Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **How many applications do you typically receive?** In the last several years, CalEPA has received about 100 applications per cycle, translating to approximately $4.5 M in requested funding per solicitation.

2. **How many grants are typically awarded?** The number of grants awarded varies by funding available, grant program project priorities, and number of competitive projects. In the recent grant cycles, CalEPA has had approximately $1.5 M dollars available per cycle to award and has awarded approximately 25 to 30 projects per cycle.

3. **Will the EJ Small Grants Informational Webinar presentation be available online?** Yes, it is posted on the EJ Small Grants Program website.

4. **Why was the application deadline extended to August 13, 2021 (formerly the deadline was June 30, 2021)?** Due to the pandemic, the CalEPA EJ Grant Program wanted to allow grant applicants more time to develop their applications.

   - **Federally Recognized Tribal Government Applicants:** Also, please note that with the application deadline extension; tribal government resolutions (only applicable to tribal government applicants) will now be due by October 15, 2021 (formerly August 13, 2021).

5. **With the updated application due date, what is a reasonable project start date?** Projects are expected to start in the fall of 2021.

6. **Does the project need to be 18 months in length?** Grant applicants may choose a grant term of up to 18 months that will allow for successfully implementation of it proposed project. The applicant is free to determine, but must justify, the project duration. CalEPA has provided 12-month grant performance terms in the past however, CalEPA has extended the grant performance term to 18 months to allow for more project implementation flexibility. Whatever duration you as the applicant choose, please be sure to make a justification (provide a scope of work) in the work plan narrative for the project performance term selected.

7. **When during the fall of 2021 will CalEPA announce the awards?** Once the budget is finalized, anticipated in fall of 2021, we should have a better picture of how much funding is available for the EJ Small Grants Program.

8. **Who is Eligible to Apply for the CalEPA EJ Grants?** Eligible applicants are the following:

   - Designated 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations designated by the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), or

- State of California recognized non-profit entity that operates primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or other similar purposes in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit, or

- Federally-recognized tribal government in California.

- Organizations who do not have the IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation may apply under a California based Fiscal Sponsor who does have the IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization designation.

9. **Must the applicant be based in California in order to be eligible?** Yes.

10. **Do you accept projects based outside of the state of California?** No.

11. **Will there be a certain number of grants allocated to Southern, Central and Northern California**? CalEPA always tries to ensure that grantees represent a fair and equitable geographic distribution throughout the entire state of California.

12. **Is it acceptable to collaborate with another party to apply for the grant?** Yes, as long as the lead applicant is an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, collaboration within the project can be with non-501(c)(3) nonprofit partners or sub-contractors.

13. **Does the project need to start in the fall in order to be eligible, or is it okay if the project has already commenced?** Projects may not start until CalEPA awards and provides the grantee a notice to proceed.

14. **If you are a State of California recognized non-profit eligible entity, are you also required to be and show proof of your IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit tax status? Or will we be required to have an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization designated fiscal sponsor to be able to submit a proposal?** No, if you are a State of California recognized non-profit eligible entity, you will not need to be and provide evidence as a designated IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. You will only need eligibility and show proof of eligibility under either criteria – as a state of California recognized non-profit or as an IRS designated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

15. **Are Special Districts, such as Resource Conservation Districts, eligible?** Special Districts are established under the authority of state statute. Unless the Special District is registered as an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization or a state nonprofit organization under the Secretary of State, the Special District is not eligible.

16. **Are organizations/Tribes that currently recipients of either an EJ Small grant and/or CARB-AB617 grant eligible to apply again?** Yes, organizations/Tribes that are current grantees of the EJ Small Grant Program may apply again. However, current grantee applicants must submit a new grant proposal that details project scope that is separate and distinct from the current grant project. In other words, the new proposal may not be related or focus on the same topic as the current grant project.

17. **Can the same organization apply to both CARB and CalEPA grants during the same year?** Yes.

APPLICATION FORMAT QUESTIONS

18. **Must the 15-page Project Narrative be double-spaced?** No, the 15-page Project Narrative can be single-spaced.

19. **Is it okay to include live links in the 15-page narrative**? Yes, you may include live links so long as the narrative still falls within the 15-page limit.

20. **Can we include images to better explain the project?** Yes, you many include images so long as the narrative still falls within the 15-page limit.

