Wildfire Smoke Preparedness in Community Buildings

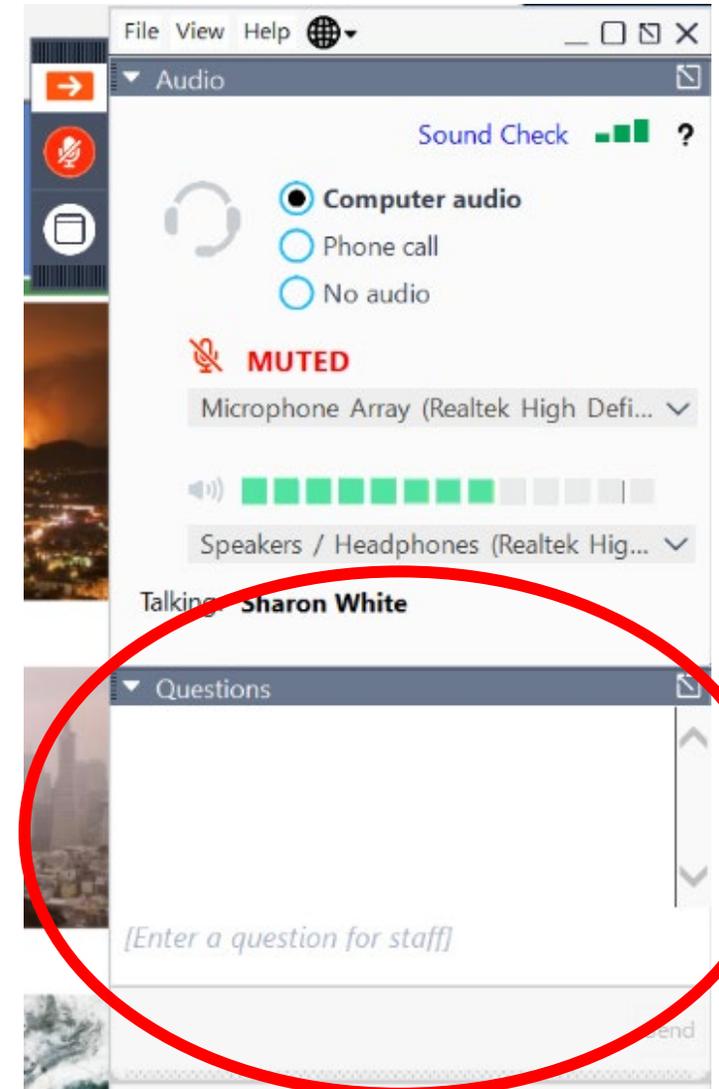## Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Information Session

February 25, 2026

Welcome

- Slides from this presentation will be uploaded following today's session. A recording will be posted in the coming weeks.

- We will address as many questions as possible. If we run out of time, we will post questions and answers on the Air Grants webpage, which can be accessed at www.epa.gov/grants/wildfire-smoke-preparedness-community-buildings.

- To ask a question, please use the Questions function, as shown in the screenshot on the right.

Agenda

- Overview
- Eligible Activities
- Eligible Entities
- Key Dates
- Threshold Evaluation Process
- Cost-Share Waiver Evaluation
- Merit Evaluation Process
- Merit Evaluation Criteria
- Application Process
- Questions and Answers

Overview

Wildfire Smoke Preparedness in Community Buildings Grant Program

- **Program goal:** Improve public health protection against smoke from wildfires by enhancing preparedness in community buildings.

- **For details about the program:**
  - NOFO on Grants.gov:
    grants.gov/search-results-detail/361217
    - Applications are due by April 15, 11:59 p.m. ET, via Grants.gov.
  - EPA grants webpage:
    www.epa.gov/grants/wildfire-smoke-preparedness-community-buildings
    - Questions and answers are posted to the webpage weekly during the NOFO open period.
    - The slides and recording of this webinar also will be posted.
  - Wildfire Smoke Preparedness in Community Buildings Grant Program website:
    www.epa.gov/emergencies-iaq/wildfire-smoke-preparedness-community-buildings-grant-program

Overview (continued)

- Awarding competitive **grants.**
- Provided under Section 103(b)(3) of the Clean Air Act as supplemented by authority provided in the 2024 and 2025 Consolidated Appropriations Acts to fund abatement activities.
- **Total funding** available for awards: **$13.58 million**
  - Approximately **13–18 grants, ranging from $350,000 to $2.5 million**
  - Maximum of **25% of total funding may go to award recipients in any one state**
- The **10% cost-share requirement** may be waived for facilities in economically distressed communities.
- Funded assistance agreements will have up to **3-year periods of performance.**

Eligible Activities

Application activities should be designed to improve the capability and capacity of communities and buildings to effectively reduce indoor concentrations of air pollutants in wildfire smoke.

