EPA Grants Competition Process Webinar, December 4, 2023
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: What kind of searching did you recommend for SAM.gov? Something additional to what we would find in the usual Grants.gov search?

> **A1:** You can search for Assistance Listings in SAM.gov. Other than that, your main interaction with SAM.gov will be with regards to registering and maintaining your SAM.gov account. You will not search for, or find, open funding opportunities on SAM.gov - you should use Grants.gov to search for those.

Q2: Can the E-Business (EBiz) Point of Contact (POC) be changed?

> **A2:** Yes. Please note that it's much easier to change the EBiz POC while the existing EBiz POC is still with your organization.

Q3: My organization's Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) has left for a different position. How can I gain access to the AOR role, as our Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is still active?

> **A3:** The best way to make sure you take the correct steps is to contact [Grants.gov support](#) so they can guide you based on the roles already in your particular organization's Grants.gov registration. Please note that we encourage organizations to designate multiple AORs to avoid delays in submitting applications when an AOR isn't available.

Q4: What is the difference between initial and final proposals?

> **A4:** Initial proposals will often be shorter and have less detailed requirements. Final proposals will require more detailed information.

Q5: What if we do not have past performance for any grants?

> **A5:** The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will explain how these applicants will be evaluated. Typically, they will receive half of the points available, as long as they follow the instructions and include a statement that they do not have any relevant past performance.

Q6: Does the EPA make pass-through awards at the state or county level that are less competitive than open federal EPA opportunities? How would I find out about pass-through EPA opportunities at the state or county level if there are such opportunities? For example, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) passes opportunities through the state library systems of every state. If so, how can we learn about these subawards at the state level?

> **A6:** EPA does make pass-through awards to recipients that then issue subawards. However, as it is a grant or cooperative agreement, the recipient is responsible for disseminating information on how to apply for the subawards they plan to issue under their award. For this reason, it will vary based on the recipient and grant program.

Q7: Who should we reach out to if the funding opportunity contact doesn't answer?

> **A7:** You can email [EPA_grants_info@epa.gov;](#) however, please note that the POC of the NOFO is the only person who can respond to questions about the opportunity. Check

the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) website of the NOFO if there is one as your question may have already been answered in the FAQ.

Q8:   Will the presentation with links be available?

A8:   The presentation from today's webinar is available for download from the Competition Process Webinar webpage: https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-12/epa-grants-webinar-series-competition-process_12.4.23.pdf.

Q9:   Are there any advantages to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) nonprofits?

A9:   EPA does not confer priority access to grants or other benefits on the basis of the racial composition/identity of an organization or its constituents, consistent with federal and constitutional law. However, depending on the specific grant program, there may be preferences or set-asides for community-based organizations serving underserved or disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, tribal communities, or those experiencing disproportionate environmental and human health burden.

Q10:   Are there any advantages to Native American-owned for-profit organizations?

A10:   Yes. As stated on page 10 of the Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements (available at https://www.epa.gov/grants/best-practice-guide-procuring-services-supplies-and-equipment-under-epa-assistance):

> b. Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education and Assistance Act (ISDEAA), as amended, 25 U.S.C 450-458ddd-2 tribal recipients may give preference to Indian organizations and to Indian-owned economic enterprises when awarding procurement contracts under EPA assistance agreements. EPA does not interpret the ISDEAA to, in and of itself, authorize sole source procurements with Indian organizations and Indian owned economic enterprises. However, tribal recipients may give preference to these entities when developing lists for soliciting bids and proposals.

Please note that Indian Organizations and Indian-owned economic organizations are defined at 25 U.S.C. 1452.

Q11:   Any advice for an organization with multiple grant seekers (in different divisions within a single entity)?

A11:   Organizations with multiple divisions that already have a SAM registration should verify whether they have multiple SAM registrations/UEIs or a single SAM registration/UEI. If they have multiple registrations, they should pay careful attention to the roles their staff have under the various registrations to ensure that everyone has the appropriate access in Grants.gov. Additionally, they should pay careful attention to which UEI is being used in the Workspace they are using to apply under a particular funding opportunity to ensure it's the appropriate UEI, and that it matches the organization listed on the SF-424 being submitted with the application. Applicants should also check Section III of any funding opportunity they are applying for to make note of any threshold eligibility restrictions on the number of applications an applicant submits.

Organizations with multiple divisions that do not already have a SAM registration should decide whether they would like to have one registration or multiple registrations, taking into consideration the factors mentioned above.

If you are unsure of the details of your organization's SAM registration(s), contact the Federal Service Desk for assistance.

Q12:   Does the Agency foresee a time when application windows are open longer than 45 days?

