



Request for Applications

Opening Date: October 28, 2024

Deadline: Applications must be submitted on or before December 12th 2024 at 11:59 pm Mountain Standard Time. through Alchemer (an online submission tool) or by mail. Applications submitted by mail must be postmarked by December 12, 2024. Applications submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

Anticipated Award Timeline: Approximately 3-4 months after the application closes

Link to Submit Online Application: [Competitive Application](#) and [Non-Competitive Application](#)

Spanish translations are available on the online survey tool.

RFA Contents

Background.....	2
Definitions.....	3
Eligibility to Apply.....	4
Types of Competitive Subgrants Available.....	5
Competitive Subgrant Application Requirements.....	6
Non-Competitive Subgrant Application Requirements.....	7
Application Submission Process.....	9
Funding Rules & Restrictions.....	10
Contact Information.....	11

Background

The Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program

In 2022, the Biden–Harris administration signed the [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#), which allocated nearly \$2 billion to underserved communities to address environmental and climate justice challenges.

As part of the IRA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is implementing the [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking \(EJ TCGM\)](#) program. The goals of the TCGM program are to:

- Benefit communities of interest, as defined by the [Inflation Reduction Act Disadvantaged Communities Map](#)
- Seek to address a specific environmental justice issue in that community of interest
- Engage community members and prioritize community representation and inclusion

The Mountains and Plains Environmental Justice Grants Hub

The EPA has selected the Mountains and Plains Environmental Justice (MAP EJ) Grants Hub as the grantmaker for EPA Region 8. The MAP EJ Grants Hub is managed by [JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc](#) (JSI). JSI is a global nonprofit dedicated to improving lives around the world through greater health, education, and socioeconomic equity for individuals and communities.

The MAP EJ Grants Hub is administered by JSI's Colorado office in Denver. Established in 1982, JSI Colorado focuses on local and regional level work related to a variety of public health and environmental health and justice topics. JSI is working with [multiple partners](#) in the region to ensure geographic and community representation in the MAP EJ Grants Hub.

The MAP EJ Grants Hub is committed to reducing the burden of applying for a federal grant, and strengthening the capacity of local organizations to support long-term sustainability.

Definitions

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice, as defined by the EPA, is the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

- are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and
- have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices

Examples of Environmental Justice Projects:

- Air quality & asthma
- Fence line air quality monitoring
- Monitoring of effluent discharges from industrial facilities
- Water quality & sampling
- Small cleanup projects
- Improving food access to reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Stormwater issues and green infrastructure
- Lead and asbestos contamination
- Pesticides and other toxic substances
- Healthy homes that are energy/water use efficient and not subject to indoor air pollution
- Illegal dumping activities, such as education, outreach, and small-scale clean-ups
- Emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency
- Environmental job training for occupations that reduce greenhouse gasses and other air pollutants
- Environmental justice training for youth

Disadvantaged Communities

This grant program uses the EPA's definition of disadvantaged communities, but you may also see the term "community of focus." All of these terms refer to the communities this program seeks to serve.

From the EPA: A "disadvantaged community" is a population or geographic location in the United States that experiences disproportionate environmental and climatic harms and risks. This disproportionality can be a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, lack of opportunity for public participation or other factors. Increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative or lack of positive environmental, health, economic or social conditions within these populations or places. The term describes situations where multiple factors, including both environmental and socioeconomic stressors, may act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities. **NOTE: This term has a distinct meaning when identifying geographically defined disadvantaged communities for any programs funded through the Inflation Reduction Act.**

Eligibility to Apply

Eligible Entities

- Must be located in, or providing services in, EPA Region 8 (CO, MT, SD, ND, UT, WY, and 28 federally recognized tribes)
- Nonprofit organizations, including community-based and grassroots nonprofit organizations and philanthropic and civic organizations with 501(c)3 or 501(c)6 nonprofit status
- Tribal governments (both federally recognized and state-recognized) and intertribal consortia
- Native American organizations (includes Indian groups, cooperatives, nonprofit corporations, partnerships, and associations that have the authority to enter into legally binding agreements)
- Local governments (includes cities, towns, municipalities, and counties, public housing authorities and councils of government)

- Institutions of higher education (e.g., private and public universities and colleges, including community colleges)

Ineligible recipients

- State governments
- For profit institutions
- Individuals
- Any other entity, collaborative, or consortium that does not meet the requirements above.