Eligible project types include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Smoke readiness planning
- Outreach and training for smoke readiness
- Indoor and outdoor air quality monitoring
- Deployment of portable air cleaners
- Identification and preparation of cleaner air shelters
- Significant improvements to buildings, such as upgrading and repairing heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units or systems and weatherization necessary to protect occupants from hazards stemming from wildfires

Applicants are encouraged to integrate project activities under a comprehensive smoke management plan at the building or community level, where appropriate.

See NOFO Section 3.A. for additional details and requirements.

Eligible Entities

- States (including Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories and possessions)

- Federally recognized Tribes

- Public preschools

    (Note: This definition has been updated for the 2026 competition.)

- Local educational agencies

- Public and private nonprofit organizations

See NOFO Section 2.A. for detailed definitions.

Key Dates

✉	January 30, 2026	Announcement	Submit questions via email to WildfireSmokeGrants@epa.gov by April 8.
⏱	April 15, 2026	Applications due	**Earlier application submissions are encouraged** to allow plenty of time to navigate the application system.
📢	July 2026	Anticipated notification of selections	
📄	September 2026	Anticipated awards	Register at **SAM.gov** *and* **Grants.gov** *now* if you think you may apply for a federal grant. **The process can take a month or longer for new registrants.**

Threshold Evaluation Process
Step 1: Threshold Criteria Review (Section 2.A(1))

Applications must meet ALL seven threshold criteria to move on to Step 2:

1. Substantially comply with submission instructions and content.

2. Cannot request more than $2,500,000.

3. Cannot submit more than one application. (If more are submitted, the EPA will contact the applicant to determine which one(s) to withdraw.)

4. Must characterize the population served by the project.

5. Must describe a detailed approach to measure project effectiveness.

6. Must describe how much or how often the building or communities served by the project are impacted by wildfire smoke.

7. Must not be exclusively designed to conduct scientific research.

Applications also are reviewed to determine if any activities are ineligible for funding. See NOFO Section 2.A(1).

Cost-Share Waiver Evaluation

- There is a **10% cost-share requirement** under this announcement.
- Cost sharing may be waived for facilities located in "economically distressed communities," which must meet one or more of the following criteria:
  - An unemployment rate that is, for the most recent 24-month period for which data are available, at least one percentage point greater than the national average unemployment rate;
  - Per capita income that is, for the most recent period for which data are available, 80% or lower than the national average per capita income; or
  - Percentage of the population 25 years and older with a high school diploma (or equivalent) or higher education that is, for the most recent period for which data are available, below the national average.
- *Note:* These criteria have been updated for the 2026 competition.
- Requests to waive the cost-sharing requirement will be reviewed according to the criteria detailed in Section 2.B. of the NOFO.

Merit Evaluation Process
Step 2: Evaluation Criteria (Section 6.B.)

Evaluation Criteria	Points
1) Project Summary and Approach	55
2) Environmental Results	15
3) Programmatic Capability and Environmental Results Past Performance	15
4) Budget	15
Total Possible Points	**100**

- Sub-criteria and associated points are described for each criterion in the table in Section 6.B. of the NOFO and later in this presentation.

- See Section 4.B. for Project Narrative instructions, including the suggested format, and content.

Merit Evaluation Process (continued)

- Each eligible application will be evaluated by an EPA evaluation team.

- Proposals are ranked and scored by the criteria in Section 6.B.

- The EPA evaluation team will provide preliminary funding recommendations to the EPA Headquarters Selection Official based on the proposal scores.

- Final funding decisions will be made by the Selection Official based on the ranking and the preliminary recommendations of the evaluation team and the following other factors:
  - o Programmatic priorities
  - o Geographic diversity

- In addition, no more than 25% of total funding may go to award recipients in any one state.

Merit Evaluation Criteria
1. Project Summary and Approach (55 points)

Under this criterion, the EPA will evaluate the extent and quality of the following:

- **Overall Project (25 points):** The overall proposed project plan and approach, consistent with the program purpose, priorities and activities in Section 3.A.

- **Wildfire Smoke Impacts (5 points):** Description of how much or how often the buildings or communities served by the project are impacted by wildfire smoke.

