

Questions and Answers about the CARE RFP

Updated March 6, 2009

Added since previous update: B14, C3, E4, E5, E6, Section U (Unanswered Questions from 2/24/09 CARE National Webcast

The following Questions and Answers are compiled for the benefit of organizations considering applying for a CARE Grant. They include questions from previous years as well as updates from the current RFP process. They are grouped by categories and numbered consecutively with the category. The Categories are:

- A. Eligible Applicants**
- B. Documentation**
- C. Speaking to Someone**
- D. Costs and Funding**
- E. Bidding Requirements**
- F. CARE Definitions**
- G. Leveraging**
- H. Working with EPA**
- I. CERCLA and Monitoring**
- J. Threshold Criteria**
- K. Locations for CARE Communities**
- L. Length of CARE Agreement**
- M. Future CARE Competitions**

- N** **Is My Project Eligible For Funding?**
- O.** **Multi-Media**
- P.** **Difference between Grant and Cooperative Agreement**
- Q.** **Number of Applications**
- R.** **CARE Information Sessions**
- S.** **Principal Investigators**
- T.** **Old Applications and Workplans**
- U.** **Unanswered Questions from February 24 Session**

A. Eligible Applicants

Question A1: I am curious to know whether or not a community group that is not a nonprofit is eligible for the CARE grant? Does community organization have to be a 501c3? Are 501(c) (3)s eligible? Are local hospital foundations eligible?

Answer: According to the RFP, a 501(c)(3) is eligible. A community group or hospital foundation or other organization must be a non-profit as defined by OMB Circular A-122. The Circular defines a non-profit as:

“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. For this purpose, the term "non-profit organization" excludes (i) colleges and universities; (ii) hospitals; (iii) State, local, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments; and (iv) those non-profit organizations which are excluded from coverage of this Circular in accordance with paragraph 5.

[Please note that while colleges and universities and tribes are not non-profits they are still eligible for CARE grants]

Question A2: I am not an agency, only an individual but looking over the grant requirements it is to prevent pollution; well that is what I am trying to do also. Is it possible for me to apply?

Answer: Individuals are not eligible to apply for CARE Cooperative Agreements.

Question A3: Are local county health departments eligible to apply for CARE program funding?

Answer: If the county health department is an agency of the county or other local or tribal government entity they could apply. However, in some states the county health department is part of the State government. In those States they can not apply since State agencies are ineligible. They could of course be a partner working on a CARE project that has an eligible grantee.

Question A4: Is a Council of Governments eligible to be an applicant for the CARE

Program? We are a regional planning organization that serves city and county governments who are members of the Council.

Answer: An organization of local government or local officials would be eligible to be an applicant.

Question A5: Will CARE consider funding a Level I and a Level II grant for a community? We would like to submit a Level I grant but do not want to interfere with the community's larger collaboration that may be seeking Level II funding.

Answer: According to the RFP an applicant (organization) can submit only one proposal. An organization could partner in more than one CARE project or proposal. However, you should be aware that it is EPA's intent, to the extent it can, provide geographic diversity in the CARE projects. As a practical matter, it is highly unlikely that we would have two CARE Cooperative Agreements in the same community.

Question A6: In Puerto Rico, nonprofits apply for certification under Section 1101 under the PR Internal Revenue Code and are not directed to apply under any other code, are they eligible as non-profits?

Answer: If you are legally recognized as a non-profit in Puerto Rico you are eligible. Similarly, if an organization qualifies as a non-profit organization under state law, that organization also is eligible.

Question A7: Are 501 C (4) non profits eligible to apply -or only 501(c) 3?

Answer: No. Non profits that meet the definition of non profit under OMB Circular A-122, with the exception of Nonprofits that fall under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Act and lobby, are eligible. Nonprofits can demonstrate eligibility by providing documentation of nonprofit status under the state law in which the organization was incorporated or by providing evidence that the IRS considers the organization exempt from taxation under 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6) or another provision of the IRS.

Question A8: 1. Will the community spanning across the border be eligible providing that all other criteria are met?
2. Are non-US institutions eligible to provide services/be partners providing that this is the only option/the most efficient option available?

Answer: Border communities are eligible for funding provided the money goes to an American grantee. Once an American grantee gets the money they can use a non-American entity to provide services if all other criteria for efficiently spending money are met.

Question A9: Could you clarify for me, if a public school was to apply, how might that application look for consideration?

Answer: A public school would be considered an agency of local government and thus eligible. A local chapter of a Parent Teacher Association or similar organization would be considered a nonprofit. EPA would judge an application from a school the same as other applications. Please note that while a school would be part of a community a school in and of itself is not a community. As we stated in the RFP:

A community is all the people living in the same area sharing the same environment, including both residents and businesses. ... Moreover, a subpopulation of a community (e.g., all the schools in a specific area [*or a single school*]; or all the people of the same ethnic group; or all the people with a single occupation to the exclusion of the other people living in the same area), does not qualify as representing the entire community and a project addressing a subpopulation is not be eligible for a CARE grant.

Question A10 Is a *national* non-profit (versus local as indicated on page 16) is eligible to apply?

Answer: A national non-profit is eligible to apply providing it meets the criteria established by OMB Circular A-122.

CARE is focused upon local communities which have specific boundaries, not upon broad national toxic issues. Therefore, a national non-profit must have specific, local partners as part of the proposal and focus upon issues and concerns specific to that community.

Question A11 I am not sure if I should apply for a LI or a LII project. How do I determine which level I should apply for?

Answer The applicant ultimately decides which Level to apply for.

A number of current grantees received a Level II grant without first receiving a Level I grant. The threshold factor for Level II assumes that the applicant completed a process akin to a Level I project. See p. 18 of the RFP for more information.

B. Documentation

Question B1: What kind of documents do you require from a subaward/subcontract?

Answer: What EPA requires is outlined in Section IV, "Application and Submission Information", of the RFP. Letters of commitment from a proposed subcontract is sufficient.

