

Questions and Answers: Healthy Communities Grant Competition 2024

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-R1-HC-2024

Questions and answers as of October 7, 2024

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) New England Region is accepting applications for funding under the Healthy Communities Grant Program (EPA-R1-HC-2024) until **November 1, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

This document contains responses to questions raised in EPA's information sessions and to questions submitted to the Healthy Communities email inbox and program contacts. EPA plans to update this document regularly with additional incoming questions regarding the Healthy Communities Grant Competition.

This document includes questions and answers on the following topics:

- I. [Applicant Eligibility](#)
- II. [Project Eligibility](#)
- III. [Application Materials](#)
- IV. [Award Information](#)

Applicant Eligibility

1. Q: Are councils of governments eligible to apply for Healthy Communities funding?

A: Yes. The list of eligible applicant types is broad and includes local, state, and regional governments. A list of entity types eligible to apply for funding can be found in Section III.A of the RFA (p. 22).

2. Q: My organization/group has a nonprofit serving as our fiscal sponsor. Are we eligible to apply for Healthy Communities funding?

A: Yes. In this case, the nonprofit fiscal sponsor would be the legal applicant, and the application would need to explain the relationship between the nonprofit and the organization or group carrying out the project in the project narrative and/or environmental results, past performance, and programmatic capability attachment.

3. Q: Are pass-through entities eligible to apply?

A: Yes. Entities designated as eligible in Section III.A of the RFA (p. 22) may apply to the Healthy Communities Grant Program to make subawards to other eligible entities. If awarded, the recipient would be responsible for having all subawardees report to them. Applicants intending to make subawards must adhere to the [EPA Subaward Policy](#).

Project Eligibility

4. Q: How do I determine if my project serves one of the target investment areas?

A: To be eligible for funding, an application must propose a project that serves one or more of the target investment areas identified in the RFA. The target investment areas are written broadly and leave some room for interpretation; it is the applicant's responsibility to provide sufficient details justifying the application's alignment with the target investment area(s) identified. A population or geographic area that is not explicitly mentioned under a particular target investment area may still qualify under that area, provided that the application gives a clear and reasonable justification for how it qualifies. Conversely, even if the population(s)/area(s) an applicant plans to work with are explicitly highlighted in the RFA, applicants are cautioned that they will still need to justify their project's alignment with the selected target investment area(s). Details on the target investment areas can be found in Section I.B of the RFA (p. 7-9).

5. Q: How do I determine which target program area(s) my project aligns with?

A: As with the target investment areas, applicants will need to provide sufficient detail in the application materials to demonstrate that the proposed project aligns with one or more of the target program areas outlined in the RFA. Prospective applicants should read Section I.B of the RFA (p. 9-19) carefully to learn more about project activities that align with each target program area, as well as project examples and example outputs for each. It is the applicant's responsibility to demonstrate in the application materials how the proposal addresses the selected target program area(s). Applicants are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with the statutory authorities listed on page 6 of the RFA to ensure that their proposed projects comply with the relevant statutes.

6. Q: My organization supports communities who are working on different campaigns to address environmental health threats that could fall within multiple target program areas. Should we apply for funding to support this work broadly or focus on one program area?

A: It is up to the applicant to choose whether to focus on a single program area or address multiple with their proposed project, depending on what is most appropriate for the applicant. Applicants should refer to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section V.A of the RFA (p. 29-33) and determine what they wish to include in their proposals based on what can be adequately addressed and justified in the application materials. To receive full points, applications must provide sufficient detail justifying the project's alignment with all target program areas identified in their application.

7. Q: Are construction costs eligible for Healthy Communities funding?

A: No, costs related to construction or installation are not allowable expenses under the Healthy Communities program.

8. Q: Can Healthy Communities funding support ongoing, year-round projects?

A: Healthy Communities funding may be used to support existing or ongoing programs, but applications must be focused only on a specific time period falling within the allowable program dates. Per Section II.A of the RFA (p. 21), projects funded under the Healthy Communities program may last one or two years and start no earlier than April 1, 2025. Applications should clearly describe the specific activities and deliverables that will take place during the project period and be funded by the Healthy Communities program. Applications proposing projects that are part of broader, ongoing programs should make clear how the activities specified in the application fit into the bigger picture of the program, as well as which specific portions of the program the Healthy Communities grant would be supporting.

9. Q: Can Healthy Communities funding be used for the installation of HVAC or septic systems? *(Added October 2024)*

A: No, costs related to construction or installation are not allowable expenses under the Healthy Communities program.

10. Q: Are supplies and equipment costs eligible for Healthy Communities funding? *(Added October 2024)*

A: Yes, supplies and equipment costs can be allowable expenses under the Healthy Communities program, as long as the purchase of the proposed supplies and/or equipment align with the project goals and activities. Project goals and activities must align with the purpose and goals of the Healthy Communities program.

11. Q: Do all Healthy Communities projects need to have an end date of March 31, 2027, or earlier? *(Added October 2024)*

A: A project may have an end date later than March 31, 2027, if the project start date is later than April 1, 2025. However, the project end date must be no later than two years after the start date.

12. Q: If an application proposes expanding on a prior project, does it need to have been a project that was funded by EPA? *(Added October 2024)*

A: The prior project does not need to have been funded by EPA in order for an expansion or extension of the project to be funded by a Healthy Communities grant. It is important to note that applications must be focused only on a specific time period falling within the allowable program dates. Per Section II.A of the RFA (p. 21), projects funded under the Healthy Communities program may last one or two years and start no earlier than April 1, 2025. Applications should clearly describe the specific activities and deliverables that will take place during the project period and be funded by the Healthy Communities program. Applications proposing projects that are part of broader,

ongoing programs should make clear how the activities specified in the application fit into the bigger picture of the program, as well as which specific portions of the program the Healthy Communities grant would be supporting.

