

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

TITLE: “US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program”

ACTION: Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP NO: EPA-OAR-IO-07-07

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NO: 66.037

DATES: The closing date for receipt of hard copy proposal packages is December 14, 2007, 4:00 p.m., EST. All hard copies of proposal packages must be received by Linda Zarow by December 14, 2007, 4:00 p.m., EST in order to be considered for funding. Electronic submissions must be submitted via Grants.gov by December 14, 2007, 11:59 p.m., EST. Proposals received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding. EPA will request final applications from the eligible entity or entities whose proposal(s) have been preliminarily recommended for award.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds and solicits proposals from eligible United States entities (See Section III) to develop and administer a “US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program,” designed to provide education and training for undergraduate and graduate students interested in careers in air quality-related environmental disciplines.

FUNDING AWARDS: The total estimated funding available for this cooperative opportunity is approximately \$1,250,000. EPA anticipates awarding one or two cooperative agreements from this announcement, subject to availability of funds and the quality of proposals received.

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Section I. Funding Opportunities Description

A. Background

The Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Air and Radiation is soliciting proposals from eligible U.S. entities capable of designing and implementing a US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program to provide both undergraduate and graduate students in science, engineering, and other relevant fields with financial support to encourage students to undertake air quality-related research and training on air quality issues characteristic of those found in the US-Mexico border region. The US-Mexico border region is defined in the 1983 La Paz US-Mexico Agreement as "the region that encompasses 62.5 miles on each side of the US-Mexico border" and spans 1,950 miles from the Gulf Coast to the Pacific Ocean.

The long-term purpose of the education program is to increase the quality, number, and diversity of air pollution control specialists available to work on US-Mexico border air quality problems. These problems have the potential to grow significantly as the population and economy of the border regions grow. According to *Border 2012*, a multi-year environmental strategy for the region, the population of the region is estimated to be near "12 million having an explosive population growth and industrial expansion in the last two decades." The population is expected to top 19 million by 2020, which will continue to increase demands on the regions' natural resources, including the air.

Studies have shown that there is lower outward mobility among many residents of the border region. This means that many students attend local universities to which they commute on a daily basis. The purpose of US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program is for a selected applicant(s) to reach out to students and stimulate their interest in acquiring the science, engineering, and other knowledge necessary to help address air quality issues affecting their communities.

Among the goals of this education program will be introducing the selected students to the possibilities of a career working to better understand and improve air quality through pursuing research and advances in science and technology related to US-Mexico border air quality issues. The applicant will be responsible for selecting the participating students. Eligible students are citizens of the US, its territories, or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the US for permanent residence. Unfortunately, students who legally attend a US university, under a student visa, are not eligible participants. Through the US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program, the Office of Air and Radiation is supporting education and training in various academic fields such as engineering, environmental science, political science, and public health. Applicants are encouraged to focus their proposals toward a diverse student population who may have had limited exposure to environmental science and engineering, but who are experiencing first-hand the border air quality issues that need to be addressed. Benefits of the program should include enhancing students' abilities to work in the environmental field, providing them with knowledge and a sense of understanding for air quality related topics, and appreciation of unique US-Mexico border environmental issues.

B. Scope of Work

EPA's Office of Air and Radiation is seeking proposals from eligible U.S. entities that are capable of serving local populations in the US-Mexico border region, and can provide a coordinated program of education and training on air quality-related topics relevant to that region. The proposal should describe the overall scope and focus of the proposed five-year program, education, training, and research opportunities that will be available to the students who participate. The project description should include how the applicant will identify and recruit a diverse pool of potential students for their program. After recruiting students, the description should show how the applicant will select students who have a need for financial assistance, are the first in their families to attend college, and/or have disabilities. This description also should explain how the applicant will develop their individual academic programs, provide mentoring, and offer other relevant activities. The proposal should identify the participating faculty members and include their relevant qualifications, particularly with regards to air quality issues, and potential extent of participation.

Goals of the US-Mexico Environmental Education Program

The major, long-term objective of the US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program is to increase the quality, locality, and number of air pollution control specialists available to work on US-Mexico border air quality problems. EPA wants to accomplish this through facilitating access to undergraduate and graduate training on air quality-related topics. This includes, but is not limited to, studies on sources and characteristics of air pollution, measuring and modeling air quality, and health and environmental effects of air pollution, and approaches to controlling air pollution.