- **Population Served and Community Engagement (10 points):** Characterization of the population served by the project and the extent to which the project addresses engagement with affected communities, especially local residents who will be impacted by the project, to ensure their meaningful participation with respect to the design, project planning and performance of the project.

- **Approach to Measure Project Effectiveness (5 points):** The applicant's approach to measure project effectiveness.

- **Multi-hazard Approach and Sustainability (10 points):** How the proposed project addresses multiple hazards that may be concurrent with wildfire smoke (e.g., extreme heat, power outages, airborne infectious disease outbreaks) and/or improves overall capacity to comprehensively address indoor air quality issues and/or the extent to which the applicant demonstrates their ability to effectively promote and continue or replicate efforts after EPA funding for this project has ended.

Merit Evaluation Criteria
2. Environmental Results (15 points)

Under this criterion, the EPA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- **Expected Outputs and Outcomes (5 points):** The extent and quality to which the applicant identifies and proposes quantitative and qualitative outputs and outcomes, as described in Section 3.A. These may be shorter and longer term.

- **Performance Measures (5 points):** The quality of the proposed performance measures and effectiveness of the applicant's plan for tracking and measuring its progress toward achieving the expected project outputs and outcomes, including those identified in Section 3.A. of this announcement. This also includes how project results will be evaluated, as described in Section 3.A.

- **Timeline (5 points):** The reasonableness of the proposed timeline—including key milestones and estimated dates for specific tasks, such as bidding, procurement, installation and the preparation of reports—and the likelihood of completion of the project's goals and objectives by project end.

Merit Evaluation Criteria
3. Programmatic Capability and Environmental Results Past Performance (15 points)

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering the following:

- **Past Performance (3 points):** Past performance in successfully completing and managing assistance agreements (including grants and cooperative agreements, but not contracts, with preference to EPA agreements) directly awarded to the applicant as an organization.

- **Reporting Requirements (3 points):** History of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified above, including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements, and if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately reported why not.

- **Organizational Experience (4 points):** Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project.

- **Staff Expertise (5 points):** Staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge and resources, or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

Merit Evaluation Criteria
4. Budget (15 points)

Under this criterion, the EPA will evaluate applicants based on the extent and quality to which the following are addressed:

- **Budget Detail (5 points):** The proposed budget provides a detailed breakout by funding type in the proper budget category for each activity for which the applicant is requesting funding.

- **Reasonableness of Costs (5 points):** The EPA will evaluate the reasonableness of the applicant's budget based on the applicant's narrative description of the budget and detailed breakout of requested funding for each work component or task. The proposed costs are reasonable to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives and measurable environmental outcomes.

- **Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds (5 points):** The applicant's approach, procedures and controls will ensure that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.

Application Process: How to Apply

1. **Register your organization with SAM.gov.**

2. **Register your organization with Grants.gov.**

   - Applications must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov.

   - If you registered previously, please verify that your account is still active.

   - If you are not currently registered with Grants.gov, designate an Authorized Organization Representative (or AOR) and begin the registration process as soon as possible.

   - The registration process requires that your organization have a Unique Entity Identifier (e.g., DUNS) and a current registration with the System for Award Management (SAM). The process for obtaining both could take several weeks.

   - See the "How to Register to Apply for Grants?" webpage: www.epa.gov/grants/how-register-apply-grants

Application Process: How to Apply (continued) EPA

3. **Go to the funding opportunity on Grants.gov.**

   grants.gov/search-results-detail/361217

4. **Apply through Grants.gov.**

   Click the red "Apply" button in the upper right and create a Workspace.

Note: All applications must be submitted through the "Workspace" feature. Information can be found on the Grants.gov Workspace Overview webpage: grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview.

5. **Write your Project Narrative.**

- Include the project synopsis and workplan; cannot exceed 10 pages.

- Must substantially comply with the specific instructions, format and content as defined in Section 4.

- Save as a Word document or PDF.

- **Be aware:** The Budget Narrative and detail are part of the 10-page limit of the Project Narrative. It will **<u>not</u>** be reviewed if the Project Narrative is already 10 pages and the Budget Detail/Narrative is included as a separate attachment.

6. **Complete the mandatory forms.**

- See Section 4.A. of the NOFO: SF-424, SF-424A, EPA Forms 4700-4 and 5700-54, and the Project Narrative.