Eligible entities/applicants whose initial proposals are tentatively selected for award will be requested to submit final applications. EPA may request additional documentation regarding subawards/subcontracts when final applications are submitted.

Question B2: We hope to work with EPA around some of the project ideas we have, so we don't have specific breakdown of costs in some cases (i.e. in terms of personnel, contract, and supplies). How would you like us to proceed?

Answer: Your budget narrative is an estimate. Guidance on preparing a budget can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/recipient/tips.htm>

EPA may request additional, more specific budget information when final applications are requested from those entities/applicants whose proposals have been tentatively selected for award.

Question B3: In addressing the criteria "organizational capacity," it's not clear what information you want regarding prior EPA grants. Do you simply want to know that we are current with all required reports, or do you want to know what we have accomplished substantively?

Answer: Your response should describe other projects that you have successfully managed, or organizational features and controls that will help ensure the project can be effectively managed and successfully completed. You must describe and provide substantiation of your ability to manage a project such as the one proposed. Please also describe the system(s) that will be used to appropriately manage, expend, and account for Federal funds. If you are, or have been, a recipient of an EPA grant/cooperative agreement in the last 3 years the applicant must provide information regarding compliance reporting measures, and annual financial status reporting. If for some reason you have problems complying with some of the requirements of previous federal grants, you may also want to include how those problems were resolved and what measures have been put in place to avoid the same problems to happen in the future.

Question B4: Regarding the letters of commitment from collaborating organizations, agencies, or entities, what level of commitment is required? For example, do we need to obtain a memorandum or is it fine to have a letter of commitment signed by the representative that will be collaborating with us on the project?

Answer: A letter of commitment by a representative of the organization is sufficient. Please remember that EPA reserves the right to contact organizations to verify their commitment.

Question B5: Is a letter of intent mandatory? And if so, what is the deadline for the letter?

Answer: Letters of intent are not required to submit a proposal for a CARE grant.

Question B6: Are there any required supporting documents for ex. 990-forms, bi-laws, articles of incorporation, IRS 501(c)3 tax letters etc. that need to be included with the grant application. We will be applying for a level I grant.

Answer: No, you do not need to include these forms with your application, although you may be asked for some of them if you are selected.

Question B7: I am interesting in applying for a CARE Cooperative Agreement unfortunately I am unable to fill out the application over my computer; I was hoping you could tell me where to obtain the application papers. I look forward to your response

Answer: To get information on the EPA grant process including any grant related forms please go to: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/>

Alternatively, if you are willing to use a delivery service, instead of grants.gov to submit your application you can go to:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sf424.pdf> and download the only "form" you need to fill out.

In addition, to your SF 424 you must submit your Project Narrative as required by the Request for Proposals (RFP). While you must follow the format described in the RFP there is no specific form to download. Remember to follow the instructions and address the evaluation criteria.

Question B8: We are submitting our CARE application via gants.gov. Can letters of support be attached to the application as a PDF file? I read in the RFP that the narrative should be in Word but didn't see any mention of what format is necessary for supplemental attachments? Thank you.

Answer: PDF files are fine.

Question B9: What are the Page limits for the various sections of the submission?

What is the overall page limit?

Answer: Please refer to Section IV -- Proposal and Submission Information; Section C. Content of Proposal Submission for the page limits. They are as follows:

Title Page (Section IV: C.1)	1 page
Narrative (Section IV: C.2)	10 pages maximum
Budget (Section IV: C.2)	2 pages maximum. See Appendix B

Total Page limit for the submission is 13 pages.

Note that the RFP initially included a misprint which stated the overall limit was 20. **THAT WAS NOT CORRECT. THE CURRENT RFP WAS CORRECTED.**

Level 2 applicants are allowed up to 5 attachments (50 pages maximum of substantiating materials: e.g. membership lists, meeting notes, reports)

Question B10: What are the font and margin sizes for the proposal?

Answer: In accordance with Section III.B. Threshold Eligibility Requirements, the minimum acceptable font size for the narrative proposal and the budget is 12 point. Material in smaller font sizes will not be considered. Pages must have at least 1 inch margins on all sides.

Question B11: I am having problems with Grants.Gov. Can you help me?

Answer Grants.Gov provides a unified site for interaction between grant applicants and the US Federal agencies that manage grant funds. This is the only electronic submission system you can use.

EPA does not operate Grants.Gov. Therefore we cannot provide support for the system, answer questions, or provide assistance with the system. The Grants.Gov website does provide information, news alerts and other helpful information.

Remember that the system may be impacted by volume of submissions and it will **CEASE PROCESSING** at the end of the submission period, March 16 even if you are in the middle of entering your application.

For more information go to <http://www.grants.gov/>

Question B12: Can a logic model table be pasted as a figure, to save space, or would this violate the 12 pt criteria?

Answer: Figures can be pasted into the application providing they are within the overall application page limit and conform to the margins.

Keep in mind that reviewers will be reading the application. If the text within the figures becomes too small to read or the figure itself is too small to read, it may not be understood which will not add value to your submission.

Please remember that a logic model table can also be one of your attachments since it is supporting materials. You should mention it in the body of your narrative proposal and attach. CARE Level 2s have a 50 TOTAL pages limitation for attachments (see amendment 1) with no limitation for CARE Level 1s.

Use good judgment when including figures, graphs, or other tables.

Question B13: The RFA asks for the following information:

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. “

Yet on the SF-424 block 5a asks for the Federal Entity Identifier and 5b asks for the Federal Award Identifier.

Where do I put the information requested in the RFA?

Answer: The information requested in the RFA should be place in Block 8 of the SF-424 (OMC Number 4040-0004)

Question B14: Can a logic model table be pasted as a figure, to save space, or would this violate the 12 pt criteria?

Answers Figures can be pasted into the application providing they are within the overall application page limit and conform to the margins.

