

Small Communities Big Challenges Competition
Informational Webinar
November 29, 2023, 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET
FAQs

1. Can health departments from different counties across a state band together for this Challenge and Prize Competition?

Yes, that would be considered a team submission. The team will need to identify one point of contact for EPA to correspond with and the team should engage with one rural community, but team members may represent different counties and health departments.

2. Is this Challenge and Prize Competition open to universities?

Local government employees are the target audience for this Challenge and Prize Competition. Universities are not eligible to apply for this opportunity.

3. Does this application have to go through a city if we are a non-profit?

Non-profit entities are eligible to participate as part of a team submission, but the team's entry must be submitted by local government employees to be considered for this Challenge.

4. Are there any indirect costs to the Challenge's prize funds?

Unlike contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, Challenge and Prize Competitions are a one-time award that is provided to winning solvers.

If an individual or team applies through the city, the city will receive the prize money.

If the award goes directly to the team members individually and not through the city, the prizes would be distributed directly to the team members accounts.

EPA complies with IRS withholding requirements. Monetary prizes for Challenge and Prize competitions may be subject to federal income taxes. Prize winners are responsible for reporting and paying all applicable taxes.

5. Can communities with a population of less than 2,000 apply for this Challenge and Prize Competition?

Communities themselves cannot apply, but a local government that is engaging or has engaged with a community that is considered rural or fits within the paradigm of the definitions provided by USDA or the US Census Bureau (you can find these definitions under the ["Resources" section of the Challenge page](#)), can apply.

6. If you are awarded a prize, what is the timeframe for using the funds?

There's no time limit on when funds can or need to be used.

7. Are there restrictions on how winners can use their award money?

No, there are no restrictions on how winners can use their award money. Winning teams or individuals decide how they wish to use the money.

8. Is this Challenge and Prize Competition intended to support the local government's environmental public health communication efforts? Will residents be informed of the issues happening in their rural community?

This Challenge is intended to reward local governments who demonstrate inclusive and innovative engagements with rural communities to collaboratively identify rural environmental and public health needs.

Though public health communication is not the direct intention of this Challenge, showcasing local governments' communication efforts is a potential benefit. We hope this Challenge will bring to light a rural community's environmental public health needs, build partnerships with rural communities, and highlight innovative ways in which a local government has or is communicating with rural communities. This information could inform how other local governments engage and communicate with other rural communities across the country.

9. Could the community being served be environmental health professionals? (Training, etc.)

For this Challenge, the community being served (or engaged with) should be a rural community (see definition under the ["Resources" section of the Challenge page](#)), rather than other environmental health professionals. The intent is to understand *how* environmental health professionals have engaged or are engaging with rural communities to understand their specific environmental public health needs.

10. I work for a county government, which has a larger population than the guidelines, can I apply for smaller towns in our county that have smaller populations?

The population of the county an applicant(s) works for does not need to be less than 50,000. Rather, the *community* that an applicant(s) is demonstrating they have or are engaging with needs to have a population less than 50,000.

11. Is this funding tied to specific regulated environmental contaminants? Can it apply to drinking water quality concerns?

This Challenge is not tied to any specific environmental contaminant, though it *can* apply to drinking water quality concerns.

One of the key components of this challenge is that governments are collaborating or have collaborated with rural communities to co-identify environmental issues in their area. In collaboration with the rural community, the local government should be highlighting what is a specific rural community's environmental issue of concern. If the environmental issue highlighted can be tied to a drinking water quality concern or a regulation concern, that is something the local government could highlight in their "community engagement strategy report".

12. If a group of different health departments band together, wouldn't they exceed 50,000 population meaning they are ineligible to apply?

Team members may represent different counties and health departments, but the team should engage with one rural community. The size of the rural community that the local government or health department is engaging with is important, and those teams who apply should have worked or plan to work with communities that are considered rural in size (population less than 50,000)