

EPA 2008 State Innovation Grants Competition

Questions and Answers on USEPA 2008 State Innovation Grant Solicitation

The following is a list of questions that have been asked during the open solicitation period. The answer follows each question and the general topic for each question has been put in **bold print**. As questions continue to come in, this list will be updated during the solicitation period to provide equal access to potentially interested applicants. New questions will be located at the end of the list.

Q1. We are a **regional organization** that has been given delegated authority for POTW's. Would we be **eligible** to apply for the grant?

A1. On page 12-13, and 40 of the solicitation, we addressed this issue. Interstate, regional, county, or municipal agencies with a re-delegated authority for federal environmental permitting programs may apply for a State Innovation Grant, however, they must be a part of a team proposal that includes the State-level Agency from which they received the re-delegation. The Agency with the re-delegated authority may be the lead agency in a team proposal. If an agency or organization with re-delegated authority were to apply, they must document their delegation authority at the time of pre-proposal submittal. In addition, a letter of support from senior management at the state-level agency, with the authority to commit that agency to the project would be required within one week following the deadline for submittal of pre-proposals.

Q2. We are a part of the **Division of Forestry and Natural Resources**. Would we be able to **apply** for the State Innovation Grant?

A2. If your agency or program has received a delegation for a federal environmental permitting program from EPA or a re-delegation of that program from the State, and your proposal concept fits within the *Innovation in Permitting* theme of the grant program, you would be eligible to apply as a part of a team proposal. The principal environmental regulatory agency for the State(s) must retain a substantive involvement in the project.

If your program has not received delegated authority of a federal environmental permitting program, you could not apply directly for the grant, but you could be included as a partner in a team proposal.

Q3. Can **any regional or municipal agency** apply via **grants.gov** ?

A3. Provided that you have received re-delegated authority for federal environmental permitting programs, you would be eligible to apply for this grant program. Familiarize yourself with the application instructions. If your agency does not already have a certified Duns and Bradstreet Universal Data Numbering System (DUNS) number, you will need to obtain one. If you are familiar with grants.gov, you are ahead of the game. If you have never used grants.gov to apply for a grant, you should see the text box on page 25 of the solicitation. Allow sufficient time. We recommend that you do not wait until the last day for submittal of your proposal.

Q4. We have a project that meets the Threshold Criteria, but is **not related to a regulatory permitting program**, would it still be considered?

A4. No.

Q5. We are preparing a teaming proposal with some other States; however, with the page limitations on the pre-proposal it will be difficult for us to fully describe the activities, outputs and outcomes for each partner. Do you have any suggestions as to how we might do that and stay within the **page limit**?

A5. One thing that you might consider is including a logic model that describes how the activities link to the project's outputs and outcomes. The activities for each of the partners might be indicated by a footnote system. This is a convenient way to describe the specific activities of each partner and how they link to the bigger project goals and it can summarize a large amount of information on a single page.

Q6. What is the **grant period** ?

A6. The grant period is one to four years, based upon requests from the applicants. Applicants may propose projects with final outcomes on a longer timescale, but the final workplan must commit to submitting a report that includes a description of both completed and anticipated project outcomes within three months of completion of the project. The grant period for all applicants selected to receive assistance under this solicitation is anticipated to begin on October 1, 2008, and expire no later than September 30, 2012.

Q7. The solicitation states that applicants must comply with **Executive Order 12372 on Intergovernmental Review Process**. Is this required for submittal with the pre-proposal?

A7. No, it is not required for the pre-proposal. It would be required with the submission of the final proposal/workplan and application from applicants that are selected to continue in the competition.

Q8. We will not be able to submit our pre-proposal using the recommended grants.gov route. Are there any other **alternatives to the online submission** ?

A8. The preferred method for submittal of pre-proposals is through grants.gov. If you need to apply through a means other than electronically via grants.gov, please contact Sherri Walker by phone at (202) 566-2186, or by e-mail to innovation_state_grants@epa.gov.

Q9. I am embarking on a dissertation project that will explore the effects of environmental policy and regulation on industrial heritage, with a general focus on **Superfund sites** and a specific focus on copper smelters. We are currently in a discussion with EPA, the State Department of Environmental Quality, and a local smelter owner about remediation at one of the only remaining intact smelter sites in the nation.

Remediation efforts at other copper smelter sites across the country have generally resulted in limited attention to Section 106 of the **National Historic Preservation Act**. I intend to explore this complex relationship.

I am curious if this project qualifies under this grant program, understanding that it would need to be submitted by the State DEQ.

