

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 7
EPA-RGAD-03-003**

Notice of Request for Initial Proposals for Projects to be Funded From Regional Geographic Initiative Allocation (CFDA 66.606 - Surveys, Studies, Investigations, and Special Purpose Projects).

These proposals support multi-statute Surveys, Studies and Investigations and Special Purpose projects associated with Air Quality, Acid Deposition, Drinking Water, Water Quality, Hazardous Waste, Toxic Substances, and Pesticides; to identify, develop and demonstrate necessary pollution control techniques; to prevent, reduce, and eliminate pollution; and to evaluate the economic and social consequences of alternative strategies and mechanisms for use by those in economic, social, governmental, and environmental management positions.

SUMMARY

EPA is soliciting initial proposals to implement Region 7's strategic priorities: critical ecosystems, sensitive populations, and agriculture. The critical ecosystem priority focuses on facilitating the protection and/or restoration of ecosystems in Region 7 which are critical to biodiversity, human quality of life, and/or landscape functions. The sensitive populations priority focuses on reducing environmental and health risks to children, older adults, and people with chronic illnesses. The agriculture priority focuses on developing partnerships and projects in the agriculture community emphasizing cleaner air, purer water, and better protected land.

1. Amount of Funding Available

EPA Region 7 plans to award a varied number of grants or cooperative agreements. Funding available to the Region is between \$250,000 and \$1,000,000 with individual grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$200,000.

The number of awards will depend on individual proposal cost; the final aggregate amount of federal funding for all Initial Proposals; and the total amount of federal funding available.

Should additional funding become available for award the Agency may award additional grants based on this solicitation and in accordance with the final selection process, without further notice or competition.

2. Right to Reject all Initial Proposals

The Agency reserves the right to reject all initial proposals and make no awards.

3. Matching/Cost Share Requirements

There are no cost share requirements for these projects.

4. Project Period Timeframe

Project duration should not exceed three years. In no instance can the project period exceed five years.

5. Eligible Applicants

Assistance under this program is generally available to States (environmental, health, agriculture departments), territories, Native American Tribes, and possessions of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, Inter-Tribal Coalitions or Consortia, public and private universities and colleges,

hospitals, laboratories, other public or private nonprofit institutions (community based or volunteer organizations), individuals who submit applications proposing projects with significant technical merit and relevance to EPA's mission. Implementation of all projects must occur within the four states of EPA Region 7: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, or Nebraska.

The EPA will consider only one proposal per applicant. Applicants who have an existing agreement under this program are eligible to compete with proposals for new awards.

6. Proposal Submittal - Due Dates

All initial proposals should be e-mailed, mailed or delivered to:

Environmental Protection Agency
Attention: Mrs. Karen Flournoy (RGAD)
901 N. 5th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

E-mail: flournoy.karen@epa.gov

EPA will consider all initial proposals which are post-marked by the U.S. Postal Service, hand-delivered, or electronically delivered to the Agency, or include official delivery service documentation indicating EPA acceptance from a delivery service, on or before the deadline published in the request for initial proposals. Electronic submittals are preferred. This due date is on or before 5 p.m. Central Time, April 14, 2003. Initial proposals received after the due date will not be considered for funding.

7. Statutory Authority and Applicable Regulations

Regional geographic initiative projects are authorized under the following statutes:

- a. Clean Water Act, Section 104;
- b. Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442;
- c. Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001;
- d. Clean Air Act, Section 103;
- e. Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10;
- f. Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20;
- g. Pollution Prevention Act, Section 6605; and
- h. National Environmental Education Act, Section 6.

These projects are subject to EPA's General Grant Regulations (40 CFR Part 30 and 40 CFR Part 31).

8. Allowable Costs

EPA grant funds may only be used for the purposes set forth in the grant agreement, and must be consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Grant funds may not be used for matching funds for other Federal grants, lobbying, or intervention in Federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. In addition, Federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal government or any other government entity. All costs identified in the budget must conform to applicable Federal Cost Principles contained in OMB Circular A-87; A-122; and A-21, as appropriate. Ineligible costs will be reduced from final grant award.