Keep in mind that reviewers will be reading the application. If the text within the figures becomes too small to read or the figure itself is too small to read, it may not be understood which will not add value to your

submission. Use good judgment when including figures, graphs, or other tables.

C. Speaking to Someone

Question C1: I understand that formal questions are requested in writing, but it would be quite helpful to learn more informally about the genesis of the program and the results EPA hopes for. Is there a contact officer I can speak with to ask further detailed questions about the program or the details of my proposal?

Answer: Because this is an open competitive opportunity, in the interest of fairness, we are unable to meet with individual potential applicants to discuss details of the program or proposal development. Specific questions regarding the solicitation to the must be submitted as stated in the RFP:

“All questions or comments must be communicated in writing via postal mail, facsimile, or by using our website listed above. Answers will be posted, bi-weekly, until the closing date of this announcement at the OAR Grants/Funding webpage (http://www.epa.gov/air/grants_funding.html).

Send mail to: US EPA Attn: CARE Program Mail Code 8001A 1200
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20460

Send fax to: 202-343-2395 (attention CARE program)

Go to our website, and click on the words contact us at the bottom of the screen: www.epa.gov/care

Of course additional information about the program can be accessed at www.epa.gov/care.

Question C2: We have a specific idea and want to submit a question to the website to see if it is something that is eligible for CARE technical assistance? Can you provide any information?

Answer: Because this is a competitive process, we can not answer specific questions about whether one idea or another is eligible for funding. In addition, it is hard to evaluate projects based on short descriptions. However, in order to give you some guidance we would remind everyone that, as stated in the RFP, CARE will “form collaborative partnerships, develop a comprehensive understanding of all sources of risk from toxics and environmental pollutants, set priorities, and identify and carry out projects to reduce risks through collaborative action at the local level. CARE’s long term goal is to help communities build self-sustaining,

community-based partnerships that will continue to improve local environments into the future.”

Question C3: I applied for a previous CARE grant and was not selected. I did not receive an oral debrief last summer. Is there a way I can receive an oral debrief now because I plan to apply for a 2009 CARE grant?

Answer: During the summer, letters were sent either from the EPA Selecting Official (if you made it to the National Selection Panel but were not chosen) or from the EPA Deputy Regional Administrator or designee (if you were not selected in your region for submission to the National Selection Panel). In the letter, applicants receive notice to schedule a detailed oral debrief within 15 days with appropriate EPA staff.

The CARE policy is not to schedule an oral debrief after a new CARE RFP has been posted (e.g., usually 6 months later) and after unsuccessful applications have been stored away. Only in the cases of extreme circumstances (such as evidence of a letter not being sent) does CARE reconsider providing oral debriefs after posting of the next year RFP.

One way to assess the components of a successful application is to look at the description of awarded CARE Program Grants. These are available on the CARE Website under Community Profiles.

D. Costs and Funding

Question D1: Is the funding awarded per year or is the total amount to cover both years?

Answer: Funding for the project is awarded for a 2-year period, but the money is provided incrementally. Funding for the second year is contingent on the performance of the award recipient.

Question D2: Will indirect costs be allowed with the CARE grants? If so, is there a limit on the amount of indirect costs?

Answers: Yes, indirect costs are allowed. Any organization claiming indirect costs in its budget, must submit a copy of their approved indirect cost rate, if selected for award. The government would only reimburse indirect costs up to the approved rate

Question D3: What projects or project costs are considered ineligible for the CARE grant?

Answer: All costs associated with any project must be eligible, allowable, allocable and reasonable. Allowable costs must be consistent with the appropriate OMB cost principles. These are:

OMB Cost Principles A_21 for Educational Institutions
(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a021/a021.html>);

OMB Cost Principles A_87 for State, Local and Tribal Governments
(http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a087/a087_all.html); and

OMB Cost Principles A_122 for Non-Profit Organizations
(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a122/a122.htm>).

Question D4: If a university and community are applying for this grant together, is there a specific percentage that has to be allocated to each of the partners?

Answer: No, the percentage is for the partners to decide.

Question D5: Can you explain a little more what you mean by "successful applicant cannot use subgrants or subawards to avoid requirements in EPA Grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services...." (Section IID).

Answer: In the past, some organizations have tried to characterize contractual relationships as one of assistance (or subgrants), thereby getting around the competition requirements. This is only a reminder that it is the nature of the relationship that determines whether a contract or subgrant is the appropriate mechanism.

Question D6: A staffer at the federal agency is hoping to work with a local group on a Level I grant. Can a portion of the budget include salary and equipment for their contribution? This is not a pass through.

Answer: While Federal agencies are not eligible to get CARE agreements they can receive reimbursement from the recipient of a CARE agreement for providing services to CARE partnerships. EPA hopes to work with other Federal agencies to encourage them to support communities that receive CARE agreements at no charge.

Question D7: Our goal is to work with all sectors of the community to draft state legislation that will allow the creation of an Aquifer Protection Area for a sole-source aquifer. Is this even eligible for CARE?

Answer: EPA grant funds can not be used for lobbying as the drafting of state legislation would entail.

Questions D8: I can complete a Level I project in 1 year. Can I apply for up to \$100,000 for 1 year?

Answer: There is nothing in the RFP that says the grant has to be two years long or limits the money to \$50K a year. You must justify why you believe you can do the work half the time but still need all the money.

Questions D9: Can you tell me when the two conferences that a Level I grant requires attendance at would occur so that I can price tickets appropriately? We can be \$580-\$1180 depending upon the month and vacation times.

Answer: The training conference would probably occur between early October to mid November.

Question D10. Must an organization have a negotiated indirect cost rate to apply for a CARE grant?

Answer No. An organization can apply for a CARE grant without having already secured a negotiated indirect cost rate. However, if the recipient intends to seek reimbursement of indirect costs, the recipient has to obtain an approved, negotiated indirect cost rate. The recipient has 90 days (3 months), after they are notified that they have received an award, to submit and indirect cost rate proposal to their Federal "cognizant" agency. (Note: The recipient's "cognizant" agency is the Federal entity that awards them the most grant dollars.)

