What You Always Wanted to Know about EPA’s Environmental Education Grant Program:

How to Write a Competitive Proposal

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Note

Disclaimer: This presentation provides a general overview of the EE Grants Program and the federal grant application process. Please consult each Request for Proposals (also known as a Solicitation Notice) for the most complete and current details.
What We Will Cover Today

- The Mission and Goals of the Program
- Expectations for Fiscal Year 2018
- The Basics of Who/What We Fund
  - Who and What We Can and Cannot Fund
  - Budget and Cost Items
  - Contents of Proposals
  - Review/Selection for Awards
- Helpful Resources and Tips for Success
EPA’s Environmental Education Grant Program

The Environmental Education Grant Program provides financial support for projects which design, demonstrate and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods and/or techniques.
The Goals of the Environmental Education Grant Program

• Increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues,

• Promote environmental stewardship, and

• Provide the public with the skills needed to weigh various sides of an environmental issue and take responsible actions.
Expectations for FY 2018

- Federal budget appropriations are not expected to be made by October 1.
- Continuing Resolution (CR) is most likely for at least the first quarter.
- The EE Grant Program will proceed under the assumption that we will get a typical budget, but may have to adjust dollar amounts later.
The Basics

- **Requests for Proposals** (RFPs) are issued annually, usually late fall, and are usually open for 60 – 90 days.

- Generally **three to four grants** are awarded **from each** of EPA’s **10 Regions** each year.

- Approximate amount of each award: **$80,000 - $100,000**.

- Proposals must be **locally focused** projects that employ **EE best practices**.

- Proposals must include **both educational and environmental** priorities.

- Required: **matching funds** and a **sub-grant** program.
New for FY 2018!!

- Each of EPA’s 10 Regions will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP).

- Each RFP will be exactly the same except for text indicating which Region the applicant is applying to.

- Apply to the Region in which the proposed project will take place.
Locally Focused Projects

Help develop informed, knowledgeable and responsible citizens in the region in which the project is located. Projects focus on an environmental issue of local concern.
EE Best Practices

EPA expects funded projects to employ the best educational practices, methods and/or techniques available, especially those that have been demonstrated to be effective in developing critical thinking and problem solving skills, and that lead to lifelong stewardship behavior.
Educational & Environmental Priorities

- Educational (examples):
  - EE Capacity Building
  - Educational Advancement
  - Community Projects
  - Human Health and the Environment
  - EE Teaching Skills
  - Career Development

- Environmental (examples):
  - Improving Air Quality
  - Protecting Water Resources
  - Understanding and Addressing Effects of Toxics and Chemicals
  - Reducing Pollution from Landfills and Superfund Sites
Partnerships

- NOT required.

- Partnerships can strengthen recruitment plans by increasing potential numbers and diversity of audiences, can increase the variety of and accessibility to expertise needed to create a local project, and can assist in meeting the matching funds requirement.
Seeking Variety and Range

EPA funds a variety of projects in order to support a range of educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences.

- Dealing with environmental challenges requires a population that is diverse, informed, and environmentally literate.

- Every community needs citizens of all ages and walks of life willing and able to use critical thinking skills to solve problems to protect their local environment.

- EPA seeks to reach underserved communities, such as low income, minority, and tribal communities, and a variety of geographic locations, including populations likely to be adversely affected by environmental risks.
Who is Eligible

- Any local education agency, college or university, state education or environmental agency, or a tribal education agency*.
- A nonprofit organization as described in Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- A noncommercial educational broadcasting entity as defined and licensed by Federal Communications Commission.
- Applicant organizations must be located in the United States or Territories and the majority of the educational activities must take place in the United States; or in the United States and Canada or Mexico; or in U.S. Territories.

*Local environmental agencies, like a county solid waste district or municipal storm water management agency, are eligible if they can demonstrate a mandate to conduct educational programs. Tribal education agencies that are eligible to apply include a school or community college which is controlled by an Indian tribe, band, or nation, which is recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians and which is not administered by the Bureau of Indian Education.
What Else Affects Eligibility

- **Deadlines** must be met.
- Work Plan, Budget, and Appendices must be **complete**.
- Budget must include:
  - request for approximately, but **no more than**, the $ amount set in each RFP
  - minimum **match** of 25% of total budget
  - exactly 25% of EPA funds spent on **sub-grants** of $5,000 or less.
- Proposal must include both **educational** and **environmental** priorities.
- Applicants must demonstrate that proposed project **has not been previously funded** by EE Grants Program – or is being **significantly changed**, expanded, broadened or enhanced.
What the EE Grants Program Can & Cannot Fund

**Funded:**
- Environmental education projects based on sound science that teach or enhance critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that lead to responsible actions to protect human health and the environment.