9. Federal Requirements

An applicant whose proposal is selected for federal funding must complete additional forms prior to award (see 40 CFR 30.12 and 31.10). EPA reserves the right to negotiate and/or adjust the final grant amount and work plan content prior to award. In addition, successful applicants will be required to certify that they have not been Debarred or Suspended from participation in federal assistance awards in accordance with 40 CFR Part 32.

10. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants must comply with the Intergovernmental Review Process and/or consultation provisions of Section 204, Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, if applicable, which are contained in 40 CFR Part 29. Further information regarding this requirement will be provided if your proposal is selected for funding.

11. Pre-application Assistance

None planned.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

12. Purpose of This Request Is for Initial Proposals

The EPA is requesting initial proposals which address the regional strategic priorities utilizing the Regional Geographic Initiative. The Regional Geographic Initiative grants fund unique, geographically-based projects that support the Agency's ability to protect human health and the environment. These projects may address places, sectors or innovative projects, and focus on the regional strategic priorities of critical ecosystems, sensitive populations, and agriculture. These projects may also address problems that are multi-media in nature, demonstrate state, local, and/or other stakeholder participation, identify opportunities for leveraging other sources of funding, or support smart growth planning in communities. Smart growth projects are those focused on improving the quality of life in communities by integrating the tenets of ecology, equity and management by citizens.

13. High Priority Areas for Consideration

EPA will award grants for projects focused on Region 7's strategic priorities: critical ecosystems, sensitive populations, and agriculture. These projects should focus on places, sectors, or innovative projects; address problems that are multi-media in nature; demonstrate state, local, and/or other stakeholder participation; and/or identify opportunities for leveraging other sources of funding. Innovative projects related to the strategic priorities are encouraged. Projects could include improvements in human health and protection of agricultural or environmental assets. Projects should focus on human health and/or environmental protection related to the strategic priorities:

Agriculture- The projects should involve surveys, studies, investigations, special purpose projects, related to agricultural/environmental issues. Project emphasis could include, but is not limited to, watershed approaches, assessment tools, animal waste management, nutrient management, sustainable agriculture practices, integrated crop management, and environmental management systems.

Sensitive Populations- The projects should involve surveys, studies, investigations, and special purpose projects related to sensitive populations. Sensitive populations include children (prenatal through age 21), older adults (65 plus years of age with 85 plus years of age designated as particularly fragile) and chronically ill (such as respiratory ailments and compromised immune systems). Project emphasis could include but is not limited to data

collection in Region 7 related to asthma, COPD, lung cancer, childhood leukemia, AIDs, lead and mercury poisoning; and strategies which will mitigate the effects of indoor and outdoor air pollutants, exposure to pesticides, microbial contamination of drinking water, and lead and mercury exposures.

Critical Ecosystems- Proposed projects should involve surveys, investigations, special purpose projects, applied studies and/or application development related to the identification and/or assessment of regional ecosystems. Project focus may include, but is not limited to, ecological indicator development, state analysis and prediction, ecological risk assessment, and critical ecosystem identification and targeting, at scales ranging from regional to site specific.

14. Request for Proposal Format and Contents

Initial proposals should be limited to five pages (not including Standard Form SF-424, and SF-424A and Cover Page). Page size should be 8 1/2 x 11 inches with font size of 12 points or larger. Full application packages should not be submitted at this time. Failure to meet the format and content criteria will eliminate the initial proposal from consideration. The following format should be used for all initial proposals submitted:

- G Completed Page 1 of Standard Form SF-424*, Application for Federal Assistance.
- G Completed Page 2 of Standard Form SF-424A*, Budget Information-Section B (See Allowable Cost).
- G Statement regarding whether this proposal is a continuation of a previously funded project (if so, please provide the assistance number and status of the current grant/cooperative agreement).
- G Cover Page including: Project Title; Name of Applicant; Project Contact; Regional Priority(ies) Addressed; Geographic Location; and Community/Target Audience.
- G Project narrative containing: Project Goals (describe in measurable terms the environmental or human health issue to be addressed and how it will address the purpose(s) of the category chosen); Project Tasks (outline the steps you will take to meet the project goals); Schedule (when you expect to complete significant steps and milestones-milestones are required for project schedules greater than one year). Describe how the project will address: places, sectors or innovative projects; be based on one or more of the regional strategic priorities of critical ecosystems, sensitive populations, and agriculture; address problems that are multi-media in nature; demonstrate state, local, and/or other stakeholder participation; and/or identify opportunities for leveraging other sources of funding.
- G Project Results/Evaluation (describe how you will measure and evaluate the results of your project, and how the proposed project meets the Evaluation Criteria specified in this announcement).
- G Detailed itemization of the amounts budgeted by individual Object Class Categories (see Allowable Cost).
- G Brief description of staffing and funding resources available to implement the proposed project including the number of workers and staff qualifications (no resumes are required).
- G Brief description of the applicant organization, experience related to the area of interest (critical ecosystems, sensitive populations, and/or agriculture), and the organization's infrastructure as it relates to its ability to implement the proposed project.