If EPA is the cognizant agency, the recipient may use the attached guide (checklist) to ensure submission of a complete indirect cost rate proposal package:

E. Bidding Requirements

Question E1: As the lead sponsor of our application, we are collaborating and proposing to pay for deliverables by a local on the ground not for profit group with whom we have a long working relationship; it is a local member of our national organization. This local group, with strong grassroots connections, is uniquely positioned as a trusted convener locally, but does not have the precise expertise in the issues our proposal will address in their community. We see this as a strong partnership, not subject to putting out to bid.

A follow up question. To ensure that we reach consensus with a set of grassroots and institutional stakeholders in a well-known and troubled major urban area, we want to include another nonprofit as facilitator with whom we have worked during the last three years. As the prime application sponsor, we need the mentoring and need large group

facilitation; our grassroots partner agrees. Does the proposed facilitation work by a nonprofit need to go to bid? (*Received via e-mail*)

Answer: EPA grant regulations requires that procurement transactions be conducted in a manner that provides, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition. Non-profit organizations and universities whose proposals are tentatively selected for award will be required to follow the procurement standards as outlined in 40 *CFR 30.41 through 30.48. Local and tribal governmental agencies will be required to follow the procurement standards as outlined in 40 *CFR 31.36. EPA may request additional documentation regarding subawards/subcontracts when final applications are submitted. (* = Code of Federal Regulations).

For a copy of 40 CFR, please go to:

http://www.access.gpo.gov/cgi_bin/cfrassemble.cgi?title=200240

Question E2: If we want to use the services of an employee of one of our partner groups, do we have to go through the competitive procurement process?

Answer: EPA is unable to answer this question without more information as to the status of this partner group employee. If this employee will be paid as a contractor, then that contract would be subject to the competition procedures outlined by the contracting organization. Typically, competition would occur or a satisfactory sole source justification and accompanying cost reasonableness determination would have to be conducted.

Question E3: I want to be able to pay one of our partners for their technical expertise with my grant dollars. If that partner is a state organization, can I pay them through a subgrant or subcontract? If so, how can I do this?

Answer Recipients are allowed to offer sub-grants and sub-contracts under their assistance agreement. However, selection of the sub-grantees are subject to the procurement standards as set forth in 40 CFR 30.40-48. Selection of sub-awardees and sub-contractors should be based on free and open competition (multiple quotations) and hopefully ensure that a fair and reasonable price is obtained for the product or service purchased. A cost and / or price analysis for every procurement, history of the procurement, and an explanation of how the cost was determined to be reasonable should be documented before award is made. The recipient should also address the solicitation of MBE/WBE organizations and efforts made to award purchases to such companies.

Question E4: As a CARE grantee I want to make a subaward to a city government. Can I do that without competition? What procedures do I need to follow?

Answer You can make a subaward to city government.

Your process needs to be consistent with the EPA subaward policy:
See: <http://intranet.epa.gov/ohr/rmpolicy/aam/subaward-policy-part-2.pdf>

Of particular interest is Section I that refers to subaward competitions. It is CARE policy that all subawards be competed. This policy has been in place since the first 2005 CARE awards.

EPA's SUBAWARD POLICY

- a. The recipient agrees to:
 - (1) Establish all subaward agreements in writing;
 - (2) Maintain primary responsibility for ensuring successful completion of the EPA-approved project (this responsibility cannot be delegated or transferred to a subrecipient);
 - (3) Ensure that any subawards comply with the standards in Section 210(a)-(d) of OMB Circular A-133 and are not used to acquire commercial goods or services for the recipient;
 - (4) Ensure that any subawards are awarded to eligible subrecipients and that proposed subaward costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable;
 - (5) Ensure that any subawards to 501(c)(4) organizations do not involve lobbying activities;
 - (6) Monitor the performance of their recipients and ensure that they comply with all applicable regulations, statutes, and terms and conditions which flow down in the subaward;
 - (7) Obtain EPA's consent before making a subaward to a foreign or international organization, or a subaward to be performed in a foreign country; and
 - (8) Obtain approval from EPA for any new subaward work that is not outlined in the approved work plan in accordance with 40 CFR Parts 30.25 and 31.30, as applicable.
- b. Any questions about subrecipient eligibility or other issues pertaining to subawards should be addressed to the recipient's EPA Project Officer. Additional information regarding subawards may be found at <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/guide/subaward-policy-part-2.pdf>. Guidance for distinguishing between vendor and subrecipient relationships and ensuring compliance with Section 210(a)-(d) of OMB Circular A-133 can be found

at <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/guide/subawards-appendix-b.pdf> and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a133/a133.html>.

- c. The recipient is responsible for selecting its subrecipients and, if applicable, for conducting subaward competitions.

Question E5: What is meant by the following? "To survey more than 9 members of the public without prior approval by the Office of Management and Budget of the survey instrument" - we were considering having a survey of stakeholders as an evaluation of project success tool - but it would be more than 9 people surveyed, so I am confused if this is allowed, and why it wouldn't be.

Answer: The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995 requires that any survey collecting information from ten or more persons and using federal funds (e.g. a CARE Grant) must receive clearance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) prior to administering the survey. The approval process which is usually referred to as "OMB clearance process" is usually lengthy and time consuming. The approval request needs to be processed through EPA and forwarded to OMB for consideration.

Communities can conduct surveys using their own funds. These would not fall under the PRA.

Question E6: Is it possible to have these two roles—fiscal agent and PI--housed in separate organizations? It appears that the applicant organization (presumably also the fiscal agent) would have to subcontract (and bid) the PI role if not housed in the same organization.

Answer: The RFA clearly states: "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." P. 27. Thus the applicant will be accountable for all aspects of the Grant including financial accountability.