21. **Can you use the signature function in Adobe Acrobat to sign the Application Coversheet or does this mean it has to be a wet signature (in ink) and then scanned and emailed if we are emailing?** You may use the Adobe Acrobat signature function as long as the signature has the same appearance as the original wet signature.

22. **For the project proposal, could we write the timeline as Month 1- Month 3?** Yes, however, if the project is selected for award, the Grant Manager will work with new grantees to indicate specific months on their respective workplans to track the grant performance.

PROJECT SCOPE QUESTIONS

23. **Could you share some outcomes from past grantees who have designed and implemented collaborative or capacity building efforts?** Please see the summaries of past awardees. Past projects have addressed areas under CalEPA's purview: air quality, water quality, cumulative impacts, toxic substances and pesticides exposure, etc.

24. **Is urban forestry a project type that has been funded or is possible for funding?** Urban forestry projects have not been funded in the past however it could be a project focus that CalEPA would consider for award.

25. **Have colleges or universities as applied as lead organizations (working together with a community partner) been funded under this program?** Yes.

26. **Can a project be geared towards small businesses?** No, projects must focus on EJ communities.

27. **Are CalEPA applicants required to address all Statutory Purposes A-E (section B of the Applications and Instructions document) in the proposed project?** No, applicants are only required to meet at least one statutory purpose.

28. **Can more than one application be submitted by a given group?** Yes, but the proposals submitted must be separate and distinct. The proposals cannot be linked or expand on one another. The grant reviewers must not see a relationship between the applications. As long as the project proposals are separate and distinct, you may submit as multiple applicants.

29. **Can sub-applicant, partner organizations be named on more than one application?** If the partner organization is named on multiple project proposals (applications), the projects cannot be similar to one another; they must be separate and distinct. If they are similar, only one application will be considered.

30. **Can Tribes or NGOs partner with for-profit companies as technical consultants for project support**? Yes, applicants may contract with for profit companies. Please keep in mind that Grantees will still be responsible for the implementation and success of the project even if a consultant is hired to work on the project.

31. **How does CalEPA measure relative "environmental justice" impacts? What are the indicators and how will any outcomes or impacts be measured or evaluated after the program ends?** CalEPA uses a number of tools - quantitative and qualitative data (e.g., CalEnviroScreen scores, perceived/gained benefits to target audience, quantified measured benefits and/or deliverables identified by the grantee) – to ensure that project proposals meet the criteria of what is intended to be supported through CalEPA's EJ Small Grants Program.

32. **Will tribal grant applications be reviewed separately from the non-profit applicants?** No, tribal grant applications will be reviewed with non-profit applicants.

33. **If we are currently in the process of confirming participation and support for our project with a tribal government partner – we anticipate it may take one to two months to obtain a formal letter of commitment which is beyond the submission deadline. May we indicate this in our application, and state that a letter is forthcoming?** Yes, however please note that without confirmation of your key tribal government partner, it may be challenging for grant reviewers to determine if this project will be successful in its implementation in their evaluation to consider the project for grant award. It is strongly encouraged that all letters of commitment and support be included in the grant application proposal package.

34. **If the grant term is to start in fall 2021, what month should we put in the workplan, can we have our workplan tasks start in 1/1/22?** The grant term or "performance period" to implement grant projects will be from 12 to 18 months. The grant applicant may select any timeline within the given performance period to implement the project. In short, yes, a project start of January 1 would be acceptable however, keep in mind, the performance period would still have a set end date no matter the start date.

35. **Does the Work Plan Narrative section need to include all tasks, activities, timeline with dates that are already included in the Workplan Table?** Yes. **Or does the Workplan Narrative only need to address questions "a" through "d" listed on page 14?** The workplan narrative should include a detailed description all the objectives outlined in EJ Small Grant Applications and Instructions document and respond to the questions in the Scoring Criteria Threshold Criteria Description Table, pages 12 through 15.

36. **How is CalEnviroscreen used to score suitability?** CalEnviroScreen is used to help prioritize the funding of recommended projects to help ensure the funding goes to areas of greatest need and CalEPA priority.

37. **Can projects be multifaceted? Can projects touch other project types?** Yes. Projects may be cross-media in scope however the scope must address topics/issues that are under CalEPA's purview.

38. **What are the criteria for determining whether a community is an environmentally disadvantaged or frontline community eligible for environmental justice-focused funds?** CalEPA uses a number of factors to determine whether the community targeted is an environmental justice community, such as CalEnviroScreen and other verifiable government resources provided in the applicants project proposal.

