

**Hydrofluorocarbon Reclaim and Innovative Destruction Grants:
General Competition
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
EPA-R-OAR-HFC-24-01
Questions and Answers as of February 7, 2024**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is accepting applications for funding under the Hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) Reclaim and Innovative Destruction grants competition (EPA-R-OAR-HFC-24-01).

The Notice of Funding Opportunity and all application forms are available at [grants.gov](https://www.epa.gov/grants). The deadline to apply is February 16, 2024, at 11:59 pm ET.

The EPA hosted a Funding Opportunity Information Session on December 7, 2023. The slides from this presentation are available online. This document includes the questions asked during this session. Questions marked **NEW** or **UPDATED** have been added or revised since the last posting of the Questions and Answers document.

EPA Grant Resources:

Information about EPA Grants [\[https://www.epa.gov/grants\]](https://www.epa.gov/grants)

Grants training available [\[https://www.epa.gov/grants/recipient-training-opportunities\]](https://www.epa.gov/grants/recipient-training-opportunities)

Contents

I. Application Process and Timeline	2
II. General Questions	4
III. Eligible Entities	6
IV. Eligible Projects	7
V. Funding	10

I. Application Process and Timeline

Question 1: *What is the application deadline for the HFC Reclaim and Innovative Destruction Grants?*

Answer 1: Applications for the HFC grants (EPA-R-OAR-HFC-24-01) are due February 16, 2024, at 11:59 P.M. Eastern.

Question 2: *Do I have to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Apply? What information is required for submitting a Notice of Intent to Apply? Will EPA provide any feedback in response to a NOI?*

Answer 2: To allow for efficient management of the competitive process, the EPA requests submittal of an optional informal Notice of Intent (NOI) to Apply by December 15, 2023, to HFCgrants@epa.gov. This is a process management tool that will allow the EPA to better anticipate the total staff time required for efficient review, evaluation, and selection of submitted applications. The submission of a Notice of Intent should contain:

- Information about the applicant including name of the organization and contact details;
- Identification of the type of project that will be submitted in the application (see Section I.B);
- The amount of funds that will be requested; and
- A brief description of no more than five sentences of the project.

The EPA will not be able to provide feedback in response to an NOI but will acknowledge receipt of submitted NOIs via email.

Question 3: *Will a list of organizations that have submitted NOIs be released?*

Answer 3: The EPA will not publish a list of organizations that submit NOIs.

Question 4: *How many applications can an eligible entity submit?*

Answer 4: As described in Section II.B of the NOFO (page 14), each applicant can submit up to a total of three applications. Applicants may participate in more than one coalition but may only serve as lead applicant for one coalition.

Question 5: *Can an eligible entity submit one application per project area?*

Answer 5: Yes. Each applicant can submit up to three applications, and each application may only address one of the three project areas described in the NOFO. Applications that address more than one project area will be rejected.

Question 6: *What is the timeframe for the grants? How much time will a grantee have to complete the projects?*

Answer 6: The estimated period of performance for awards resulting from this solicitation will be up to five years. The estimated project start date for awards is Fall 2024. See Section II.G (page 15) of the NOFO.

Question 7: *Will the grant require matching funds?*

Answer 7: As explained in Section III.B of the NOFO (page 16), no cost sharing or matching funds are required as a condition of eligibility under this competition.

Question 8: *Will the EPA offer additional rounds of funding?*

Answer 8: At this time, the EPA plans to award all available grant funds (totaling \$14.25 million) by Summer 2024. No additional rounds of HFC reclaim and innovative destruction funding are anticipated.

Question 9 (NEW): *How will my application be evaluated? Should I strive to get as many points as possible for each evaluation criterion?*

Answer 9: Yes, you should strive to write a detailed and compelling response to each evaluation criterion, which will earn you more points. As described in Section V.B of the NOFO (page 39), applications will be compared based on their point scores as well as the Other Criteria under Section V.C of the NOFO (page 40).

Question 10 (NEW): *Can I include additional attachments to my application and does that count against the page limit?*

Answer 10: As described in Section IV.C of the NOFO (page 23):

The project narrative, including the cover page, workplan, and budget table and detail, must not exceed a maximum of 15 single-spaced typewritten pages. Pages in excess of the 15-page limit will not be reviewed.

Supporting materials, such as project team biographies, partnership letters, Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) or Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJSCREEN) reports, and negotiated indirect cost rate agreements can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 15-page limit. Supporting materials should also be submitted using the *Optional Attachments* form, as described in Section IV.B. above.

Additionally, applicants may need to submit a Scientific Data Management Plan (see Section IV.E of the NOFO (page 35)) which is “in addition to any application page limits described in Section IV of this NOFO that apply to other parts of the application package.”

Additional supporting materials in excess of the 15-page limit should not be included and will not be reviewed.