The applicant can subcontract only if proper procedures regarding competition are followed, See Questions E1 through E3 for additional information..

F. CARE Definitions

Question F1: How do you define "risk" as mentioned in the CARE request for initial proposals?

Answer: Risk is the possibility of a person suffering harm to their health or to the quality of their environment. Risk comes from the exposure of the person or their environment to a toxic substance or pollutant or to the combination several threats. In some cases a substance may be harmful not because it is intrinsically hazardous but because the amount may be so large as to disrupt the natural ecological or biological systems.

Question F2: Listed under background the paragraph mentions toxic pollutants and environmental concerns. Could you define toxic pollutants and environmental concerns?

Would harmful algal blooms and toxic phytoplankton fall under the toxic pollutants and environmental concerns?

Do you consider nitrogen and phosphorous or their toxic outcomes as toxic substances?

Answer: For purposes of the CARE program the term “toxic pollutants and environmental concerns” means any interest, worry, anxiety that a community may have because of the existence of toxic substances in the environment and the risks they represent. These toxic substances environmental pollutants can be in the air, water and/or land or in the indoor environment. The environmental concerns can be due to direct or indirect effects on human health or environmental quality. We are not limiting the term toxics to chemicals listed in one or more statutes or regulations.

Harmful algal blooms, toxic phytoplankton, nitrogen and phosphorous or their toxic outcomes, would fall under that definition if they were of a sufficient magnitude to cause negative health or environmental impacts in that community.

Question F3: How do you define "community" and "local level?" Specifically, could we apply for work at a statewide level? What about work with a particular community of interest or subpopulation (e.g., children)?

Answer: As stated in the RFP:

“CARE is designed to help geographic communities build collaborative partnerships that can work to understand and improve environments at the local level. Since the size of local level geographic place-based communities varies depending on the project, the CARE program is not strictly defining the term community. A community is **all** the people living in the same area sharing the same environment, including both residents and businesses. A community will often be in a relatively small area, but in rural locations a larger area such as a watershed would be

considered a community. A tribal reservation would normally be considered a community. Eligible CARE partnerships can be formed at the neighborhood level or in larger place-based areas.

However, in order to ensure that an effective local partnership and capacity can be built, New York City or watersheds the size of the Missouri or the Columbia Rivers would be considered too large to be a community. Sections of New York City or the watershed of smaller rivers would be considered communities. CARE is designed to get community residents involved in projects, the larger the CARE community proposed by the applicant the more time they should spend explaining how they will bring stakeholders together and involve the public. Moreover, a subpopulation of a community (e.g., all the schools in a specific area; or all the people of the same ethnic group; or all the people with a single occupation to the exclusion of the other people living in the same area), does not qualify as representing the entire community and a project addressing a subpopulation is not be eligible for a CARE grant..”

Based on this definition, a State is too large of an area and could not be a community. Action at the “local level” means action taken in a community. While a CARE project could, and in many cases will, involve some work that is specific to a subpopulation within a community (such as daycares or schools), those subpopulations would not, by themselves constitute a community. There are certainly many communities that revolve around their local schools, but those schools are not, by themselves, communities.

In addition, a group of locations or subpopulations that are not co-located can not be “joined together” to form a community. For example, all the public housing spread throughout different locations in a city is not a community for purposes of CARE.

Question F4: what is meant by the following? "To survey more than 9 members of the public without prior approval by the Office of Management and Budget of the survey instrument" - we were considering having a survey of stakeholders as an evaluation of project success tool - but it would be more than 9 people surveyed, so I am confused if this is allowed, and why it wouldn't be

Answer: The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995 requires that any survey collecting information from ten or more persons and using federal funds (e.g. a CARE Grant) must receive clearance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) prior to administering the survey. The approval process which is usually referred to as “OMB clearance process”

is usually lengthy and time consuming. The approval request needs to be processed through EPA and forwarded to OMB for consideration.

Communities can conduct surveys using their own funds. These would not fall under the PRA.

G. Leveraging

Question G1: For Level II applicants, is it better to provide cash or in-kind leveraged funds?

Answer: EPA does not weigh one type more highly than the other.

Question G2: I know it says no match required, but if we have matching funds, should we list them?

Answer: It is your decision whether or not to list matching funds. You should examine the evaluation criteria and see whether listing the matching funds help you demonstrate that you meet the criteria. If you do, you should be prepared to account for them during the project.

H. Working with EPA

Question H1: When EPA says we can lend technical expertise, what does that mean? What level of technical support will the EPA provide? For example, if we are interested in identifying multiple sources of exposure for a cumulative risk assessment, will EPA be able to provide modeling expertise to help us identify those sources of highest health risk? Or, would we need to bring on an academic partner that could provide that level of technical expertise? Do we need to specify in the application what type of assistance we might need from EPA?

Answer: You do not have to specify the type of assistance you might need. In general EPA sees its role as providing tools, technical assistance and other support. That support can come all phases of the CARE project based on the needs of the community. One place you can go to find the kinds of information and tools that EPA has is the CARE Resource Guide, which can found on the CARE website. Please note that the specific assistance provided will depend on the situation and needs of the community and will be worked out by the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicants in the performance of the work supported.

If some cases EPA's technical support could include modeling support. It should be noted that the CARE program has a bias for action. In general, we do not believe that full scale cumulative risk assessments are necessary or appropriate for CARE projects. They are usually too expensive and time consuming. We believe in using screening level assessments, which can include modeling, to help prioritize risks so that communities can move more quickly to take actions that will reduce risk.

Question H2: What is the list of EPA voluntary programs to choose from for the Level II awards?

Answer: EPA has produced the Voluntary Program Guide which can be found on the CARE website. However, for purposes of applying to the RFP, you do not need to include the specific set of voluntary programs you plan to carry out. It is expected that a community partnership will work with EPA and the State to examine possible voluntary programs that will address the community's priority risks.