Types of Competitive Subgrants Available

Proposed projects must fall under one of the following funding tiers:

Tier 1 Subgrants: Assessment | up to \$150,000 | 1 Year

Applicants in Tier 1 should have an identified environmental justice issue and a community of focus, **but they are not expected to propose an intervention or solution to the issue.**

Project examples include:

- Research (that is incidental to the project design)
- Sampling
- Testing
- Monitoring
- Investigations
- Surveys and studies
- Public education

+ Pilot ten \$75,000 non-competitive fixed amount awards for severely capacity-constrained organizations. More details are provided below.

Tier 2 Subgrants: Planning | up to \$250,000 | 1-2 Years

Applicants in Tier 2 should have an identified environmental justice issue and a community of focus, and they should be working with that community **to lay the groundwork for an intervention and/or to involve and mobilize the community.**

Project examples include:

- Planning
- Partnership-building
- Public outreach and education
- Coordination with community stakeholders to address environmental issues
- Training activities for community organizations and community members
- Projects and activities to spur community involvement (e.g., cleanups of vacant lots)
- Smaller land purchases and acquisitions that require less than half of the total amount of subgrant funding

Tier 3 Subgrants: Development | up to \$350,000 | 2 Years

Applicants in Tier 3 should have an identified environmental justice issue and a community of focus, and **have clearly defined implementation steps for an intervention that will impact the environmental justice issue.**

Project examples include:

- Project development
- Blueprints for construction or cleanup projects, schematics, and technical development
- Work to get permits in place directly related to an environmental project
- Smaller land purchases and acquisitions that require less than half of the total amount of subgrant funding
- Implementation of project plans
- Public outreach and education

Competitive Subgrant Application Requirements

The MAP EJ Grants Hub competitive subgrant application can be found [here](#). All applicants for competitive subgrants will be required to complete the full application and provide all of the following documentation:

- An IRS determination letter documenting nonprofit status (if applicable)
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) verification through [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov)
- Screenshot of [EJScreen](#) project area

- [Required budget template](#)
- Itemized Budget Sheet - Clearly explain how funds will be used

Click [here](#) to preview the competitive application questions.

Evaluation Criteria

All eligible competitive applications will undergo a comprehensive scoring process. The scoring committee is made up of representatives from [the MAP EJ Council](#), a council of environmental justice community-based organizations from across the region, and staff from the MAP EJ Grants Hub team. The MAP EJ Grants Hub team will consider application scores along with geographic distribution when making funding decisions.

Click [here](#) to view a high-level scoring rubric used in the scoring process for competitive subgrant applications.

Non-Competitive Subgrant Application Requirements

Non-competitive Tier 1 awards are intended for severely capacity constrained organizations who would be unlikely to obtain funding through a competitive process. The MAP EJ Grants Hub anticipates awarding a minimum of ten \$75,000 fixed-amount awards (FAA) in the first round of funding using a non-competitive grant process. Payments under these awards will be based on the achievement of project milestones. Entities can only receive one non-competitive grant, but they are also eligible to apply for competitive grants.

Eligibility for Non-Competitive Subgrants

- Be located in, or providing services in, EPA Region 8, which includes Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, and 28 Federally Recognized Tribes.
- Be one of the following entity types:
 - Nonprofit organizations
 - Tribal governments (both federally recognized and state-recognized) and intertribal consortia

- Native American organizations
- Local governments
- Institutions of higher education
- Not have another active federal grant/contract/cooperative agreement (it is ok to have been a contractor or subrecipient on another federal award).
- Not have served as the primary recipient of a competitive federal grant/contract/cooperative agreement within the past 3 years.
- Have an annual operating budget of \$300,000 or less.
- Be proposing project activities that address an environmental justice issue in a community of focus, as defined by the [Inflation Reduction Act Disadvantaged Communities Map](#)
- Examples of potential applicants*
 - Newly formed nonprofits
 - Organizations building capacity to address emerging environmental justice issues in their community
 - Organizations that are volunteer-run or who have a small staff (less than 5 people)
 - Organizations who are restructuring or have recently had a significant turnover of leadership, staff, or board
 - Organizations that have never won a competitive contract or bid
 - Organizations who have been told in the past that they do not meet minimum criteria to receive federal funds (or have never applied due to application requirements)
 - Organizations who have basic financial and administrative infrastructure in place, but could use support in developing this capacity