A12:   The Agency encourages programs to provide as much time as possible for applicants to pull together the necessary materials and information to submit their proposals. Many EPA grant competitions are open for longer than 45 days. However, we are often limited by other requirements, such as legislation that calls for awards to be made by a certain date or within a specific timeframe.

Q13:   What if you can't find the assistance listing on Grants.gov?

A13:   You will not find assistance listings on Grants.gov. Assistance listings are published on SAM.gov and provide an overview of the assistance program, including a description of the program, which entities are eligible for funding, and how programs are funded. Grant opportunities are published on Grants.gov. If you are unable to locate an assistance listing or grant opportunity for a program you are interested in, try searching the EPA website (epa.gov) or contacting the program office for additional information.

Q14:   If the EPA uses Grants.gov for grant submissions, do you then require a signed SF-424 sent in later to the EPA since that's not an option in Grants.gov?

A14:   Application packages submitted through Grants.gov are automatically signed when the AOR clicks the "sign and submit" button in Workspace. This includes the SF-424, which is part of the application package. If your application is selected for award and the SF-424 needs to be revised, EPA may require that you revise it and sign the revised version. In these cases, the SF-424 will be submitted via email.

Q15:   Can you explain the EBiz registration requirements?

A15:   Please refer to SAM.gov for questions regarding the EBiz Point of Contact.

Q16:   What is a subaward and how is it relevant when applying for an opportunity?

A16:   As defined in 2 CFR 200.1, Subaward means an award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a Federal program. A subaward may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the pass-through entity considers a contract. You can learn more about subawards by referring to EPA's Subaward Policy for EPA Assistance Agreement Recipients here: https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients

Q17:   I'm confused about how EPA defines a Community-Based Organization (CBO). Can we check to see if we qualify?

A17:   Community-Based Organizations are defined in the NOFOs where they are eligible. Please refer to the NOFO for the CBO requirements applicable to that program.

Q18:   Could you clarify if sub-grantees have to follow the competitive procurement requirements as contractors?

  A18:   Recipients do not have to follow the procurement standards in 2 CFR 200 for subawards. However, it is important to understand the difference between a subaward and a contract before determining whether or not you have to follow the procurement standards. You can learn more about the difference between subawards and contracts by referring to EPA's Subaward Policy for EPA Assistance Agreement Recipients here: https://www.epa.gov/grants/grants-policy-issuance-gpi-16-01-epa-subaward-policy-epa-assistance-agreement-recipients

  Please note that subrecipients are not contractors and contractors are not subrecipients.

Q19:   Do you have any web links or tools to assist with questions focused on Justice40 issues, eligibility criteria, etc.?

  A19:   Yes, you can find information about Justice40 at EPA on the EPA website: https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40-epa/

Q20:   Is the EPA releasing more grants opportunities in 2024 that are above and beyond the Inflation Reduction Act-related funds?

  A20:   Yes, EPA conducts grants competitions to compete funding appropriated in its annual appropriations.

Q21:   I have been having an issue finding the grant solicitation on Grants.gov. There is an announcement on the EPA's website about the grant solicitation that makes it seem like it's a rolling application. However, I am having an issue attempting to locate the solicitation. What should I do? Are rolling applications only open for certain periods to apply?

  A21:   The only NOFO currently open that is accepting rolling applications is the Community Change Grants program. You can find information about this program, as well as a direct link to the Grants.gov Funding Opportunity, on this page: https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/inflation-reduction-act-community-change-grants-program.

Q22:   You said you don't help folks with applications, because you don't want to give anyone an unfair advantage. There are organizations who have greater capacity to complete your complicated applications. Doesn't that alone create an unfair advantage?

  A22:   EPA Order 5700.5A1: EPA's Policy for Competition of Assistance Agreements requires that EPA conduct fair competitions and that EPA doesn't provide a competitive advantage to any one applicant or group of applicants. While some organizations may inherently be more experienced or have more capacity than others, that is not within EPA's control. Notwithstanding that, we do ensure that all applications are evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the NOFO. While EPA strives to simplify requirements where possible, we must comply with the statutes and regulations that govern our grant programs, and grant recipients must do the same. Additionally, EPA works to ensure that smaller organizations with less capacity are able to compete effectively in our grant competitions in various ways as appropriate, including new applicant set-asides, informational webinars (see the specific NOFO for information), training opportunities, and by making technical assistance available. In addition, EPA's Environmental Justice

Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers are available to provide technical assistance to applicants and grantees. Further information can be found here: https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-thriving-communities-technical-assistance-centers#Submitting%20a%20Request%20for%20Technical%20Assistance.