Question H3: Is it mandatory to promote or carry out only EPA's voluntary programs?

Answer: No. While we expect CARE projects to focus on voluntary programs to reduce the impact of toxics and environmental pollutants, we do not require or expect that only EPA voluntary programs will be used. EPA staff will work with the community partnership and provide information on EPA's and other programs. In addition, the other partners will also provide information on other voluntary programs they have or know about. The partnership will then select the programs that best meet their needs and resources.

Question H4: In the RFP, section "5 Utilization of EPA voluntary programs", under the category two section, there is mention of two voluntary programs "pollution prevention" and "Make a Difference Campaign Programs". I can not find either of these two on the list of voluntary programs listed in the resources. Can you tell me the url to find descriptions of these two programs?

Are new proposals expected to include EPA's voluntary programs already in existence as part of their program goals/objectives?

Answer: The URL for the pollution prevention program is: <http://www.epa.gov/p2/>. The URL for the Make a Difference Campaign is: <http://www.epa.gov/osw/students/choices.htm>. More importantly, applicants do not need, and are not expected, to decide at this point what voluntary programs they will use. The decision of what programs to implement need to be made collaboratively by the stakeholder partnership.

I. CERCLA and Monitoring

Question I1: Your note, below, says that groups around sites that are CERCLA cleanup sites do not qualify. Can you explain? Do you mean that Superfund related PROJECTS would not be eligible (e.g., the kinds of projects that are eligible under the TAG program)? Or did you mean if the site is a CERCLA site, no matter what you propose in the community, it would not be eligible? Or, put another way, would a project be eligible if it involved a Superfund site. If the project clearly was not about the Superfund cleanup of that site. For example, would sampling for potential airborne emissions (should the community desire that) downwind be a potentially eligible project -- as that has zero to do with the CERCLA cleanup at the site? Or perhaps a series of mediated meetings with site management on pollution prevention technologies -- as that is not related to CERCLA either??? I went through the guidelines and FAQs and other things, and didn't get a clear answer to this. Any help you can offer would be appreciated.

Answer: The CARE grants can't be used to fund work that is typically done under Superfund, e.g., funding cleanup work at a Superfund site or hiring a technical advisor to assist a community in understanding issues associated with a Superfund site cleanup. A community that has a Superfund site in it can be eligible for a CARE grant to assess toxic problems in their community beyond the Superfund site, and to identify ways to reduce the risks from these toxic problems.

Something like air sampling unrelated to the Superfund site could be covered by a CARE grant, but, a project that seek to use existing air emissions information from sources such as the EPA Toxics Release Inventory to prioritize toxic problems in a community may be a better CARE project. CARE projects are designed to use readily available information to set priorities and get quickly to risk reduction efforts as opposed to air emission sampling which can be very expensive and time consuming. Air sampling may be necessary for some communities, but funding for this kind of more detailed assessment activity would more likely come from the air monitoring program.

J. Threshold Criteria

Question J1: Does our project meet the Level II threshold eligibility if our stakeholder group was formed to address a known problem rather than our specific stakeholder group identifying the priority problem?

Answer: In order to meet the Level II threshold eligibility criteria, as stated in the RFP you must represent a partnership that has "... completed a detailed examination of toxics and environmental pollutants in the community

which includes more than one environmental media, come to consensus on the specific community priorities for risk reduction, and be prepared to choose a risk reduction to address community priorities and mobilize the community and its partners to carry out this plan.”

Based on the limited information provided, it does not appear that your project meets the established threshold criteria.

Questions J2: I am facilitating a PACE EH process in my community and would like to apply for CARE II funding. Our process will not be complete by the deadline for applications but we expect that it will be completed by the time the funding would arrive in Oct/Nov. 08, we will have come to consensus on the specific community priorities for risk reduction and have a draft plan of action. However, in the CARE RFP, it states that to apply for a CARE II grant, "the applicant must have come to consensus on the community priorities for risk...". Can we still apply although we are only 1/3 of the way through our process? We would hate to have to wait another year to begin implementing risk reduction activities. Thank you for responding to this question!

Answer: The language of the RFP is what matters. All Level II applications will need to meet the Threshold Criteria that states the applicant:

- must have completed a detailed examination of all or most of the toxic risks in the community including all environmental media (air, water, etc.).
- must have come to consensus on the specific community priorities for risk reduction.
- must be prepared to choose a risk reduction program to address community priorities.

This language means the applicant must meet the Threshold criteria at the time of application.

K. Locations for CARE Communities

Question K1: Are the LEVEL I awards earmarked for big cities with large populations? With a population of 52,000 would our city be in the running for a Level I grant award?

Answer: None of the cooperative agreements are earmarked for any size of community. EPA is looking for a variety of projects in communities of different sizes with varying types of organizations.

Question K2 I live in a large city where one organization already has a CARE Grant. Would I be eligible to apply for a grant as well?

Answer: Organizations can always apply for a CARE grant. You do need to be aware of the EPA National Selection Committee Determination (p. 36 of the RFP) which does mention geographic balance within an EPA Region and throughout the nation as one of several factors. CARE is looking for geographic diversity. Currently, 64 communities throughout the US have CARE Grants. For a complete list of CARE Communities, go to the CARE Website: <http://www.epa.gov/care/>.

L. Length of CARE Agreement

Question L1: Our organization is applying for a CARE grant- level I. Is it possible to complete the work in one year instead of two?

Answer: EPA expects that it will take more than a year for a community to achieve the goals of a Level I agreement - i.e. create a broad based stakeholder group, examine the toxics and environmental pollutants risks in the community and achieve consensus on priority risk, etc. However, there is no problem if the community can achieve those results in a year or less.

We believe that communities should, but are not required to, plan to complete their Level I project in either 18 or 30 months so they would be on schedule to apply for Level II grant when the appropriate RFP comes out.

M. Future CARE Competitions

Question M1: Will there be another round of similar CARE funding in 2010? Are you going to be running the grant competition every year?