**This list is not exhaustive and should not discourage applicants who do not meet these criteria from applying. These are examples and should not be construed as formal evaluation criteria.*

The non-competitive subgrant application can be found [here](#). All applicants are required to complete the full application, including an [organizational capacity assessment](#) and the following documentation:

- An IRS determination letter documenting nonprofit status (if applicable)
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) verification through [SAM.gov](#)
- Screenshot of [EJScreen](#) project area

Non-Competitive Subgrant Review Process

All eligible non-competitive applications will be reviewed to assess organizational capacity and project alignment with the goals of the grantmaking program. All non-competitive applicants will be asked to participate in an interview to discuss their project and organizational assessment, and they may be asked to provide additional documentation.

Application Submission Process

Applicants have the option to submit their application online via Alchemer, or to submit a paper application via mail. . Online applicants will receive an email confirmation stating that their application has been received within 48 hours of submission. Submissions made through the mail will receive confirmation of receipt within five (5) business days of receipt.

Applicants who choose to mail their materials, please send to the following address:

JSI

1433 17th St #300

Denver, CO 80202

Upon receipt of application, the MAP EJ Grants Team will then conduct an initial review of applications to confirm eligibility and application completeness. This screening will also include a preliminary budget review and project location eligibility verification. You will receive a follow-up email within two (2) weeks of submission with the status of your application.

Funding Rules & Restrictions

The restrictions below apply to all organizations applying for Tier 1, 2, or 3 funding.

- An entity can apply for up to two awards per cycle.
 - If a single entity submits more than two applications, all applications will be returned and the applicant will be required to determine which two applications will be considered.
 - Institutes of higher education and local governments are considered single entities and are limited to the two awards per cycle.
- National entities are eligible to apply for projects in different regions. If satellite offices do direct work in target communities, then that should be explained in the application.
- Each tier of funding has a maximum amount associated with each award (Tier 1: \$150,000, Tier 2: \$250,000, and Tier 3: \$350,000). No amount over the respective tier maximum will be granted.
- Entities may apply for multiple rounds of funding through TCGM, however the lifetime cap for any single entity is \$600,000.
- Fiscally sponsored entities may be allowed to apply. Sponsored entities should discuss their plan for applying with their fiscal sponsor to determine which entity should serve as the lead applicant, given the requirements below. The sponsorship relationship should be noted in the application narrative.
 - If the sponsored entity is not incorporated or does not otherwise have a legal status, then the organization's fiscal sponsor must apply as the primary applicant, with the sponsored entity as a contractor or partner.
 - If the entity is incorporated and has a legal status, then it can apply as the primary applicant. (**Please note:** fiscally sponsored entities may not be considered "severely capacity constrained" for the purpose of noncompetitive subgrant eligibility because the capacity of the sponsor organization will be considered. For more information on the role of fiscal sponsorship, please contact mapejgrants@jsi.com).
- Fiscal sponsor organizations do not have a cap, although any single sponsored entity would be subject to the \$600,000 lifetime max.
 - Eligible fiscal sponsors can apply for more than two awards per cycle, however, no single sponsored entity beneath the fiscal sponsor is

allowed to have more than two applications during a single funding round.

- Certain activities cannot be funded with TCGM funds, including lobbying, legal expenses, management and fiscal sponsorship fees, and any other activities that are unallowable under 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E. For more questions about allowable costs, contact mapejgrants@jsi.com or refer to [Developing a Budget Webinar | US EPA](#).

Contact Information

Office Hours & Applicant Support

Please direct any questions regarding this Request for Applications to mapejgrants@jsi.com.

To stay updated on upcoming webinars, important updates, or information about future cycles, join our mailing list [here](#).

The MAP EJ Grants Hub holds regular office hours for prospective applicants and grantees. Email mapejgrantshub@jsi.com for more information.

For technical assistance on applications, support is available from the [Region 8 MAP Thriving Communities Collaborative](#).