**Not funded:**
- Projects that advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action about environmental issues or simply disseminate information.
- Lobbying or political activities.
- Non-education-related research or development.
- Technical training of environmental professionals.
- Construction projects.
Budget and Cost Items

- **SF-424A and Detailed Budget**

- **Contracts vs Sub-grants**
  - Contracts are for purchasing services and generally must be competed.
  - Sub-grants go to eligible entities to help plan or implement the main tasks of the project.

- **Indirect Costs**
  - Cannot be reimbursed without indirect cost rate agreement.
Budget and Cost Items: Matching Funds & Sub-grant Funds

• Matching Funds
  ❖ **Minimum** of 25% of Total Project Budget
    • Cash or in-kind services, but no federal funds.

• Sub-grants
  ❖ **Exactly 25%** of EPA funds **must** go to **eligible** sub-grantees in amounts of $5,000 or less.
Budget & Cost Items: Program Income & Food/Beverage Costs

- **Program Income**
  - Money a grant recipient earns as a direct result of a grant-supported activity (e.g., workshop fees), usually used for eligible, allowable costs in project

- **Food/Beverage Costs**
  - Allowed for “working” breakfast or lunch, or light refreshments during breaks.
  - NOT allowed for evening receptions, banquets, or events where alcohol is served, entertainment is provided or funds are solicited.
Content of Applications/Proposals

**Standard Forms**
- Standard Federal Application Form (SF-424)
- Budget Form (SF-424A)

**Work Plan** (8 page limit)
- Project Summary
- Detailed Project Description
- Project Evaluation

**Detailed Budget** – Same order and categories as 424A, but with much greater detail.

**Appendices**
- Timeline
- Logic Model
- Partnership Letters of Commitment
- Programmatic Capability and Past Performance
Review & Selection for Funding

- Eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of reviewers assembled by each Regional Office; includes experts in EE.

- Section V of RFP describes factors and points; scores up to 100.

- Applications are ranked from highest to lowest score.

- EPA Selection Official is briefed on score, ranking and other factors* that may be considered for final funding selection.

*Other factors may include the EPA educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences that are addressed in the highest ranked proposals.
Helpful Resources for Employing Best Practices

- If you are training educators: *Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators*,
  [http://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-publications](http://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-publications)

- If you are developing materials:
  The *Guidelines for Excellence in EE* series of publications listed at
  [http://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-publications](http://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-publications)

- When you set up an evaluation of your project, consult the site, *My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant (MEEERA)*:
  [http://meera.snre.umich.edu/](http://meera.snre.umich.edu/)
Tips for Success

• Show that your proposal fits the criteria of the EE grants RFP.

• Demonstrate past successes.

• Describe your qualifications.

• Describe your target population and why they were selected.

• Demonstrate partner support, when appropriate.

• Demonstrate adequate match and exact sub-grant amounts.

• Write simply and clearly – do not leave out important details; but stick to page limit.

• Do not assume reviewer knowledge.

• Explain acronyms/terms.

• Check your math – and check it again.

• Organize application around the scoring factors in RFP.

• Include a plan to measure and evaluate educational and environmental results.
And...

- Start early – Leave time to review and edit your proposal.

- Read the RFP (solicitation) and online FAQs thoroughly before beginning your proposal/application – and as many times as you need during the writing process.

- You must use grants.gov to submit your proposal, so have your Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) register now, and make sure you are current in SAM and DUNS.

- Send questions to EEGrants@epa.gov – after you read the RFP and FAQs thoroughly!
Where Do I Find More Information?

The EPA Environmental Education Grant website:

https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants
Frequently Asked Questions

Review the EE Grants *FAQ’s online before starting to write a proposal: [http://www.epa.gov/education/frequently-asked-questions-about-environmental-education-grants-program](http://www.epa.gov/education/frequently-asked-questions-about-environmental-education-grants-program)

*To be tailored to the new RFP.
This presentation is intended to provide a general overview of the Environmental Education Grant Program and federal application process. Nothing in the presentation is meant to supersede anything in any RFP/Solicitation Notice.

For general information about the Environmental Education Grant Program please contact:

Karen Scott at scott.karen@epa.gov

For questions about any open Environmental Education Grant Solicitation/RFP please contact: eeegrants@epa.gov

Thank You!