Answer: It is our intent to continue the CARE program and fund additional cooperative agreements in the future but that will depend on future appropriations and budget decisions.

Question M2: Should I submit my grant this year with the hope that if it doesn't get funded this year, it might be funded next year or the year after that?

Answer: No. EPA does not save applications that are not awarded this year and use them in future competitions. You must apply each time the RFA is announced.

N. Is My Project Eligible For Funding?

Question N1: We are a very rural area on St. John in the US Virgin Islands with only 1500 people. We have stormwater pollutants entering ocean and damaging coral, need for rainwater cistern drinking water to be purified in homes, and an old auto junkyard needing detox and removal. Are any of these needs eligible?

I am wondering if un-sewered communities that discharge to a drainage tile which ultimately goes to a drainage ditch and/or stream would be considered a toxic exposure and would qualify for this CARE program.

Are there grants available for meth cleanup? Will the CARE Program fund initiatives related to lead poisoning prevention?

We would like to produce and distribute to the residents of our small community, a video outlining how they can prepare for and protect themselves from, these hazards in the event of a release of some kind. We were wondering if funding under the Care Program would be applicable to this application.

Answer: We can not answer specific questions about whether one idea or another is eligible for funding. Not only is it unfair to the other applicants to prejudge a specific idea, it is hard to evaluate projects based on short descriptions. However, in order to give you some guidance we would remind everyone that, as stated in the RFP, under the CARE program communities form collaborative partnerships, develop a comprehensive understanding of all sources of risk from toxics, set priorities, and identify and implement projects to reduce risks through collaborative action at the local level. CARE's long term goal is to help communities build self-sustaining, community-based partnerships that will continue to improve local environments into the future. Therefore, a particular action could be eligible for funding if it was part of a larger CARE project but CARE does not simply fund the implementation of a specific project.

Question N2 Can I use CARE funds to build/buy a...(solar heater for a community swimming pool, removal of an underground storage tank, purchase monitoring equipment, etc.)

Answer CARE is a community-based, community-driven program created to build self-sustaining partnerships to help communities understand and reduce environmental and health risks. As such, the primary orientation of CARE is not purchasing major equipment or funding construction activities. Certainly the purchase of small items is not prohibited, but these need to be indicated in the Project Budget. Refer to the Evaluation Criteria in the RFP to better understand the selection process (P. 29-36).

O. Multi-Media

Questions O1: Do the projects considered for the CARE grants have to be multi-media, or can the projects be limited to one media (e.g., air)?

Is it correct to say that we cannot limit its program to multiple sources of contamination to a single medium (like a waterway) without having that medium come out on top during the risk assessment?

Answer: The CARE program is designed to be a multi media program. We expect communities with a Level I agreement to analyze toxic risks in all media. In order to pass the threshold criteria to be considered for a Level II agreement, a community would have to have completed a screening level, multi media assessments to toxics in their community. At that point a community which has examined risks from different media would be allowed to set their priorities as they see fit and those priorities could be in one media.

Question O2: In a previous project in the targeted community, we had assessed air and soil contamination, but not water. Are we required to examine all three media – air, soil, and water – or is two enough?

Answer: If you look at the threshold criteria it says: “the partnership must have completed a detailed examination of toxics in the community which includes more than on environmental media (air, water, etc.)” (emphasis added)

Question O3: We are planning to submit an application to address Lead Poisoning and the problems associated with Mold and the problem is trying to identify the multi-media for both pollutants. Air is a media for both and water can easily be identified with Lead but not with Mold. Since we would be addressing two issues would both medias have to address both issues? Could physical contact be accepted as a media? Physical contact in the case of Lead would be actual digestion and with mold it would be if some touched visible mold or got it on their clothing.

Answer: For purposes of the CARE program we generally consider the indoor environment to be one media and drinking water to be another. Physical contact is not a media, for a pollutant to impact the body, something (matter or energy) must have some contact with the human body. Please remember that being multi-media is only one requirement of the CARE Program. The CARE Program is very competitive, your application will need to do a good job addressing all the CARE Evaluation Criteria in order to successfully compete for funding.

P. Difference between Grant and Cooperative Agreement

Question P1: I am unsure what the difference is between a grant and cooperative agreement.

Answer: A cooperative agreement is a type of grant in which EPA has substantial involvement with the grantee and the project. CARE is a Cooperative Agreement.

Q. Number of Applications

Questions Q1: 1: Have you had more interest in Level 1 or Level 2 funding?
2: How many proposals did you receive last year total (Level I & Level II)? Thanks.

Answer: We do not keep track of the number of people expressing interest in the program, thus we cannot say if there was more interested in Level I or Level II cooperative agreements.

Last year we received approximately 130 proposals and there were substantially more Level I proposals than Level II proposals.

R. CARE Information Sessions

Questions R1: I have a question about the CARE Grant. Would an applicant be able to apply for the CARE Grant if they had missed the three CARE Information Sessions?

Answer: Please feel free to apply. There is no requirement that you attend any of the sessions. These are simply an opportunity to learn more about the CARE Program and ask questions. However, if you are unable to attend you can listen to the seminar and see the presentation at <http://www.clu-in.org/live/archive.cfm>.

Question R2: Are you going to conduct a Question and Answer session for potential applicants like you have other years?

Answer: The CARE Program will conduct three identical national information

sessions for potential applicants via a national Web cast seminar. We do require registration prior to the Web cast since we have a limited number of phone lines. To do that, click on <http://www.cluin.org/studio/seminar.cfm#upcoming>

The remaining schedule is as follows:

February 24, 2009 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM EST

February 27, 2009 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM EST

S. Principal Investigators

Question S1: What qualifications should the PI have for this grant? Please be as specific as possible. Thanks!