39. **Do we need COVID contingency plans in the project narrative?** Given the current public health situation in California, it would be advisable to include a COVID-19 contingency in your project proposal.

40. **What are the requirements for the progress reports and final report?** Information can be found in the Draft Exhibit A – Procedures and Requirements, which can be viewed or downloaded from the CalEPA EJ Small Grants Program website, section II on page 3.

FUNDING/PAYMENT QUESTIONS

41. **How should we notify the EJ Small Grants Program if we have another grant proposal submitted to another funding organization, and what if that proposal is funded while the EJ Small Grants application is pending?** The proposal you submit to CalEPA should be a standalone project. Leveraging project resources is encouraged and acceptable but keep in mind that the information in the work plan table and budget table should only include activities, products and services to be funded by the CalEPA EJ Small Grant. You can certainly tell us about your leveraged project in the project narrative, but just ensure that your project proposal is unique to the EJ Small Grants Program. CalEPA cannot award money to the project if you submitted the exact same application elsewhere and received funds from another organization.

42. **Can we reference in the application certain activities, products or services that are part of our project, but that will be paid for by another source?** Yes, reference in-kind or other provider supported services and materials, but be sure that in the budget table submitted, you only include costs that are eligible and will be paid for by the CalEPA EJ Small Grant.

43. **Would remediation/mitigation to prevent vapor intrusion into affordable housing be an eligible expenditure?** See summaries of past awardees to get a sense of what types of projects CalEPA has awarded in the past. We welcome applications for new, innovative projects, but projects must fall under CalEPA's purview and authority.

44. **Is it permissible to use funds to pay a lab for sample analyses?** We have allowed this type of cost in the past however please keep in mind that any analysis or testing supporting by grant funding must be approved by CalEPA prior to analysis or testing to be supported by the grant.

45. **Where in the budget would we place the time to write the reports?** Time for writing reports is considered administrative overhead costs and would be charged under indirect/overhead costs. There is a 20% indirect rate cap per grant award on overhead/indirect costs.

46. **Is software covered under the budget?** Software is not generally an eligible expense under the grant however, given the covid-19 pandemic, CalEPA is now supporting

software expenses (e.g., Zoom, Survey Monkey, etc.) that allows for continued interaction with the target community should social distancing guideline restrict in-person activities. These expenses must only cover the performance period.

47. **Is there a cap or maximum on indirect expenses/overhead?** Yes. The maximum on indirect expenses is 20 percent.

48. **Is Honoraria an allowable expense?** No. Please read the list of ineligible costs on pages 6, 7 and 8 of the Grant Application and Instructions document.

49. **What is the distinction between small monetary stipends and honoraria?** Stipends are for money paid to trainees, interns, or students to help cover basic costs while they receive or conduct work training. Stipends paid must have a paper trail (e.g., receipt of payment). Honoraria are ineligible costs under this grant, known as gifts to bestow recognition to an individual for which payment is not required.

50. **Are small stipends for volunteers (we use a Promotora model) to do some of the work of our project allowable costs? I know the RFP says prepaid credit/cash cards, gift cards or gift certificates are unallowable -- these would be small checks.** Work stipends are allowable expenses but must have a paper trail so the checks would serve as proper documentation for the work stipends provided. Also see question #49 for a description of work stipends allowed.

51. **Can EJ Small Grants funds be used as matching dollars for other grants?** No, you may not use EJ Small Grants monies as matching dollars for other grants.

52. **Can grant funds be used to buy food and drinks?** No, grant funds cannot be used to purchase any food, beverages, utensils, plates, drinkware, etc.

53. **Is it permissible to use the grant money to hire someone to help with the project? If we do not have their resume ahead of time can we submit what skills and experience we would require in a new hire?** Yes, the project may hire staff to help with the implementation of the project. Yes, if the applicant does not yet have the staff person hired or name on file, and the grant funding will be used to hire personnel and support resources, be sure to include the title, hourly rate and jobs duties of the staff that will be hired in the budget. Upon hiring, the resume for the staff hired will need to be submitted to CalEPA in ordered to be paid through the grant.

54. **Can non-profit applicants use the funds for small re-grants or for small business partners?** No, applicants may not use CalEPA EJ Small Grants to re-grant or to provide support to small businesses.