C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs

- 1. Linkage to EPA Strategic Plan.** Tasks under this project support the EPA Strategic Plan's Goal 1: Clean Air and Global Climate Change; Object 1.1 Healthier Outdoor Air; Sub-Objective 1.1.1. More People Breathing Cleaner

Air. Specifically, the results of the proposed activities should contribute to local efforts to understand and address the air pollution problems of the US-Mexico border region.

- 2. Outputs.** The term “output” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an EPA environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative, but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period. An example of a short-term output might be the number of peer-reviewed research papers. An example of a long-term output might be the number of students who go on to careers related to air pollution control in the border region.

Expected outputs from the project(s) to be funded under this announcement may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Number of students trained
- Number of technical reports and peer-reviewed papers
- Tools that facilitate projects or provide access to information
- Better characterization of outdoor air or indoor air quality

Progress reports and a final report also will be a required output, as specified in Section VI (C) of this announcement, Reporting Requirement.

- 3. Outcomes.** The term “outcome” means the result, effect or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, but must be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. Examples of outcomes include enhancing students’ abilities to work in the environmental field, providing them with knowledge and a sense of understanding for air quality related topics, and appreciation of unique US-Mexico border environmental issues.

D. Supplementary Information

The statutory authority for this action is the Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3) which authorizes the award of grants for research, investigations, experiments, demonstrations, surveys, and studies related to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, and control of air pollution. Additional statutory authority includes the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Section 102(2) (F), Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4332.

Section II. Award Information

A. What is the amount of funding available?

The total estimated funding expected to be available for awards under this competitive opportunity is approximately \$1,250,000.

B. Partial Funding

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund proposals by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process.

C. How many agreements will EPA award in this competition?

EPA anticipates award of one or two cooperative agreements under this announcement ranging in value from approximately \$625,000 to \$1,250,000, subject to the availability of funds and quality of evaluated proposals. In addition, EPA reserves the right to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections. Any additional selection for awards will be made no later than six months after the original selection date.

D. What is the project period for awards resulting from this solicitation?

The estimated project period for awards resulting from this solicitation will begin in late Spring/early Summer 2008. Proposed project periods may be up to five years.

E. Funding Type

The funding for selected projects will be in the form of a cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements permit substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicants in the performance of the work supported. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial Federal involvement for this project will include:

- close monitoring of the successful applicants performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- in accordance with 40 CFR 31.36(g), review of proposed procurement;
- approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient);
- review and comment on reports and other publications prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

Section III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Entities

Proposals will be accepted from States, local governments, territories, Indian Tribes, possessions of the U.S. (including the District of Columbia), public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, and other public or private non-profit institutions.

Non-profit organization, as defined by OMB Circular A-122, located at 2 CFR Part 230, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization which: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations.

Only US entities, as described above, are eligible under this announcement.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no statutory or regulatory match requirement under the Clean Air Act Section 103. Eligible and allowable voluntary contributions of funds and/or in-kind contributions of resources will be treated as cost shares under 40 CFR 30.23.

C. Threshold Eligibility Criteria

These are requirements that if not met by the time of proposal submission will result in elimination of the proposal from consideration for funding. Only proposals from eligible entities (see above) that meet all of these criteria will be evaluated against the ranking factors in Section V of this announcement. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

1. a. Proposals must substantially comply with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the proposal, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
b. In addition, proposals must be received by the EPA or received through www.grants.gov, as specified in Section IV of this announcement, on or before the proposal submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their proposal reaches the designated person/office specified in Section IV of the announcement by the submission deadline.
c. Proposals received after the submission deadline will be considered late and returned to the sender without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling. For hard copy submissions, where Section IV requires proposal receipt by a specific person/office by the submission deadline, receipt by an agency mailroom is not sufficient. Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with Linda Zarow as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.
2. Proposals must be written in English.