*Standard Form 424 may be obtained from the following website:

www.epa.gov/Region07/economics/index.htm or by contacting the R7 Competition Advocate at the number/address in this announcement.

15. Preliminary Eligibility Screening Requirements

To be eligible for consideration, applicants **must meet** all of the following criteria. Failure to meet the following criteria will result in the automatic disqualification of the proposal for funding consideration:

1. Be an applicant who is eligible to receive funding under this announcement;
2. The proposal must address one or more of the High Priority Areas for Consideration; (agriculture, sensitive populations and/or critical ecosystems)
3. The proposal must meet all format and content requirements contained in this notice; and
4. The proposal must comply with the directions for submittal contained in this notice.

16. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

All initial proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria and weights:

1. The proposal has clearly stated measurable goals and objectives. Description of how meeting the goals and objectives will address the environmental or human health issue(s) and achieve environmental results (20 pts);
2. Multi-media approach (air, land, water, pollution prevention, etc) and replicability or transferability to other communities, locations, sectors. (20 pts);
3. Importance of the environmental or human health issue(s) to be addressed to the community(ies) or target audience(s). How applicant and partners are currently involved with the community(ies) or audience(s) that will be impacted or engaged (15 pts);
4. Partnerships in place to accomplish the project. Examples of commitment and experience of applicant and/or partnership that support the ability to conduct the proposed project. How the partnership functions and how it will carry out the work of the proposed project (15 pts);
5. Description of the financial needs of the proposed project, identify funds/resources that have been committed or will be committed, and describe how this grant will stimulate the availability of other funding sources (15 pts); and
6. Ability to manage this grant or describe the system in place to hire the requisite experience. Applicant's history of managing federal funds. If applicant is, or has been, a recipient of an EPA grant/cooperative agreement, provide information regarding compliance with quarterly progress reports, reporting measures, and annual financial status reporting (15 pts).

17. Evaluation Process

All proposals will be reviewed, evaluated and ranked by a selected panel of EPA reviewers based on the above evaluation criteria. Applicants will be screened to ensure that they meet all eligibility criteria and will be disqualified if they do not meet the criteria.

18. Selection Process

The funding decision will be made from this group of top rated initial proposals based on additional factors such as:

1. Geographical distribution of funds; and

2. Distribution across Region 7 and Agency strategic priorities.

19. Selection Official

Final selection of initial proposals will be made by the Region 7 Regional Administrator.

20. Notification

The Region 7 EPA office will mail acknowledgments to applicants upon receipt of the proposal. Once initial proposals have been reviewed, evaluated, and ranked, applicants will be notified regarding the outcome of the competition.

A listing of successful proposals will be posted on the Region 7 EPA website address www.epa.gov/region07/economics at the conclusion of the competition. This website may also contain information about this announcement including information concerning deadline extensions or other modifications.

21. Dispute Resolution Process

Procedures at 40 CFR 30.63 and 40 CFR 31.70 apply.

22. Confidential Business Information

Applicants should clearly mark information contained in their proposal which they consider confidential business information. EPA reserves the right to make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with Agency regulations at 40 CFR, Subpart B. If no such claim accompanies the proposal when it is received by the EPA, it may be made available to the public by EPA without further notice to the applicant.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

- Karen Flournoy at flournoy.karen@epa.gov Telephone (913)551-7782; Fax (913) 551-7976, or
- Karen Sherrill, Region 7 Competition Advocate at sherrill.karen@epa.gov Telephone (913)551-7461; Fax (913)551-7467