



**Cultivating Healthy
Environments**

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program (EJ TCGM)

Application Guide

December 9, 2024



Prepared by
RTI International
3040 E. Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program (EJ TCGM)

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Application Guide

Initial Announcement

DATES: **ANNOUNCEMENT DATE: December 9, 2024**
 CLOSING DATE: April 30, 2027

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	3
<i>Before you Begin</i>	4
<i>Overview of Opportunity</i>	5
About the Grantmaking Program	5
Background on EPA's EJ TCGM Program	6
<i>Ready: Confirming Eligibility</i>	7
Who is Eligible to Apply	7
Who is Not Eligible to Apply	7
<i>Set: Getting Started</i>	9
Submission Instructions.....	9
Application Submission and Review Timelines.....	9
<i>Apply: Preparing Your Application</i>	11
Set up Your Account.....	11
Working with Others.....	11
Step 1: Applicant Information	13
Step 2: Project Information	17
Step 3: Budget Information	22
Step 4: Submission Questions	27
<i>What to Expect After You Submit Your Application</i>	28
Step 1: Initial Administrative Review	29
Step 2: External Review	32
Step 3: Community Advisory Board Review	34
Step 4: Notice of Funding Decision	36
<i>Award Notice and Requirements</i>	37
Award Process.....	37
Project Accountability	37
<i>Closing</i>	38
Consider Serving as a Reviewer	38
Letters of Support	38
Defining Terms.....	39
List of Acronyms	40

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Before you Begin

Welcome to the application guide for the Cultivating Healthy Environments EJ TCGM program! This document is designed to help you navigate the application process with ease and confidence.

Before you start filling out your application, here are a few important tips and reminders to ensure a smooth experience:

1. **Gather Necessary Information:** Make sure you have all the required information and documents at hand. This includes details about your organization, project specifics, budget information, and contact details for key personnel.
2. **Understand the Requirements:** Carefully read through each section of the application to understand what is being asked. Pay attention to word limits and specific instructions to ensure your responses are clear and concise.
3. **Plan Your Responses:** Take some time to outline your answers before entering them into the application form. This will help you stay organized and ensure that you cover all necessary points.
4. **Check for Accuracy:** Double-check all information for accuracy and completeness. This includes verifying contact details, budget figures, and any other critical data.
5. **Seek Assistance if Needed:** Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862.

What You Need to Know

Each section contains a similar text box that will highlight essential information for each section.

We encourage you to review this document in its entirety before starting your application.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Overview of Opportunity

Underserved and disadvantaged communities have long faced disproportionate environmental hazards and health risks. These challenges are often compounded by social inequities such as poor housing, job insecurity, limited access to clean water, healthy food, and reliable transportation. In addition to environmental risks, these communities are burdened by social issues like crowded homes, noise pollution, and underperforming schools, which lead to greater health disparities. The result is a cumulative, disproportionate impact that hinders their ability to achieve optimal environmental health and justice.

About the Grantmaking Program

Under its cooperative agreement with EPA, Cultivating Healthy Environments is a grantmaking program centering diverse community perspectives and expertise, engaging community representatives who are directly affected by environmental inequities and historically excluded from environmental policymaking and regulatory processes. Cultivating Healthy

Environments recognizes that navigating the federal grants process can be particularly difficult for small, resource-constrained community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide vital support to underserved populations. Moreover, capacity-constrained organizations in one geographic area might have different capacity levels and acute issues impacting them than capacity-constrained organizations in another geographic area. The complexity of the federal registration and application process, combined with usually long delays in funding distribution—sometimes six months or more—can put federal funding out of reach for many organizations.

We make it easier for more community-based organizations to apply for federal funds and to address local environmental and public health issues.

As the designated pass-through entity for EPA's EJ TCGM program, Cultivating Healthy Environments serves as the TCGM Region 4, TCGM Region 7, and TCGM National-Central grantmaker to manage and distribute funds to 23 states and 116 federally recognized Tribal Nations. The program is designed to provide federal funds to CBOs and other [eligible organizations](#) to support the planning, assessment, and development of community-based projects. Projects funded under this program should directly benefit and empower communities to address local priorities. Through our advisory boards, our community-engaged transformative governance model supports decision-making that acknowledges that community organizations have the authority to define local priorities and the expertise to make funding decisions.