3. The proposal must demonstrate how the applicant will design and implement a US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program providing both undergraduate and graduate students in science, engineering, and other relevant fields with financial support to encourage students to undertake air quality-related research and training on air quality issues characteristic of those found in the US-Mexico border region. The US-Mexico border region is defined in the 1983 La Paz US-Mexico Agreement as “the region that encompasses 62.5 miles on each side of the US-Mexico border” and spans 1,950 miles from the Gulf Coast to the Pacific Ocean.
4. Proposals must include planning for one field trip per year for the students to Washington, DC, one of the EPA regions, or to one of the EPA laboratories that work with air quality issues to enhance the student’s knowledge of environmental laws, regulations, scientific research, and technical processes.
5. Proposals must support EPA’s Goal 1, *Clean Air and Global Climate Change*, of EPA’s Strategic Plan -- Protect and improve the air so it is healthy to breathe and risks to human health and the environment are reduced; reduce greenhouse gas intensity by enhancing partnerships with businesses and other sectors..

Section IV. Proposal and Submission Information

A. How to Obtain Proposal Package

EPA encourages applicants to obtain proposal materials and apply electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. Applicants may also download individual grant application forms from EPA’s Grants and Debarment website at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/how_to_apply.htm.

To obtain a hard copy of materials, please send an email or written request to the Agency contact listed in Section VII of this announcement.

B. Form of Proposal Submission

Applicants have the option to submit their proposals in *one of two ways*: 1) Hard copy by express delivery service, or 2) electronically through the Grants.gov website. All proposals must be prepared, and include the information, as described in Section IV.C. below, regardless of mode of transmission.

1. Hard Copy Submission

Please provide one original of the proposal package (including signed and completed SF 424 and SF 424A forms) and four copies--**no binders or spiral binding**--to:

Express Delivery Address (FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Attn: Linda Zarow (Mail Code: 6101A)
OAR/IO
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460
Phone: (202) 564-7431

Hard Copy Proposal Submission Deadline

All hard copies of proposal packages must be received by Linda Zarow on December 14, 2007 by 4:00 p.m., EST.

2. Grants.gov Submission

The electronic submission of your proposal must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and is authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance. For more information, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on “Get Registered” on the left side of the page. *Note that the registration process may take a week or longer to complete.* If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an AOR and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To begin the application process under this grant announcement, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on the “Apply for Grants” tab on the left side of the page. Then click on “Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions” to download the PureEdge viewer and obtain the application package for the announcement. To download the PureEdge viewer click on the “PureEdge Viewer” link. Once you have downloaded the viewer, you may retrieve the application package by entering the Funding Opportunity Number, **EPA-OAR-IO-07-07**, or the CFDA number that applies to the announcement (CFDA 66.037), in the appropriate field. You may also be able to access the application package by clicking on the “Application” button at the top right of the synopsis page for this announcement on <http://www.grants.gov> (to find the synopsis page, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on the “Find Grant Opportunities” button on the left side of the page and then go to Search Opportunities and use the Browse by Agency feature to find EPA opportunities).

ATTENTION – Microsoft Vista and Word 2007 Users

Please note that Grants.gov does not currently support the new Microsoft Vista Operating system. The PureEdge software used by Grants.gov for forms is not compatible with Vista. Grants.gov will be reviewing this new product to determine if it can be supported in the future.

In addition, the new version of Microsoft Word saves documents with the extension .DOCX. The Grants.gov system does not process Microsoft Word documents with the extension .DOCX. When submitting Microsoft Word attachments to Grants.gov, please use the version of Microsoft Word that ends in .DOC. If you have any questions regarding this matter please email the Grants.gov Contact Center at support@grants.gov or call 1-800-518-4726.

Grants.gov Proposal Submission Deadline

Your organization’s AOR **must** submit your complete proposal package as described below electronically to EPA through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on December 14, 2007.

Proposal Materials

The following forms and documents are required to be submitted under this announcement:

- I. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- II. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- III. Narrative Proposal (as described in Section IV.C of the announcement)

-The proposal package **must** include all of the following materials:

I. Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance

Complete the form. There are no attachments. Please be sure to include organization fax number and email address in Block 5 of the Standard Form SF 424.

Please note that the organizational Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number must be included on the SF-424. Organizations may obtain a DUNS number at no cost by calling the toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711.

II. Standard Form SF 424A – Budget Information:

Complete the form. There are no attachments. The total amount of federal funding requested for the project period should be shown on line 5(e) and on line 6(k) of SF-424A. If indirect costs are included, the amount of indirect costs should be entered on line 6(j). The indirect cost rate (i.e., a percentage), the base (e.g., personnel costs and fringe benefits), and the amount should also be indicated on line 22.