7. **Use the "Other Attachments" form to submit the mandatory documents, if applicable.**

8. **Use the "Other Attachments" form to submit the following optional documents:**

   - Cost-share waiver rationale (if applicable and not included in the Project Narrative attachment)
   - Project team biographies
   - Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement
   - Partnership letters, if applicable
   - Maps, data, analyses and results that—
     - Characterize the population served
     - Describe wildfire smoke impacts in the project area

Application Process: How to Apply (continued) ⬖EPA

9. **On Grants.gov, fill out the required grant application forms and upload all required and optional attachments.**

- Download PDFs of the forms, fill them out offline, and then upload back to grants.gov, or
- Complete the forms online as webforms.

PACKAGE FORMS:

Mandatory Forms (Click to Preview)

» Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) [V2.1]
» EPA Form 4700-4 [V2.1]
» Project Narrative Attachment Form [V1.2]
» EPA KEY CONTACTS FORM [V1.1]
» Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A) [V1.0]
» Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B) [V1.1]
» Other Attachments Form [V1.2]

Application Process: How to Apply (continued)

10. On Grants.gov, validate and submit the application.

- The "Check Application" button runs a validation process to ensure all the forms are complete. If the validation fails, a list of errors will be displayed.

- When all of the forms are in "passed" status, the "Sign and Submit" button will be active.
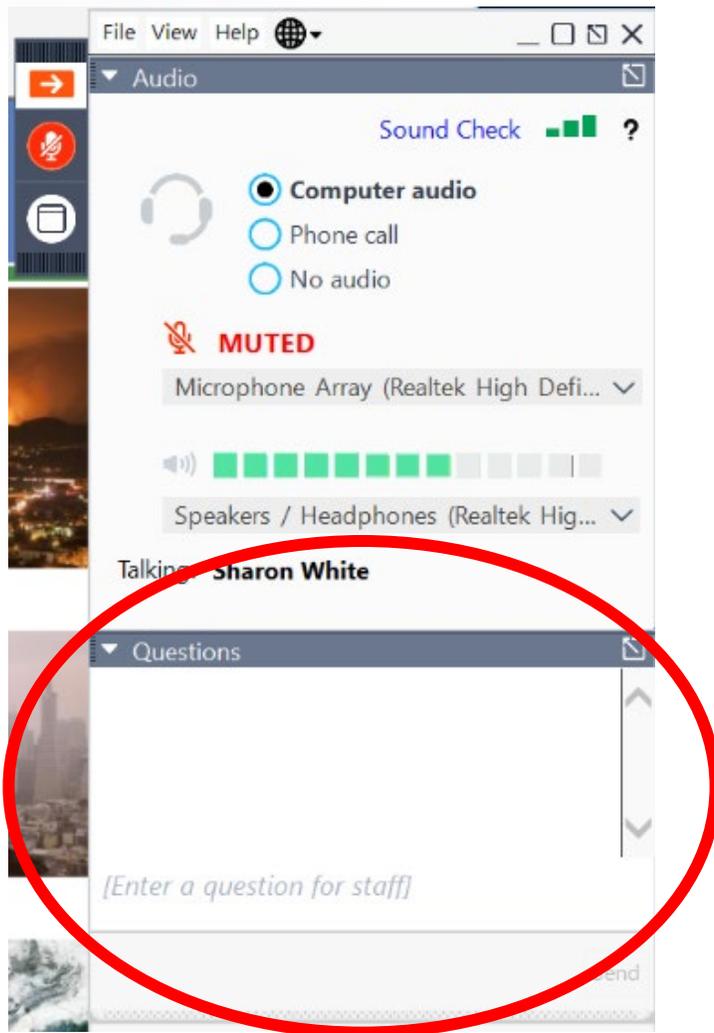
Application Process: Helpful Reminders

- **Create/verify your Grants.gov account now.**
  - The registration process requires that your organization have a Unique Entity Identifier (e.g. DUNS) and a current registration with the System for Award Management (www.SAM.gov).
  - Grants.gov now requires users to sign up for and use the "Workspace" feature when applying for opportunities.
- **Be aware of support time.**
  - Minor problems with application submittal are *not* uncommon.
  - Grants.gov offers 24-hour support; however, some issues may **take a few days** to resolve.
- **Submit early.**
  - Late applications will not be accepted.
  - See Section 5 for full Grants.gov instructions.

Questions and Answers

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We will address as many questions as possible. If we run out of time, we will post questions and answers on the Air Grants page, which can be accessed at www.epa.gov/grants/wildfire-smoke-preparedness-community-buildings.

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Submit additional questions to WildfireSmokeGrants@epa.gov by April 8.

Thank you!

Slides, Q&A, and a recording will be posted in the next few weeks at
www.epa.gov/grants/wildfire-smoke-preparedness-community-buildings.