A9. It seems that you are looking for support to evaluate a retroactive condition or approach. Unfortunately, we don't see a test of innovation in what you are describing. The projects that we select are required to focus on demonstrations of innovation that produce environmental results.

Q10. I understand that there are no **match funds** required, however it is strongly encouraged to provide one. Does your agency prefer cash or in-kind contributions?

A10. We addressed this issue on page 13 of the solicitation. No matching funds are required. However, an applicant may provide any level of voluntary "leverage" support in cash or in-kind (e.g., personnel time). Voluntary "leverage" funding will be considered, along with in-kind contributions, as identified in Section V.B of this solicitation.

Q11. Is the State Innovation Grant competition **highly competitive** ? Can you provide a ratio of applications received, applications selected, and awards made. Do only 10 percent or 80 percent of submittals receive an award? What are an applicant's chances of receiving an award ?

A11. Using the prior five cycles as a reference, the competition has gotten increasingly more competitive as the number of high quality pre-proposals submitted has increased. The State Innovation Grant program opened its first competition on July 19, 2002. There have been additional competitions annually since 2004. There have been 35 awards in the program, totalling over \$6.7 million. Below is a profile of the annual awards. In most cases, awards were given to all projects that were selected to submit a final proposal and application package (unless a State opted to withdraw their proposal).

Competition Cycle (Fiscal Year)	Total Number of Pre-proposals Received	Number of Projects Funded	Total Amount of Funding
2002*	29	3	\$ 296,000
2003*		3	\$ 322,000
2004	33	9	\$ 1,526,000
2005	26	7	\$ 1,528,000
2006	25	6	\$ 1,355,000
2007	17	7	\$ 1,644,000
Total	130	35	\$ 6,671,000

* The 2002 and 2003 awards were made from a single competition in FY 2002.

Prior statistics may not serve as an accurate comparison for this year's competition because EPA clarified the eligibility definition for this solicitation to include regional, county, or municipal agencies with delegated authority for federal environmental permitting programs. Consequently, we anticipate that the number of proposals received may increase. At this point in the competition, we can not speculate about an applicant's chances in receiving an award. The success of an applicant would depend on the quality of their proposal and the extent to which they addressed the evaluation criteria, as well as the number of proposals received and their evaluation.

Q12. What does an applicant need to focus on to be selected ? Are any areas more important than others ? Specifically, are there any **criteria** that are weighted or assigned higher **points** than others?

A12. An applicant must meet the Eligibility and Threshold criteria identified in Section III (pages 12-14), and Evaluation Criteria in Section V (pages 26-32) of the solicitation. Criteria points are clearly shown in Section V.B.1 and V.B.2 for each evaluation criteria.

Q13. We are a local agency that has been given delegated authority for air quality permits. We are contemplating a pollution prevention project that would not be tied directly to permitting and would not fit within any of the three specific areas: Environmental Results Program, Performance Track Program, or Environmental Management Systems. Should we apply if our **proposed project doesn't quite fit into those 3 areas** ?

A13. We prefer that the proposal address our three strategic focus areas, but we also want to encourage other truly innovative concepts. The theme for our grant program is "Innovation in Permitting", so our main concern would be the linkage to environmental permitting programs (or an alternative to permits). If the project is not directly linked to permits or alternatives to permits, it is likely that the project would not be evaluated favorably for this grant program. The proposal would have to be clear about how your newly proposed innovative plan would benefit a permitting program aimed at better environmental results.

Q14. I have a question regarding one of the sections of the SIG pre-proposal, **Environmental Results Past Performance**. Is there an example you can provide to help me better assess how to address this section? I can certainly get a list of grants from our accounting staff, but I'm not sure how to go about selecting 5 of them and assessing (from my perspective) if we are doing well or not on them. Is this not something that the EPA project/grant managers would know as a result of required progress reports provided by State program managers. What about the PPG? I co-oversee this core program grant and the associated workplans. We typically accomplish most of the workplan each year and our negotiations go very smoothly with EPA. We do well with our grants administration and project oversight and our transparent communication with EPA and project partners, but I'm just not sure how to quantitatively prove that in the grant pre-proposal. Any thoughts/insights and examples are greatly appreciated.

A14. This is a relatively new grants policy requirement (e.g., 1-2 yrs). The requirement that you quoted asks applicants to describe how they did (in the past) documenting their performance on assistance agreement projects specifically, how well they were documenting and reporting whether they were making progress and if not, why not. In other words did they do an adequate job of communicating with us in their periodic reports, or in other communications. The intent of this requirement is to get at the communication issue. Lack of adequate communication of status can be a major problem in overseeing grants and we think this is a really good requirement.