***Selected applicant(s) will need to submit a copy of their current indirect cost rate that has been negotiated with a federal cognizant agency during application phase.**

III. Narrative Proposal

The document should be readable in PDF, MS Word or Word Perfect WP6/7/8 for Windows and consolidated into a single file and be prepared in accordance with Section IV.C of the announcement.

Documents I through III listed under Proposal Materials above should appear in the “Mandatory Documents” box on the Grants.gov Grant Application Package page.

For documents I and II, click on the appropriate form and then click “Open Form” below the box. The fields that must be completed will be highlighted in yellow. Optional fields and completed fields will be displayed in white. If you enter an invalid response or incomplete information in a field, you will receive an error message. When you have finished filling out each form, click “Save.” When you return to the electronic Grant Application Package page, click on the form you just completed, and then click on the box that says, “Move Form to Submission List.” This action will move the document over to the box that says, “Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission.”

For document number III, the Narrative Proposal, you will need to attach electronic files. Prepare your narrative proposal as described above in Section IV.C. of this announcement and save the document to your computer as an MS Word, PDF or WordPerfect file. When you are ready to attach your proposal to the application package, click on “Project Narrative Attachment Form,” and open the form. Click “Add Mandatory Project Narrative File,” and then attach your proposal narrative (previously saved to your computer) using the browse window that appears. You may then click “View Mandatory Project Narrative File” to view it. Enter a brief descriptive title of your project in the space beside “Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename;” the file name should be no more than 40 characters long. If there other attachments that you would like to submit to accompany your proposal, you may click “Add Optional Project Narrative File” and proceed as before. When you have finished attaching the necessary documents, click “Close Form.” When you return to the “Grant Application Package” page, select the “Project Narrative Attachment Form” and click “Move Form to Submission List.” The form should now appear in the box that says, “Mandatory Completed Documents for Submission.”

Once your proposal package has been completed and saved, send it to your AOR for submission to U.S. EPA through Grants.gov. Please advise your AOR to close all other software programs before attempting to submit the application package through Grants.gov.

In the “Application Filing Name” box, your AOR should enter your organization’s name (abbreviate where possible), the fiscal year (e.g., FY08), and the grant category (e.g., Assoc Prog Supp). The filing name should not exceed 40 characters. From the “Grant Application Package” page, your AOR may submit the application package by clicking the “Submit” button that appears at the top of the page. The AOR will then be asked to verify the agency and funding opportunity number for which the application package is being submitted. If problems are encountered during the submission process, the AOR should reboot his/her computer before trying to submit the application package again. [It may be necessary to turn off the computer (not just restart it) before attempting to submit the package again.] If the AOR continues to experience submission problems, he/she may contact Grants.gov for assistance by phone at 1-800-518-4726 or email at <http://www.grants.gov/help/help.jsp> or contact Linda Zarow at (202) 564-7431 or zarow.linda@epa.gov.

Proposal packages submitted thru grants.gov will be time/date stamped electronically.

C. Content of Proposal Submission

All proposal submissions, regardless of mode of submission, must contain a completed and signed Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance, a completed SF-424, Budget Information—Non Construction Programs, and a Narrative Proposal as described below. Submissions must conform to the outline below.

Narrative Proposal

The Narrative Proposal cannot exceed a maximum of 30 single-spaced typewritten pages, including the Summary Page. Pages in excess of 30 will not be considered. Supporting materials, such as resumes and letters of support, can be submitted as attachments and are not included in the 30-page limit.

1. Summary Information Page

- a. Project Title.
- b. Applicant Information. Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, fax and email address.
- c. Funding Requested. Specify the amount being requested from EPA.
- d. Total Project Cost. Special total cost of the project. Identify funding from other sources, including any in-kind resources.
- e. Project period. Provide beginning and ending dates (for planning purposes, applicants should assume a project start date of late Spring/early Summer 2008)

2. Narrative Work Plan

**The Narrative must explicitly describe how the proposed project meets the guidelines established in Sections I—III (including the threshold eligibility criteria in Section III.C) of this announcement, and address each of the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.

a. Project Summary/Approach: The summary shall contain the following components:

1. A detailed project description, summary of specific actions and methods to be undertaken and the responsible institutions, including estimated timeline for each task. Also, the following bullets should be addressed:
 - how the applicant will identify and recruit a diverse pool of potential students.
 - explain how the applicant will select students who have a need for financial assistance, are the first in their families to attend college, and/or have disabilities.
 - explain how the applicant will develop their individual academic programs, provide mentoring, and offer other relevant activities.
2. A description of the associated work products to be developed.
3. An explanation of project benefits to the public, and specifically the potential audiences served .
4. A description of the roles of the applicant and partners, if any.
5. A description of the organization’s experience related to the proposed project.
6. A description of staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. *Example: Expertise in many of the Border region’s environmental problems: poor water quality and availability, inadequate infrastructure, air pollution, etc*
7. A detailed plan for one field trip per year for the students to Washington, DC, one of the EPA regions, or to one of the EPA laboratories that work with air quality issues to enhance the student’s knowledge of environmental laws, regulations, scientific research, and technical processes (trip should be included in overall budget).

b. Environmental Results—Outcomes and Outputs:

Identify the expected quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the project (**See Section I**), including what measurements will be used to track your progress towards achieving the expected project outcomes and how the results of the project will be evaluated. Identify the expected project outputs and how progress towards achieving them will be tracked and measured.

c. Past Performance

I. Programmatic Capability: Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5, and preferably EPA agreements) and describe (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements and (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including submitting acceptable final technical reports.

*In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current and prior Federal agency grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for these factors under Section V.

II. Reporting on Environmental Results--Outcomes and Outputs: Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5, and preferably EPA agreements), and describe how you documented and/or reported on whether you were making progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outputs and outcomes) under those agreements. If you were not making progress, please indicate whether, and how, you documented why not.

*In evaluating applicants under this factor in Section V, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from EPA files and from current and prior Federal agency grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information

provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available environmental results past performance information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for this factor under Section V.

3. Detailed Budget Narrative

Clearly explain how EPA funds will be used. Applicants must itemize costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel (detailed plan for one field trip), equipment, supplies, other direct costs, indirect costs and total costs.

Management Fees: When formulating budgets for proposals/applications, applicants must not include management fees or similar charges in excess of the direct costs and indirect costs at the rate approved by the applicants cognizant audit agency, or at the rate provided for by the terms of the agreement negotiated with EPA. The term "management fees or similar charges" refers to expenses added to the direct costs in order to accumulate and reserve funds for ongoing business expenses, unforeseen liabilities, or for other similar costs that are not allowable under EPA assistance agreements. Management fees or similar charges may not be used to improve or expand the project funded under this agreement, except to the extent authorized as a direct cost of carrying out the scope of work.

D. Can funding be used to make subawards, acquire contract services or fund partnerships?

EPA awards funds to one eligible applicant as the "recipient" even if other eligible applicants are named as "partners" or "co-applicants" or members of a "coalition" or "consortium." The recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds.

Funding may be used to provide subgrants or subawards of financial assistance, which includes using subawards or subgrants to fund partnerships, provided the recipient complies with applicable requirements for subawards or subgrants including those contained in 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as appropriate. Applicants must compete contracts for services and products and conduct cost and price analyses to the extent required by the procurement provisions of these regulations. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. While applicants are not required to identify contractors or consultants in their proposal, if they do so the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific contractor or consultant in the proposal EPA selects does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with competitive procurement requirements. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the proposal solely based on the firm's role in preparing the proposal.

Successful applicants cannot use subgrants or subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products from for-profit organizations to carry out its assistance agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subawardee or subgrantee must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance under Subpart B Section .210 of [OMB Circular A-133](#), and the definitions of "subaward" at 40 CFR 30.2(ff) or "subgrant" at 40 CFR 31.3, as applicable. EPA will not be a party to these transactions.

E. How will an applicant's proposed subawardees or contractors be considered during the evaluation process described in Section V of the announcement?

Section V of the announcement describes the evaluation criteria and evaluation process that will be used by EPA to make selections under this announcement. During this evaluation, except for those criteria that relate solely to the applicant's qualifications, past performance, and reporting history, the review panel will consider (to the extent applicable under any relevant criteria) the qualifications, expertise, and experience of

(i) an applicant's proposed subawardees/subgrantees identified in the proposal if the applicant demonstrates in the proposal that the subaward/subgrant will be properly awarded consistent with the applicable regulations.