What You Need to Know

This program provides funding for projects aimed at addressing long-standing environmental and health challenges within historically underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Background on EPA's EJ TCGM Program

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognized the need for innovative solutions that focus on community engagement, the distribution of financial resources to those communities in need of support, and capacity-building efforts. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Acts of 2022 and 2023, and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, the EPA received significant investments aimed at improving the health, equity, and resilience of underserved communities. By increasing funding access and reducing administrative barriers, the EPA aims to empower disadvantaged communities to address long-standing environmental and health challenges. EJ TCGM aligns with the goals of Executive Orders 13985 and 14008, which prioritize equitable access to federal resources and emphasize the need for inclusive decision-making processes that advance environmental justice nationwide. These programs were created through the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest investment in climate action in history, and is part of EPA's strategic goal to address climate change and advance environmental justice.

A portion of this funding—\$2.8 billion under the Environmental and Climate Justice block grant program—has been earmarked to support projects benefiting disadvantaged populations. To maximize the impact of these investments, the EPA is employing new strategies, such as strengthening community participation in environmental programs and promoting effective grants management and performance. The pass-through model, central to EJ TCGM, allows Grantmakers to distribute smaller subawards to CBOs more efficiently than the traditional federal grants process. This model, now being implemented through the Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program, ensures that underserved communities can access funds more quickly and with fewer administrative burdens.



Note on Cost Sharing and Matching Requirements

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) does **NOT** have a cost sharing or matching requirement.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Ready: Confirming Eligibility

This program is designed to benefit and support community-based organizations and the communities they serve. Below is a list of all the types of entities that are eligible to apply for this funding.

Who is Eligible to Apply

Eligible applicant organizations include the following types of entities:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Community-based and grassroots nonprofit organizations
- Philanthropic and civic organizations with nonprofit status
- Tribal governments (both federally recognized and state-recognized)
- Intertribal Consortia (i.e., a partnership between two or more tribes that work together to achieve a common objective.)
- Native American Organizations (includes Indian groups, cooperatives, nonprofit corporations, partnerships, and associations that have the authority to enter into legally binding agreements)
- Organizations based in Puerto Rico
- Organizations based in U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands)
- Local governments (as defined by 2 CFR 200.1 – includes cities, towns, municipalities, and counties, public housing authorities and councils of government. Specifically, "small governmental jurisdiction" as the government of a city, county, town, school district or special district with a population of less than 50,000.)
- Institutions of higher education (such as private and public universities, colleges, and community colleges)

If your organization does not identify with one of these categories, there is the option to specify your organization under the “Other” category.

What You Need to Know

Your nonprofit organization does **not** need to have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS to receive funding under this opportunity.

Who is Not Eligible to Apply

It is important to note that the following entities are NOT eligible to receive funding:

- Individuals
- For-profit businesses (unless EPA’s Award Official makes an exception based on factors such as those described in [Appendix A of EPA’s Subaward Policy](#))

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

- State governments
- Freely Associated States (FAS) – including local governmental entities and local nonprofit organizations in the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau
- 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations that lobby are not allowed.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Set: Getting Started

Cultivating Healthy Environments, an EJ TCGM program, is designed to alleviate the burden associated with the traditional federal grants process by streamlining the application and distribution procedures. It also accelerates the time it takes for grantees to receive funding, thus enhancing their ability to operate and fulfill their missions.

Submission Instructions

First, you will need to decide how your organization will submit your application for consideration.

- ➔ **Online.** The application system is available on your computer and accessible on your mobile device.
- ➔ **By Mail.** You can submit your application by mail.
- ➔ **By Phone. (Coming Spring 2025)** Organizations can also schedule an appointment to complete your application over the phone. This is a guided, verbal process to relay the information requested for the application without the use of a computer.