Answer: There are no specific qualifications for the head of a CARE grant. EPA has asked for brief biographical sketches of key technical experts who will be involved in the proposed project in order to see if their qualifications and experience are consistent with workplan and provide confidence that the project will be successfully completed. Please note that EPA does not use the term Principle Investigator (PI) because CARE projects are not research projects but collaborative projects designed to bring communities together to reduce risks from toxics.

Question S2: Is it possible to have these two roles—fiscal agent and PI--housed in separate organizations? It appears that the applicant organization (presumably also the fiscal agent) would have to subcontract (and bid) the PI role if not housed in the same organization.

Answer: The RFA clearly states:
“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.” P. 27. Thus the applicant will be accountable for all aspects of the Grant including financial accountability.

The applicant can subcontract only if proper procedures regarding competition are followed, See Questions E1 through E3 for additional information.

T. Old Applications and Workplans

Question T1: We are looking to do a project that might be eligible for this CARE program but would really appreciate seeing an example of an

approved/funded project, such as the application narrative or work-plan. If you can please provide this information, I would greatly appreciate it.

Answer: Unfortunately, it is EPA policy not to distribute applications and workplans. They are not considered public documents and belong to the grantees. I would recommend your participation in the upcoming webcast to learn more about the CARE program. As an alternative you could listen to the webcast from last year which is archived at:
<http://www.cluin.org/live/archive.cfm>.

This contains the following archived Webcasts:

Archive of Jan 18, 2008 Seminar (1 Hour, 30 Minutes):
Archive of Feb 11, 2008 Seminar (1 Hour, 30 Minutes):
As of they occur, Webcasts for the current RFA will be added to the archive.

U. Unanswered Questions from February 24 National Webcast Session

Question: Do 12 point font and margin requirements apply to tables and attachments (for example in Logic Model Table)?
—Paul Chakroff; St. Croix Environmental Association; Christiansted, VI, United States (pchakroff.atsea@gmail.com) on 2/24/2009 at 1:01 PM EST

Answer: See Question B 12 in this document

Question: Would you please clarify what does mean _the goal is not get a detailed quantitative risk assessment of all environmental risk in a community?
—Luis Aguirre; Latino Health Initiative; Silver Spring, MD, United States (luis.aguirre@montgomerycountymd.gov) on 2/24/2009 at 1:11 PM EST

Answer: Section B (5) starting on p. 5 or the RFP explains what EPA expects the community undertake. We do not expect the community to conduct a formal Risk Assessment which typically is a lengthy process requiring specific data inputs. We do expect a community to conduct a screening process which looks at possible toxics from land, water and air to identify hazards in their community.

The EPA document: *The CARE Road Map* provides an explanation : What Should the Scope of the Environmental and Health Be? (see p. 4)
<http://www.epa.gov/care/library/20080620roadmap.pdf>

Question: Sorry I asked 3 questions in one submission last time. My question is about the mention of page limits earlier in the webinar: somebody said that the budget should be 2 pages out of the 13 page limit. Could you direct me to where in the rfp it gives this limit? Besides the SF 424A form, which is not part of the limit, I see budget on pg 25, but no specific page # designated for it - it appears to be part of the 13 page limit, with one page as the title page, the rest as the narrative proposal Our budget does not take up this much space, and I am worried now!

—Kimberly Steinmann; University of CA Davis; DAVIS, CA, United States (kpsteinmann@ucdavis.edu) on 2/24/2009 at 1:31 PM EST

Answer: **See Question B 9 (in this document) for a summary of the page requirements. These are also included in the RFA Amendment.**

Question: In response to that last question about the lead applicant - in looking at the capacity to be the grant administrator there seems to be quite stringent guidance of who is acceptable?

Answer: **As a recipient of an EPA Grant we must be certain you have programmatic and administrative capability. To better understand the criteria, look at EPA Order 5700.8 “EPA Policy on Assessing Capabilities of Non-Profit Applicants for Managing Assistance Awards” Full text of this is available at: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/award/5700_8.pdf**

Question: If we have to build a partnership collaborative to create the project but then make them submit to a selection process to participate – is that going to destroy the partnership?

—Dendra Best; Onsite Wastewater of NW MI; Traverse City, MI, United States (secretary@michigan-onsitewastewater.org) on 2/24/2009 at 1:43 PM EST

As a follow up I need to know if our partners have to submit to a bidding process.

—Dendra Best; Onsite Wastewater of NW MI; Traverse City, MI, United States (secretary@michigan-onsitewastewater.org) on 2/24/2009 at 1:59 PM EST

Answer: **Partners are organizations, individuals, and governments who will work with you on the project. If you intend to pay them for their services, you must employ a competitive process since they are then consultants providing a service. All procurement of goods and services must be done through a competitive process.**

See Section E of this document for more information.

Question: Is it true that you must submit both an online application through grants.gov along with a hard copy or can you submit one or the other?
—Tanya ; ; Washington, DC, United States (tblue55@gmail.com) on 2/24/2009 at 1:45 PM EST

Answer: **You submit your application *either* through an online process using Grants.Gov or a hard copy. You do not do both. Remember that you need to be registered through Grants.Gov to use that system.**

This is addressed in the CARE RFP Section IV – Proposal and Submission Information (starting on p. 19)

Question: When are you going to have the presentation on line?
—Nancy Parast; Environmental Initiative for the PittsburghCommun; Atlanta, GA, United States (nparast@gmail.com) on 2/24/2009 at 5:33 PM EST

Answer: **The CARE RFP, CARE Amendment and the revised Question and Answer document are available at:**
http://www.epa.gov/air/grants_funding.html

A copy of the CARE National Webcast presentation is available for viewing at: <http://www.clu-in.org/conf/tio/care/resource.cfm>

Question: What if EPA web site does not have current pollution data? Can a consultant be used?
--Susan Kramer (susankramer@wyoming.com) on 2/27/2009

Answer: **You can obtain a consultant through the issuance of a sub-award or sub-contract to your CARE grant. Please refer to Questions E3 and E4 in this document.**