(II) an applicant's proposed contractor(s) if the applicant's proposal demonstrates that the contractor was selected in compliance with the competitive Procurement Standards in 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR 31.36.

EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of proposed subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractors during the proposal evaluation process unless the applicant complies with these requirements.

F. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for receipt of hard copy proposal packages is December 14, 2007, 4:00 p.m., EST. All hard copies of proposal packages must be received by Linda Zarow by 4:00 p.m., EST on December 14, 2007 in order to be considered for funding.

Electronic submissions must be submitted via Grants.gov by December 14, 2007, 11:59 p.m., EST. Proposals received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

Final (full) grant applications will be requested only from those eligible entities whose proposals have been tentatively selected for award. Additional instructions for final application packages will be provided when the applicant is notified of the tentative selection

G. Confidential Business Information

In accordance with 40 CFR 2.203, applicants may claim all or a portion of their application/proposal as confidential business information. EPA will evaluate confidentiality claims in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2. Applicants must clearly mark applications/proposals or portions of applications/proposals they claim as confidential. If no claim of confidentiality is made, EPA is not required to make the inquiry to the applicant otherwise required by 40 CFR 2.204(c) (2) prior to disclosure. Note that under Public Law No. 105-277, data produced under an award is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

H. Pre-Proposal Communications and Assistance

In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft proposals, provide informal comments on draft proposals, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications/proposals. However, EPA will respond to questions in writing from individual applicants regarding eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement. Applicants are responsible for the content of their proposal, and for ensuring that their proposal is submitted as specified in Section IV of the announcement.

Section V. Proposal Review Information

Only proposals that meet the threshold criteria in section III will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth below. Applicants should directly and explicitly address these criteria as part of their proposal submittal. Each proposal will be rated under a points system, with a total of 100 points possible.

A. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Points
<p>1. Project Summary/Approach: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the following factors: (i) (10 pts) the extent and quality to which the proposal narrative includes a well-conceived strategy for implementing an education program that will provide both undergraduate and graduate students in science, engineering, and other relevant fields with an opportunity to undertake air quality-related research and training on air quality issues characteristic of those found in the US-Mexico border region while addressing all the requirements in Section I, Part B (Scope of Work) and Part C (EPA Strategic Plan Linkage and Anticipated Outcomes/Outputs), (ii) (10 pts) the extent and quality to which the proposal's goals are realistic and will be actually implemented by project end, (iii) (5 pts) whether the proposal sets forth a reasonable time schedule for the execution of the tasks associated with the project(s), (iv) (5 pts) the extent and quality to which the proposal identifies how the applicant will recruit a diverse pool of students for potential participation in a US-Mexico Border Environmental Education Program, and how the applicant will select students to participate in the program including those with financial assistance needs, disabilities, and who are the first in their families to attend college.</p>	<p>30</p>
<p>2. Location: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the following factors: (i) (9pts) the extent to which the applicant's physical location will affect its ability to successfully achieve the objectives of this announcement as described in Section I and provide a coordinated program of education and training on air quality-related topics relevant to the U.S/Mexico border region, (ii) (6pts) the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that its proposed project has the aptitude to increase the likelihood that potential participants (students) of their proposed project will reside in the border region as described above, continuing to address the current and future air quality issues facing residents of the US-Mexico border area.</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>3. Environmental Results—Outcomes and Outputs: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the effectiveness of the applicant's plan for tracking and measuring its progress toward achieving expected project outputs and outcomes, including those identified in Section I of this announcement.</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>4. Past Performance--Programmatic Capability and Reporting on Environmental Results: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the applicant's technical ability to successfully complete and</p>	

<p>manage the proposed project taking into account the applicants: (i) (7 pts) past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project performed within the last 3 years, (ii) (7 pts) history of meeting reporting requirements on federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project performed within the last 3 years and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements, and (iii) (6 pts) past performance in documenting and/or reporting on progress towards achieving the expected outcomes and outputs (e.g., results) under federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope and relevance to the proposed project within the last 3 years; and, if such progress was not made whether the documentation and/or reports satisfactorily explained why not.</p> <p><u>NOTE:</u> In evaluating applicants under this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance or reporting history will receive a neutral score for those elements under this criterion. A neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points.</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>5. Staff Expertise/Qualifications: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate the applicant’s (i) (5 pts) description of staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project as described in Section I, (ii) (5 pts) and description of the applicant’s organization and experience relating to the proposed project.</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>6. Budget/Resources: Under this criterion, the Agency will evaluate whether the applicant’s (5 pts) proposed project budget is appropriate to accomplish the proposed goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes, (ii) (5 pts) proposed budget provides an approximation of the percentage of the budget designated for each major activity, including a plan for one field trip per year for the students to Washington, DC, one of the EPA regions, or to one of the EPA laboratories that work with air quality issues.</p>	<p>10</p>