Online applications are highly encouraged. Paper and phone submissions are available to communities and CBOs without reliable access to internet services.

What You Need to Know

Once you start your application online, you can save and return at any time. However, you must enter data in all required fields before you can proceed with the final submission of all four sections of the application.

Application Submission and Review Timelines

The application submission process begins December 16, 2024. Submissions will be accepted on a “rolling basis.” Applicants can submit their application for funding when they are ready. To assist applicants in planning, we encourage you to select a target date to submit your application. All applications received by these dates will be reviewed and considered for the next round of funding decisions. These target dates align with the scheduled meetings for review of applications and funding decisions.

Target Dates to Submit for Funding:

- January 31, 2025
- April 30, 2025
- July 31, 2025
- October 31, 2025 (Last date for 2-year projects)
- January 31, 2026
- April 30, 2026
- July 31, 2026
- October 31, 2026 (Last date for 1-year projects)
- January 31, 2027
- April 30, 2027 (Last date for 6-month projects)

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Funding decisions will be announced on a quarterly basis. Applicants may anticipate a notification about a funding decision within 3-5 months of submission, based on the next target application date (see table above). To assist with project planning, the potential start date for awards may be about 1 month after the notification date. This estimated start date allows time for completion of all required pre-award paperwork.

Applications submitted through the application management system will be time and date stamped electronically. Applications submitted by mail will use the postmarked date. Please note that successful submission of your application does not necessarily mean your application is eligible for award.

Dates are subject to change. Additional dates may be announced later, depending on funds available. Any remaining applications in progress must be submitted, or post marked on or before **April 30, 2027, at 11:59 PM (Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this final date and time will not be considered for funding.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Apply: Preparing Your Application

The application form is divided into four (4) sections.

- Step 1: Applicant Information
- Step 2: Project Information
- Step 3: Budget Information
- Step 4: Submission Questions

Cultivating Healthy Environments has designed an easy and intuitive way to submit your application for funding online. In addition to submitting your application online, Cultivating Healthy Environments accepts applications submitted by mail.

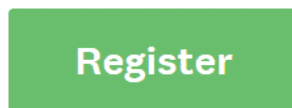


To receive a **paper copy** of the application and instructions for submission, please contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862.

Set up Your Account

If you are applying online, you will first need to create an account in Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply).

Located on the [EJ Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program page](#), in the top right-hand corner there is a green register button.



Selecting this button will direct you to register using either a Google account or by manually filling in the requested information to create an account.

- ☒ Register as an individual
- ☐ Register as an organization

After creating your account, you can log in to view the program page and select your region from the available programs. To start your application, click on the “MORE” button on any of the tiles. Next, follow the guidance to direct you to the program that best fits your project application. If you have any questions about which program is the best fit for your organization’s needs, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862.

You can save and return to your application at any time. The application platform will also send an automated reminder if you have an application in progress to alert you that the current closing date for funding is approaching.

Working with Others

Our online application platform is designed to allow multiple individuals to work together to prepare an application.

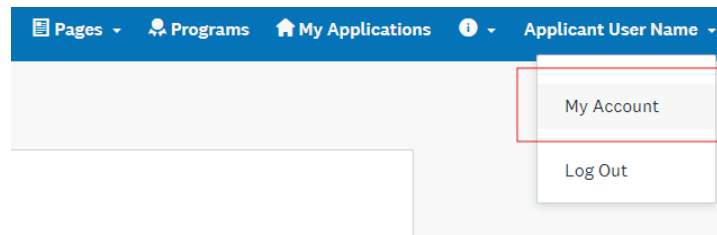
Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

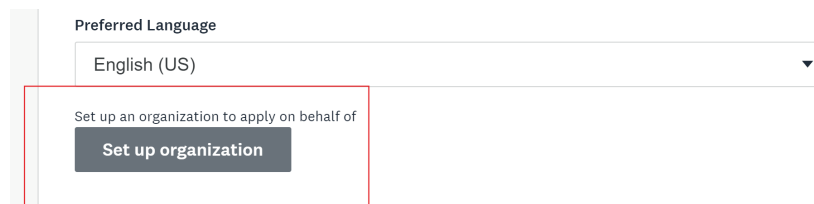
What You Need to Know

When you work with others, applying organizations should encourage team members to save their work frequently using the "Save and Return" button to ensure that no contributions are lost and to allow for revisiting and updating sections as needed.