Question 11 (NEW): *What are the competition requirements for for-profit companies that participate in an application? For example, if an eligible entity intended to partner with or subcontract with one or more for-profit firms as part of the application, should those firms be included in the application as part*

of the partnership, or would the eligible entity be required to “compete” the applicants for the partnership?

Answer: The NOFO states (page 35) that “any contracts for services or products funded with the EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 CFR Part 200 and/or 2 CFR Part 1500, as applicable,” and to “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.” Additionally, the NOFO (pages 1-2) states that:

“The EPA does not require nor encourage applicants to name procurement contractors (including consultants) or subrecipients in applications for grant funding. However, if you intend to name a contractor (including an individual consultant or equipment vendor) or a subrecipient as a project partner or otherwise in your application, the EPA recommends that you carefully review, and comply with, the directions contained in the “Contracts and Subawards” clause at the [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#). Refer to the [EPA’s Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#), the [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#), and supplemental Frequent Questions for additional guidance. Applicants must demonstrate that named contractors (including individual consultants and equipment vendors) were selected in compliance with the competitive requirements of the Procurement Standards in 2 CFR Part 200 as interpreted in EPA guidance and/or that named subrecipients meet the eligibility requirements in the EPA’s Subaward Policy for the EPA to consider their qualifications and role in the proposed project.”

II. General Questions

Question 1: *How can potential grant applicants learn more?*

Answer 1:

- Watch the Informational Webinar: On December 7, 2023, the EPA hosted a webinar to discuss this NOFO. The [recording](#) and presentation (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) have been posted, and the questions asked during the session will be answered in this document.
- Review this Questions and Answers document. These will be updated weekly until February 2, 2024.
- Email a question to the EPA: Applicants may email questions to HFCGrants@epa.gov. Questions must be submitted by email before February 2, 2024.

Question 2: *Do these competitive grants relate to the small business grants described in Section (h) of the American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act?*

Answer 2: These are distinct programs. Subsection (h)(5) of the AIM Act includes a grant program “for the purchase of new specialized equipment for the recycling, recovery, or reclamation of a substitute for a regulated substance.” Congress has not appropriated funding for this grant program to date. Under a separate authority, the Inflation Reduction Act provides funding for the implementation of the AIM Act, including approximately \$15 million for competitive grants for reclaim and innovative destruction technologies.

Question 3: *Will the attendee list of the webinar be posted?*

Answer 3: The EPA will not post a list of attendees.

Question 4: *Can the EPA provide an example of meaningful involvement of a disadvantaged community in the grant process?*

Answer 4: As explained in Section I.V.C of the NOFO (pages 26-27), there are many ways to engage in meaningful community involvement. Examples of meaningful community involvement could include, but are not limited to:

- Developing an outreach and engagement strategy;
- Promoting the use of a wide variety of techniques to create early, frequent, and continuing opportunities for community engagement;
- Creating a transparent planning process that also provides opportunity for early risk mitigation;
- Holding community consultations or public input meetings;
- Providing a publicly accessible list of all upcoming community engagement opportunities (e.g., listening sessions, outreach, questions and answers sessions, door-to-door visits, and community meetings);
- Creating a community work group or advisory board made up of community members;
- Including community-elected member(s) on the planning and project team; and/or,
- Getting community feedback on local benefits and prioritizing what they value most.

Question 5 (NEW): What environmental justice considerations should HFC reclaim and innovative destruction technology projects incorporate into their design and implementation?

Answer 5: Applicants should consider how they will meaningfully engage with any low-income and disadvantaged communities surrounding the project area during project development and implementation to identify their concerns and priorities, as described in Question 4.

To identify low-income and disadvantaged communities, applicants may consider using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>) and/or the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen)(<https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>).

In addition, applicants should consider how to mitigate potential harms that may stem from project design or implementation. To the EPA's knowledge, HFCs are not a local pollutant and have low toxicity to humans, so direct health impacts from reclaim and/or destruction projects are expected to be relatively minimal. However, applicants should consider potential secondary impacts from increased reclamation and/or destruction of HFCs. Some of those potential harms could include: emission of unintended byproducts, changes in land use (e.g., construction of facilities on or near farmland), vehicle emissions associated with transportation of materials in and out of facilities, as well as associated noise and light disturbances, and the cumulative effect of a combination of these harms on communities. Applicants should consider how to address those potential harms in project design and implementation.

Finally, applicants could consider how their project benefits might flow to disadvantaged communities in the project area. This could include offering training, workforce development and job opportunities for local community members, and partnering with local entities (e.g., community-based organizations, small businesses, non-profits, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions, etc.) through subawards or contracts (as appropriate) to implement parts of a proposed project.