B. Review and Selection Process

Each eligible proposal will be evaluated by a review team using the evaluation criteria described above. Each proposal will be given a numerical score and will be rank-ordered according to the numerical score. Preliminary funding recommendations will be provided to the Approving Official based on this ranking.

C. Other Factors

Final funding decisions will be made by the Approving Official based on the rankings and recommendation of the review team. In making the final funding decisions, the Approving Official may also consider: programmatic priorities and geographical diversity of awards. Once final decisions have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA Award Official.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Proposal Notifications

- i. EPA anticipates notification to the *successful* applicant will be made, via telephone, electronic or postal mail by February 8, 2008. The notification will advise the applicant that its Proposal has been successfully evaluated and recommended for award. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance. The notice shall require submission of a Final Application. (*Refer to Section IV(B), Content and form of Application Submission*)

This notification, which advises that the applicant’s proposal has been recommended for award, is **not** an authorization to begin performance. The award notice signed by the EPA grants officer is the authorizing document and will be provided through postal mail. At a minimum, this process can take up to 90 days from the date of recommendation.

- ii. EPA anticipates notification to *unsuccessful* applicant(s) will be made via electronic or postal mail by February 8, 2008. The notification will be sent to the original signer of the Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirement

A listing and description of general EPA Regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/applicable_epa_regulations_and_description.htm.

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs may be applicable to awards, resulting from this announcement. Applicants selected for funding may be required to provide a copy of their proposal to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) for review, pursuant to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. This review is not required with the Initial Proposal and not all states require such a review.

C. DUNS Number

All applicants **are required** to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for a Federal grant or cooperative agreement. Applicants can receive a DUNS number, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711, or visiting the D&B website at: <http://www.dnb.com>.

D. Reporting Requirement

Quarterly progress reports and a detailed final report will be required. Quarterly reports summarizing technical progress, planned activities for next quarter and summary of expenditures are required. The final report shall be completed within 90 calendar days of the completion of the period of performance. The final report should include: summary of the project or activity, advances achieved and costs of the project or activity. In addition, the final report shall discuss the problems, successes, and lessons learned from the project or activity that could help overcome structural, organizational or technical obstacles to implementing a similar project elsewhere. The schedule for submission of quarterly reports will be established by EPA, after award.

E. Exchange Network

EPA, states, territories, and tribes are working together to develop the National Environmental Information Exchange Network, a secure, Internet- and standards-based way to support electronic data reporting, sharing, and integration of both regulatory and non-regulatory environmental data. States, tribes and territories exchanging data with each other or with EPA, should make the Exchange Network and the Agency's connection to it, the Central Data Exchange (CDX), the standard way they exchange data and should phase out any legacy methods they have been using. More information on the Exchange Network is available at www.exchangenetwork.net.

F. Disputes

Assistant agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2006) located on the web at: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?position=all&page=3629&dbname=2005_register

G. Non-profit Administrative Capability

Non-profit applicants that are recommended for funding under this announcement are subject to pre-award administrative capability reviews consistent with Section 8b, 8c and 9d of EPA Order 5700.8 - Policy on Assessing Capabilities of Non-Profit Applicants for Managing Assistance Awards (http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/award/5700_8.pdf). In addition, non-profit applicants that qualify for funding may, depending on the size of the award, be required to fill out and submit to the Grants Management Office the Administrative Capabilities Form, with supporting documents, contained in Appendix A of EPA Order 5700.8.

Section VII. Agency Contacts

For further information, contact:

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All questions or comments must be communicated in writing via postal mail, facsimile, or electronic mail to the contact person listed above. Questions and answers will be posted until the closing date of this announcement at the OAR Grants/Funding webpage: http://www.epa.gov/air/grants_funding.html .