From your individual account in SM Apply, go to My Account settings in the upper right-hand corner of the screen to set up the organization:



To collaborate with others in SM Apply, you must create a [Team or Organization](#). After creating an SM Apply account using their organization's email address, one designated administrator creates the organization account. Within the *Settings* menu page, there will be an option to "Set up organization":



Once created, an organization can add multiple team members who may collaborate on a single application. The applying organization is responsible for inviting collaborators to contribute to an application.

Add members Import members...

First name Last name

Email: (required)

Role:

☒ Non-administrator

☐ Organization administrator

☐ Add to team

☐ Notify member by email that they have been added

CANCEL ADD

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 1: Applicant Information

In Part 1 of the application, you will share essential details about your organization, including its category, a brief description, and basic budget information. You will also provide contact details for key personnel and your organization's mailing address. Additionally, you will be asked to describe past funding experiences, any challenges faced in securing federal funding.

You will be asked to provide your organization's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). If you do not have a UEI, this will not prevent you from applying; However, a UEI is required to receive the funding, if awarded. You will be able to note on your application if you do not currently have a UEI assigned. We recommend that you reach out to your local [Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center](#) for assistance in applying for one. Awarded funds cannot be granted until a UEI is in place, so please initiate the UEI application process as soon as possible.

What You Need to Know

Part 1 of the application asks for your organization's basic details, contact information and a brief, 500-word description of the organization. Often, this information can be found on your organization's website or in the charter or mission statement. When describing your organization, please describe the community or population that you serve and your organization's experiences with environmental and health challenges, noting local inequities and/or historical exclusions from environmental policymaking and regulation processes.

Name and Address of Applying Organization

You will first be asked to provide the name of your organization. This should be the same as the organization associated with your account. Please provide the full name of your organization and do not use acronyms.

Next, you will be asked to provide the mailing address for the organization. If your organization does not have a physical location of operation, you may provide a post office mailbox or residential address. The mailing address may be different from the proposed work takes place.



The mailing address will be used for administrative purposes only and will not be shared with the reviewers. The zip code provided will be used as one of the program measures to recognize underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Points of Contact

You will be asked to provide contact information for your group or organization. If one individual fulfills multiple roles, list their name next to each role they occupy. This ensures the Cultivating Healthy Environments team has accurate contact details for key positions within your organization.

You will be asked to identify the following individuals and their contact information:

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

- **Primary Point of Contact:** This is the main person we should reach out to for general inquiries and communications. For example, this could be your organization’s director or project manager
- **Financial Point of Contact:** This individual typically handles the organization’s financial matters, such as budgeting, funding and financial reporting. For example, this could be your organization’s treasurer or finance officer
- **Authorized Organizational Representative (if different):** This person has the authority to sign official documents and make commitments on behalf of your organization. This individual may be different from your primary and financial points of contact. For example, this could be your organization’s executive director or president.



Only the name of the individuals will be seen by the reviewers. Contact information will not be shared with reviewers. Your responses in this section do not impact the scoring of your application in any way.

What You Need to Know

You are asked for multiple points of contact to streamline communication by ensuring we can reach the appropriate individuals responsible for different aspects of the project.

About Your Organization

You will first be asked to identify the category that best describes your organization. You will need to select one category from the provided list. If your organization identifies with more than one category, choose the category that your organization most strongly identifies with. If your organization does not identify with any of the categories provided, you may select “Other” and provide a brief description.