Question 6: *Is there a more specific definition for “unwanted HFCs”?*

Answer 6: For purposes of this NOFO, the EPA considers HFCs “unwanted” when they are too contaminated to be reclaimed or are no longer in use.

III. Eligible Entities

Question 1: *Who is eligible to apply for these grants?*

Answer 1: As described in Section III.A of the NOFO (page 15), eligible entities include states (including the District of Columbia); local governments, U.S. territories and possessions; Indian Tribes; public universities and colleges, hospitals, and laboratories; and other public or private non-profit institutions.

Question 2: *Are there any restrictions on the size and type of coalition I can organize for a grant?*

Answer 2: As explained in Section IV.D of the NOFO (page 35), groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this NOFO; 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 the [EPA’s Subaward Policy](#).

Question 3: *Are for-profit entities eligible to apply for HFC Reclaim and Innovative Destruction grants? In what ways can a for-profit entity participate in a grant project? Can a for-profit entity be a consultant or receive a sub-award?*

Answer 3: (UPDATED) For-profit entities are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity or receive a subaward (see page 7 of the NOFO: “for-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards under this grant program but may receive procurement contracts”). However, there are circumstances in which a for-profit entity may participate in a grant.

A for-profit entity may participate in a HFC Reclaim and Innovative Destruction Grant if the grant recipient chooses to contract work out to the for-profit entity. A contract (as described in [2 CFR § 200.331](#)) is for the purpose of obtaining goods and services for the grant recipient’s own use and creates a procurement relationship with the contractor. Grant recipients that enter into procurement contracts must comply with the applicable procurement provisions in [2 CFR § 200.317 through 200.327](#). For example, an eligible applicant could hire a for-profit company to provide technical support on how potential new technologies could be implemented in their operations. As noted in [2 CFR § 200.319](#), the example procurement would likely require a fair and open competition. Please see [EPA’s Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#).

Question 4: *What is the definition of an applicant? Do individual researchers at a university count as an applicant or the university itself?*

Answer 4: For the purposes of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the “applicant” is considered the eligible entity as described in Section III.A (page 15) that is submitting the application. Individuals are not eligible entities under this NOFO.

Question 5: *Can Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) submit proposals? What will the funding mechanism be for this grant program?*

Answer 5: FFRDCs may be eligible to apply as long as they can meet the requirements of one of the eligible entities listed in Section III.A. of the NOFO, but it depends on the organizational structure of the FFRDC. Please reach out to HFCgrants@epa.gov for your individual situation. The funding mechanism will be a federal grant.

Question 6: *Can universities apply?*

Answer 6: Universities are eligible entities and can apply for this funding opportunity.

Question 7 (NEW): *Can for-profit companies that have operations abroad apply for this funding opportunity?*

Answer: For-profit companies are not eligible entities under this NOFO, including those that are doing work outside of the United States. Please see Question 3 in this Section for additional information.

IV. Eligible Projects

Question 1: *What sort of project is the EPA looking to fund under this opportunity? Is my project a good fit?*

Answer 1: The EPA is not able to review, meet with applicants, or comment on pre-application concepts or materials. The [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) on the grant [website](#) has a lot of information that should be helpful in determining the types of projects that would be a good fit for this opportunity. For example, Section I.A, B, and C (“Background and Summary,” Program Goals and Objectives,” and “Environmental Results and Strategic Plan Information,” pages 5-12) contain background on HFCs as well as potential project outputs and outcomes and some example projects provided for illustrative purposes. Competitive applications would need to demonstrate how they are advancing the goals of HFC reclaim and innovative destruction through the proposed project activities described in the NOFO (i.e., reclaim technology; reclaim market dynamics; innovative destruction technologies). In addition, Section III.A (page 15) on eligible entities, is particularly important to review before applying, as well as the evaluation criteria in Section V.A.

Question 2: *What kinds of projects can Tribes propose or participate in?*

Answer 2: Federally recognized Tribes are eligible entities for award under this program. Additionally, there is a Tribal set-aside of \$1.5 million. Tribes can propose projects in any of the three project areas (i.e., reclaim technologies; reclaim market dynamics; innovative destruction technologies). Additionally, Tribes can partner with other eligible entities in a coalition proposal as described in Section IV.D (page

35). Finally, in Section I.E “Minority Serving Institutions,” (page 12) Tribal universities who have research capacity focused on HFC reclaim or destruction are encouraged to apply for this opportunity.

Question 3: *Can applicants ask specific chemistry questions via email?*

Answer 3: The EPA may respond to specific chemistry questions via email. However, the EPA is not able to review, meet with applicants, or comment on pre-application concepts or materials.