13. Q: Are planning costs, such as consultant fees, eligible expenses for a Healthy Communities project? *(Added October 2024)*

A: Yes, planning costs, including consultant fees, for an eligible project are eligible for Healthy Communities funding.

14. Q: Are projects that address only one target investment area or only one target project area considered less competitive than projects that address multiple? *(Added October 2024)*

A: No, the evaluation criteria outlined in Section V.A of the RFA (p. 29-33) do not consider whether the applicant addresses more than one target investment area or target project area. However, applicants who do propose more than one target investment area or target project area will lose points if they do not sufficiently justify the project's connection to all identified target areas.

Application Materials

15. Q: Should applicants submit a budget narrative with their applications?

A: Applicants should not submit any application materials beyond those that are listed in Section IV.A of the RFA (p. 24-27). Any submitted materials that are not included in the RFA will not be reviewed. Applicants should ensure that all necessary budget information is provided in the required application materials; the project narrative and budget detail provide opportunities for applicants to break down individual proposed costs and justify why expenses are necessary for the successful completion of the project.

16. Q: Is SAM.gov registration required for this application? *(Added October 2024)*

A: Yes, Healthy Communities applicants must have an active SAM.gov registration. Applicants who are not registered with SAM.gov or who need to renew an expiring registration should do so as early as possible to avoid delays with the registration process. Information on how to register with SAM.gov is available in Section IV.B of the RFA (p. 27).

17. Q: Does providing voluntary matching resources make an application more competitive? *(Added October 2024)*

A: No, the evaluation criteria outlined in Section V.A of the RFA (p. 29-33) do not consider whether the applicant proposes a match or not. If an applicant chooses to

include voluntary match in their application, it is important to note that the matching resources become part of the EPA project budget. Applicants proposing a match should provide the same level of detail for matching resources as they provide for expenses that will be covered by EPA funding. Additionally, matching resources included in the project budget are subject to the same allowability requirements as EPA funds.

18. Q: Are there any font, text size, or margin size requirements for the project narrative or other application materials? *(Added October 2024)*

A: There are no font, text size, or margin size requirements for Healthy Communities application materials. However, all application materials must be readable.

19. Q: Should applicants include the questions from the project narrative format in the project narrative they submit with their application? *(Added October 2024)*

A: The project narrative format provided in Attachment A of the RFA (p. 36-38) is meant as a guideline for applicants to understand what information should be included in the project narrative. Applicants do not need to include the questions from the template in their project narratives.

20. Q: What are “assistance agreements”, which need to be listed in the environmental results, programmatic capability, and past performance information attachment? *(Added October 2024)*

A: Assistance agreements are grants and cooperative agreements. Per Section IV.A of the RFA (p. 26), applicants should submit a list of up to five federal and/or non-federal assistance agreements they have carried out within the last three years in the environmental results attachment. Contracts are not considered assistance agreements.

Award Information

21. Q: Does EPA plan to make 15 total awards, or 15 awards per round of funding? *(Added October 2024)*

A: EPA intends to award 10 to 15 projects each for both rounds of funding (FY 2024 and FY 2025) for an expected total of 20 to 30 projects funded under the solicitation. However, the number of awards made during the second round of funding is dependent on FY 2025 funding availability.

22. Q: How many applications were received and awarded for the 2023 Healthy Communities competition? *(Added October 2024)*

A: EPA received 24 eligible Healthy Communities applications in 2023 and funded 14.

23. Q: Will EPA make multiple awards for work happening in the same region of New England, or will EPA limit the number of awards made for projects targeting the same areas? *(Added October 2024)*

A: The Healthy Communities program does not have limits for project locations. However, per Section V.C of the RFA (p. 33), final funding decisions will be made by the Selection Official based on evaluation scores but may also consider other factors including funding availability, geographic distribution of funds, diversity of projects, programmatic priorities, and the similarity of the project to other projects being funded by EPA. These other considerations may factor into funding decisions when evaluation scores are tied.

24. Q: Does the \$40,000 maximum award amount apply to each year of the grant or the total amount of funding? *(Added October 2024)*

A: Per section II.A of the RFA (p. 21), the amount of federal funds an applicant may request cannot exceed \$40,000 total.

25. Q: If my organization has a nonprofit fiscal sponsor who will be the legal applicant, does the fiscal sponsor also need to provide a letter of commitment for the application? *(Added October 2024)*

A: No, the fiscal sponsor would not need to provide a letter of commitment. The application should clearly explain the relationship between the fiscal sponsor and the organization or group carrying out the project in the project narrative and/or environmental results, past performance, and programmatic capability attachment.

26. Q: Will EPA host a Healthy Communities competition in fiscal year (FY) 2025? *(Added October 2024)*

A: EPA anticipates making two rounds of selections from the 2024 Healthy Communities competition using FY 2024 and FY 2025 funding. EPA does not anticipate hosting the next Healthy Communities competition until FY 2026.

27. Q: Are the recent revisions to the Uniform Grants Guidance regulations applicable to Healthy Communities awards? *(Added October 2024)*

A: Yes, the revisions made by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to the Uniform Grants Guidance ([2 CFR 200](#)) apply to all awards made on or after October 1, 2024, which includes all Healthy Communities awards made during this round of funding (FY 2024-2025). Healthy Communities applicants should familiarize themselves with the [changes to 2 CFR 200](#) as they prepare their applications. Applicants can also access slides and a recording from an [EPA webinar](#) on the changes hosted October 9, 2024.