization concerns using tools and other resources.
- Learn how to leverage human, social, and financial resources to make long-term progress in communities.
- Understand how to use consensus-building processes and skills to help ensure successful collaboration and negotiations.
- Apply knowledge on environmental regulations and policies to determine the best approach to address environmental challenges.
- Gain an understanding of key steps in conducting an evaluation of progress and efforts, as well as developing evaluation plans, designing logic models and documenting program efforts.

Benefits from Participating in the EJ Academy:

As a result of participating in the EJ Academy, participants will receive the following benefits:

- Complete a community portfolio, which will assist in securing funding, identifying partners, describing community resources and challenges, and establishing credibility amongst stakeholders.

- Complete a plan that will guide organizational activities, indicate who has responsibility for completing those activities, by when, and what they intend to accomplish through those activities.
- Identify and secure potential partners to assist them with addressing their challenges.
- Interact directly with technical experts from EPA and other organizations.
- Network with other community leaders and establish mutually beneficial relationships.
- Receive individualized feedback monthly from experts who will provide guidance and assistance on homework assignments and the development of the portfolio contents.

Responsibilities of Selected Participants:

Commitment of Time and Attendance:

To graduate, participants enrolled in the EJ Academy must attend at least eight of the nine sessions, and complete all assignments included in each module, including a portfolio. Participants will receive homework assignments to be completed outside of the sessions.

Program sessions will be conducted in a hybrid setting, and generally be held each month. A Virtual session will be conducted Wednesdays from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm CT, and in-person session on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm CT at the East St. Louis Kappa House, in East St. Louis, Il. Meals and refreshments will be provided. The session schedule is as follows:

- **Module 1:**
 - In-person Session: Saturday, March 23rd 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, March 27th 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- **Module 2:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, April 24th, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - In-person Session: Saturday, April 27th, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 3:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, May 15th, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - In-person Session: Saturday, May 18th, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 4:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, June 26th, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

- In-person Session: Saturday, June 29th, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 5:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, July 31st, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - In-person Session: Saturday, August 3rd, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 6:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, September 11th, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - In-person Session: Saturday, September 14th, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 7:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, October 9th, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - In-person Session: Saturday, October 12th, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 8:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, November 6th, 2024. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - In-person Session: Saturday, November 9th, 2024. 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Module 9 & Graduation:**
 - Virtual Session: Wednesday, January 8th, 2025. 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
 - Optional In-person Commencement Activity: Friday, January 10th, 2025 Time TBD.
 - In-person Session and Graduation Ceremony: Saturday, January 11th, 2025. 10 am to 4 pm.

Participants will be notified in advance of session schedule and location changes. If a participant is absent from a session, they will be responsible for acquiring the information covered during the modules, in addition to completing the assignments that were given. Assignments may require use of a computer and the internet; however, not having access to these tools will not impact your ability to be selected for the program. By applying, the applicant agrees to adhere to the terms described above if they are selected for the program. Participants handle their own lodging and transportation. Transportation stipends and aid may be available upon request.

Homework Assignments:

After each module, participants will be given an assignment that is to be completed before the next session. The purpose of these assignments is to reinforce what participants learned during the session and give them a viable way to apply those lessons in their community. These assignments will serve as the groundwork for their portfolio.

Community Portfolio:

The portfolio will be a compilation of materials, in a binder, that exemplifies the community's beliefs, skills, qualifications, challenges, partnerships, and other critical information that will define the purpose and practices of the community, the organization and its members. The portfolio contents will be derived from each session's activities and homework assignments and will be compiled by the participant as a representation of their capability and capacity to be used when meeting with potential partners and benefactors.

Technical Assistance Consultations:

Participants will have access to technical assistance consultations. The consultations will be facilitated by experts who will help clarify any questions regarding homework assignments and course materials. These consultations are scheduled per participant request, as needed.

Accountability Partners:

Participants will be paired at the beginning of the program based on several different criteria. The expectation is that partners will work together on assignments and activities throughout the program, keep each other on track to complete those assignments, and to provide a mutually beneficial and motivational relationship.

How to Apply:

Each applicant must submit a **completed application package** which consists of the following:

- Applicant Information Form (Part A)
- Responses to the essay questions (Part B)
- One Letter of Recommendation

Applications:

The application is contained in this packet. To be considered for selection, applications must be sent by 11:59 pm CT, March 1st to R5 Environmental Justice (R5environmentaljustice@epa.gov). If you need other accommodations, please email Alexa Burnett, (burnett.alex@epa.gov).

This a fillable PDF document. Once you have filled it out, please save as a PDF titled "Application: *Your First Name and Last Name*" (i.e., "Application: Jane Smith") and submit via email to R5 Environmental Justice (R5environmentaljustice@epa.gov). Both the application and letter of recommendation should be submitted at the same time. The letter of recommendations can be in any document format (Word, PDF, images, etc). If preferred, applicants may submit assessment answers as a separate document with their application and letter of recommendation.

Selection Process

- A review panel made up of local Advisory Committee members will rate and rank candidates' applications based on responses to the assessment questions in Part B. Each question will be scored up to 20 points.
- The top 30 applications will be submitted for a second round of further review. From these 30, the final 20-25 participants will be selected. The remaining 5-10 applicants will be placed on a waiting list should any of the originally selected participants choose to no longer partake in the EJ Academy.
- All participants will be notified whether they were selected via e-mail or by mail.

Please note: Each application will be assigned a letter and a number (A1, A2, A3, etc.). This is to assure anonymity and fairness during the process. The review panel will not have access to Part A of the application package.

For More Information, contact:

Alexa Burnett (burnett.alex@epa.gov)
Environmental Justice Academy Healthy Communities
Team
Region 5 – US Environmental Protection Agency

Environmental Justice Academy

Participant Application

Part A

Applicant Information		
Full Name: _____		
<i>First</i>	<i>M.I.</i>	<i>Last</i>
Address: _____		
<i>Street Address</i>		<i>Apt/Unit #</i>
<i>City:</i>	<i>State:</i>	<i>ZIP Code:</i>
Phone: _____		
Best Time to Contact: _____		
Email Address: _____		
Name of the organization/community represented		
<p>Please answer the questions below and note that these answers will not affect your application scoring:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have a reliable mode of transportation? Please indicate the method of transportation below. 		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Will you need childcare provided to attend in-person sessions? 		

3. Do you have access to reliable internet service and access to a computer?

If any of the above items are not easily accessible, accommodations may be available. Reach out to R5environmentaljustice@epa.gov for more information.

By checking this box, you acknowledge that as an Environmental Justice Academy participant, you are expected to attend 8 out of 9 modules to successfully complete this certification. Each module consists of a virtual and in-person session.

Part B

Assessment Questions

Provide brief responses to the five Assessment Questions that follow. Due to resource constraints, only the first 200 words of each response will be reviewed. Each question is worth up to a total of 20 points. The total possible score is 100 points.

1	Describe the community, organization, or population you would represent as a participant in the Environmental Justice Academy.
2	What are the most critical environmental challenges facing your community and what do you believe can be done to resolve these challenges? Note: Environmental challenges may include “the natural environment” or “the built environment”.
3	Describe your involvement and activities within the community you would represent as an Environmental Justice Academy Fellow.
4	What leadership skills/qualities do you offer that: 1) Benefit the community in which you work, and 2) You would like to develop further?
5	What do you hope to gain from your Environmental Justice Academy experience that would benefit the community you represent?