Question 4: *Are indirect costs allowed?*

Answer 4: Indirect costs are typically allowable as part of an indirect cost rate. Please see the Section 8.A “Budget Detail” section of the NOFO (page 32) which describes indirect cost rate. Additional indirect cost guidance is available in [RAIN-2018-G02, “Indirect Cost Guidance for Recipients of EPA Assistance Agreements.”](#)

Question 5: *Does the technology have to be new or can it be existing (i.e., enhance an existing technology that works and promotes reclamation)?*

Answer 5: The expansion of an existing technology is not considered innovative for purposes of this funding opportunity. The EPA is interested in projects that advance “innovative technologies or innovative deployment of technologies to destroy unusable and/or unwanted HFCs” (p. 6 of NOFO) which includes, for example, projects that “advance knowledge and technical capacity for innovative HFC destruction technologies and/or innovative deployment of HFC destruction technologies” (p. 8 of NOFO).

Question 6: *Are projects eligible that are focused on research/development of new destruction technologies that are at early Technology Readiness Level (TRL) and not at the pilot stage, particularly if they use some similar methods to approved technologies?*

Answer 6: Regarding early-stage TRL, the NOFO states on page 25 (Section IV.C, (2) Workplan, Section 2.a) that “this NOFO will prioritize HFC technology that is ready to be validated and demonstrated outside the lab. Projects with a lower TRL may not be rated as highly as those with a higher TRL.” How a proposal ranks relative to other proposals will be dependent on what eligible proposals the EPA receives; while early-stage TRL projects are a lower priority, it is still possible that they may receive awards, based on the number and merit of eligible applications the EPA receives. Please also review the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. for additional information.

Regarding approved technologies, applications must meet the Section III.C Threshold Criteria of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), including the sixth point on page 17:

Applications that propose projects under innovative destruction technologies must demonstrate that their proposed technologies will use one of the approved technologies listed at [40 CFR §84.29](#). Applications must include the name of the destruction technology as listed in [40 CFR §84.29](#) and the HFCs they intend to destroy.

Applicants should ensure their proposed technologies have been approved by the EPA and are capable of either destroying HFCs at a Destruction Removal Efficiency (DRE) of at least 99.99 percent or

converting them into non-regulated substances. See the Federal Register notice concerning this [here](#).

Question 7: *Are HFC recycling projects an option?*

Answer 7: HFC recycling and HFC reclamation are two different processes. Reclamation requires bringing an HFC back to the purity standard required under AHRI 700-2016. Recycling is typically done on-site and does not have the same purity standards, and therefore is distinct from reclamation. Consistent with the Inflation Reduction Act's direction that these grants be for "reclaim and innovative destruction technologies," the EPA's understanding of the intent of the statute for this grant program is to fund projects which advance HFC reclamation, not recycling.

Question 8: *Are projects that use new chemistry dealing with upcycling or using/converting the fluoro compound into something else that has no or much less global warming potential eligible under this opportunity under the umbrella of destruction?*

Answer 8: For details about what is considered destruction, please review pages 5-6 of the NOFO, which state in part:

"Destruction" is defined in [40 CFR §84.3](#) as the expiration of a regulated substance to the destruction and removal efficiency actually achieved. Such destruction might result in a commercially useful end product, but such usefulness would be secondary to the act of destruction. As part of these competitive grants, the EPA will only fund projects that advance or innovatively deploy the technologies listed in [40 CFR §84.29](#).

Approved destruction technologies (described on page 6) must be "capable of either destroying HFCs at a destruction removal efficiency of at least 99.99 percent or converting them into non-regulated substances." Additionally, "innovative technologies are those that demonstrate efficacy in destroying HFCs and are not yet widely available, particularly in the United States (e.g., chemical conversion or portable plasma arc)."

Question 9: *Do you have examples of any projects that the EPA or others have funded in this sector via other grants in the past?*

Answer 9: No. These grants under the Inflation Reduction Act are new to the EPA.

Question 10 (NEW): *Can the project proposal demonstrate newer destruction technologies or diagnostics?*

Answer 10: Please see the response to Question 8 in Section IV above on destruction technologies. As stated in the NOFO, the EPA is looking for innovative technologies that "demonstrate efficacy in destroying HFCs and are not yet widely available, particularly in the United States (e.g., chemical conversion or portable plasma arc)" (page 6).

Regarding diagnostics, in this context, the EPA understands diagnostics to mean laser-based analytic instruments to optimize the repurposing of refrigerants during destruction and reclamation. Projects which develop such technologies could "advance knowledge and technical capacity for innovative HFC

destruction technologies and/or [innovatively deploy] HFC destruction technologies” (NOFO, page 8), which would be consistent with the goals of this funding opportunity.

V. Funding

Question 1: *How much funding is the EPA awarding from this NOFO?*

Answer 1: \$14.25 million is available for competitive grants under this opportunity. This opportunity also has an \$1.5 million set aside for federally recognized tribes.