If you are unfamiliar with other grant projects in your Agency, perhaps you could also obtain the names of project managers for those projects from the accounting staff and ask for their input in identifying how the State met this requirement. It's up to the applicant to say what the State did in communicating with us on environmental results from past performance.

Unfortunately, we can not provide any past performance examples to you. EPA can't advise you regarding which grants to select because it would be unfair to other applicants. It should be the state's determination regarding which one(s) would be most closely-related or pertinent to this grant program.

Q15. How do we handle **Letters of Support**?

A15. The Letter of Support must come from senior management at the state-level agency, with the authority to commit that agency to the project. The letter can be provided in the same application method that the applicant chooses (e.g., electronic via grants.gov, or via hard copy). If the applicant uses grants.gov, they can submit the signed letter file as an attachment. The letter does not count against the page limit. The deadline for submittal of letters of support would be within one week following the deadline for submittal of pre-proposals.

Q16. We have some **industry related associations** who would like to support our project and they inquired about providing **letters of support**. I am not sure if they are relevant or not but I thought they could submit them if it would be helpful.

A16. If these groups would be considered as active partners/team members with direct involvement letters of support would clearly be relevant.

Q17. I have some great innovative **recycling** ideas that I believe would benefit the environment. I would like to start a **for-profit** organization and I am seeking funding.

A17. Unfortunately you would not be eligible for this grant competition since you are not with the principal environmental regulatory agency from a State agency, nor with a regional or municipal agency that has been given delegated authority for permits. A key factor in this competition is that the proposal be linked to an existing environmental permit, or provide an alternative to a permit with demonstrated benefits to the public health.

If your concept is related to permits, you may approach the State environmental regulatory agency with your proposal ideas, but the environmental regulatory agency will make the decision about the project(s) it wishes to submit in a team proposal.

Since you are seeking to start your own business, perhaps you may want to explore funding opportunities with the US Small Business Administration (SBA).

Q18. Unfortunately, we will not be able to submit our pre-proposal using the recommended grants.gov route. Can we submit it another way? Do you have a recommended **courier** service? What **address** should we send it to?

A18. If you can not submit via grants.gov, you may submit via mail or courier/ overnight delivery. We recommend against regular mail because of possible delays due to security screening of mail packages. You may submit your pre-proposal using an overnight delivery service. We can not recommend one overnight courier over another. The mailing address for overnight courier is provided in the solicitation in Section VII B on page 34-35. The package should be addressed to the attention of Gerald Filbin. The deadline for courier delivery is 6:00 pm. As a last resort, you may also fax your pre-proposal to the fax number listed in Section VII. If you use a submittal approach other than electronically through grants.gov, we require that you follow-up with an electronic file submitted via CD, disk, or submitted via e-mail to innovation_state_grant@epa.gov.

Q19. I just came across your grant opportunity. It is in an area that fits perfectly with some work that I am doing for our agency. We would likely team up with another Division that may take the lead since they are directly linked to permitting. Do you require a **signature from management** to accompany the proposal? I am familiar with submitting through grants.gov, but I am concerned that it may not get submitted by this other program within the deadline.

A19. No, a signature is not required at this time. However, we do request that you include a statement indicating that your Commissioner/Director/Secretary has been informed about the project and supports it. If the project is selected, a letter would be required to be submitted with the final proposal.

Q20. I am a Reclamation Specialist for the State Department of Mines Minerals and Energy. Our agency is seeking to procure funds through your RFP NO EPA-OPEI-08-01. I am requesting the **alternate method of submittal** as we do not have the ability to submit this proposal electronically. Please let me know what efforts I can make so that we meet the deadline date of January 3, 2007. Unfortunately our Agency Deputy Director will be on leave after this week, and will not return in time to meet the January deadline so I wish to submit this pre-proposal early as possible.

A20. This question was previously addressed in questions 8 and 18. See above.

Q21. Do you require 424 to be submitted for the **budget** ?

A21. A SF 424 is required to submit via grants.gov, but you need not submit a detailed budget on the SF 424 for the pre-proposal. Instead, we require a Budget Summary page, and budget in the Project Narrative as explained in Section IV of the solicitation.

Q22. Is a **full SF 424** Application for Federal Assistance form required ?

A22. No, only the front page.

Q23. Is January 3 the only **submission date** ?

A23. You may submit your pre-proposal any time prior to January 3, 2008. Pre-proposals received [or postmarked if applicable] after the January 3 submission deadline will be considered late and returned to the sender without further consideration.