55. **Could a non-profit hire a consultant?** Yes. Please note, even if the consultant is hired to implement portions of the grant, ultimately, the grantee will still be responsible for the overall successful implementation of the grant.

56. **Could a non-profit use the funds to hire a specialist consultant rather than a staff person**? Yes.

57. **Does the program funding allow for youth and/or community participation?** Yes, CalEPA encourages community participation, including community youth participation.

58. **Is there a cap on hired personnel's hourly rate or number of paid hours?** Yes. If you are an Executive Director or similar grant lead, signing off as signature authority for the grant or supervising authority of the grant, that person may not individually benefit from over 50 percent of the grant award (i.e., personnel costs, travel expenses, contracting, etc.).

59. **Is there a cap on hourly rates for project staff implementing the project?** Hourly rates should be reasonable and provided in an hourly wage rate format. If benefits are included within the hourly rate, the base hourly rate and benefits should be provided.

60. **Is payment distributed as reimbursements, lump sum, or scheduled payments?** Generally payments are distributed as reimbursements. There is also an initial payment option as well for the start of the grant.

61. **Can you please go over reimbursement payment process**? CalEPA work with each grantee to go over the documentation that is required for all payments including reimbursements. Please see details in the Payment Request section of the Draft Exhibit A of the Procedures and Requirements document, which can be downloaded on the CalEPA EJ Grant Program website for an idea of what will be required.

62. **What is the timeline for reimbursements?** With the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, payments are taking a little longer than usual to process. Generally, payments are typically four to six weeks upon approval of the request, however, we are seeing additional delays extending this period.

63. **Pending budget allocations, is this program annual?** No, CalEPA does not have continuous appropriation, so this Program is available as long as funding is available.

APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS

64. **Should Letters of Support be included with the application package submission? Or do attachments need to be submitted separately, directly from the support organization?** Either is acceptable however, CalEPA prefers receiving whole application packages that include all attachments including the letters of support. It is generally best to submit Letters of Support and/or Letters of Commitment with the application package. If your project partner or supporting organization sends us the letter separately, be sure they clearly identify which application they are supporting. Both Letters of Support and Letters of Commitment are optional, but if you have partners who will be working on the project with you, we recommend including a Letter of Support.

65. **If the project includes collaboration with two separate non-profits, what resumes should be included?** Resumes included in the application should be from the three lead project staff (i.e., three highest paid staff in the CalEPA EJ Grant proposal) no matter what organization they are affiliated. Please remember there is a one page, double-sided limit per person per resume.

66. **Must the application include resumes of everyone who is being paid by the grant?** Yes. We require the resumes of at least three key staff who will be involved in the project, but you may include the resumes of those staff members will be working on the project and paid through the grant.

67. **Is CalEPA considering Certification of participation in workshops?** Applicants may include evidence of participation in CalEPA Boards, Departments and Office workshops however since certificates take up space and all applicants are restricted to a 15-page narrative (the certificates would be counted) limit. Therefore we recommend that applicants simply list the workshop certificates title, date, agency and recipient name of the certificate for consideration**.**

68. **Does a resume need to be provided for contractors like interpreters?** No, unless the interpreter is a staff person of the applicant organization.

OTHER QUESTIONS

69. **Please explain what each agency considers environmental racism versus environmental justice?** Environmental racism may be interpreted differently. In California, environmental justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

70. **Do you accept hand delivered applications?** No, at this time we are not accepting hand delivered applications for application submittal. CalEPA will only accept emailed and mailed applications. Our mailing address and email address can be found in the Application and Instructions document on the EJ Small Grants Program website, and below:

    - **Mailed Applications:** Mailed applications must be submitted no later than August 13, 2021, to the CalEPA Headquarters Building, mailing address: P.O. Box 2815, Sacramento, California, 95812-2815. Mailed applications must submitted and postmarked by the US Postal Service before or on August 13, 2021. Large commercial delivery (e.g., UPS, FedEx, or Golden State Delivery) service confirmations before or on August 13, 2021 are also acceptable. Applications postmarked after the final August 13 deadline date will not be accepted or considered.

    - **Emailed Applications:** Emailed applications must be emailed to the CalEPA Environmental Justice Program email box at EnvJustice@calepa.ca.gov no later than 11:59 pm, Pacific Standard Time (PST), August 13, 2021. Applications received after 11:59 pm, PST, August 13, 2021 deadline to the CalEPA EJ Program email box will not be accepted or considered.