- Nonprofit organization
- Community-based and grassroots nonprofit organization
- Philanthropic and civic organizations with nonprofit status
- Tribal government (both federally recognized and state-recognized)
- Intertribal consortia (i.e., a partnership between two or more tribes that work together to achieve a common objective.)
- Native American organization (includes Indian groups, cooperatives, nonprofit corporations, partnerships, and associations that have the authority to enter into legally binding agreements)
- Organization based in Puerto Rico
- Organization based in U.S. Territories: American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands
- Local government (as defined by 2 CFR 200.1 – includes cities, towns, municipalities, and counties, public housing authorities and councils of government)
- Institution of higher education (such as private and public universities, colleges, and community colleges)

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Next, you will be asked to **tell us about your organization**. Your description should include a high-level summary of information about (1) grants or other funding received from the federal government, (2) challenges you have faced to receiving funding from the federal government, (3) your experience working on environmental issues or issues where health is impacted by the environment, and (4) your experience working directly with your community on projects or issues. The word limit for this section is up to 500 words, around 2-3 paragraphs. This limit is designed to help you provide clear and focused responses, making it easier to introduce reviewers to your organization or group and its needs.

What You Need to Know

To assist with the writing process, you may find it helpful to develop the text in a separate document, then copy and paste text into the response space. If you chose to use an AI-enabled tool to assist with drafting your responses, be sure to review the text language for accuracy before submitting.

Unique Entity Identifier

You will be asked about your organization's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Your organization's UEI is generated when you register in SAM.gov. A UEI is different from a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. You can read more about the [DUNS to UEI transition information on SAM.gov](#).

👉 **Learn more about obtaining a [Unique Entity Identifier](#).**



This information is not shared with reviewers. If your organization does not have a UEI, this does not prevent your application from being considered for award. Your response does not impact the evaluation of your application in any way. However, if selected, you will be required to obtain a UEI for your organization before receiving the award.

Organization Budget

Understanding the size of your organization's budget helps us to provide appropriate support and resources to tailor assistance to better meet your needs and to ensure that funding is distributed equitably. This information will be used in part to determine whether your organization is eligible for a noncompetitive, capacity-constrained award. Capacity-constrained awards are designed to support organizations with limited financial or technical resources.

You may select "Prefer not to answer" this question, if you do not wish to share this information.

Sharing Any Challenges

The last question in this section asks you to describe the obstacles your organization faces in applying for and executing federally funded work. This information helps us understand difficulties your organization has encountered. The intent of this question is to identify areas where your organization may need additional technical assistance or supplemental resources to ensure a successful project.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Responses are limited to 250 words, or about 1-2 paragraphs. You may also provide your response in a series of bulleted statements. Common challenges might include managing administrative and financial reporting burdens, dealing with funding gaps, ensuring compliance with federal regulations, or other areas where you may need support.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 2: Project Information

In this section, you will provide detailed information about your proposed project. This includes selecting the project type, providing a brief title, and specifying the start date and duration. You will also indicate whether you are collaborating with any partners. You will identify capacity-building areas and activities the project will address, describe the community and issues the project aims to impact, and estimate the number of beneficiaries.

Question response word limits range from 100-500 words, 1-3 paragraphs. This information helps us understand the scope and goals of your project and assess its potential impact.

Type of Award

You will be asked to indicate which one of the three (3) tiers the proposed project matches. You will need to select only one. Each tier corresponds to different stages of project development and has specific funding limits and durations.

Project Award Tier	Tier I		Tier II Planning	Tier III Project Development
	Foundational Support	Assessment		
	Non-Competitive	Competitive	Competitive	Competitive
Max. Award Amount	Up to \$75,000	Up to \$150,000	Up to \$250,000	Up to \$350,000
Project Duration	Up to 1 year	Up to 1 year	Between 1-2 years	Up to 2 years
Example activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff development Process improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Sampling Testing Monitoring Investigations Surveys/studies Public education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership building Public outreach and education Stakeholder coordination Training activities Community clean-ups Small land purchases and acquisitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction plans, schematics, and technical development, includes excavation Permitting activities Small land purchases and acquisitions Implementation of project plans Public outreach and education

Tier I – Assessment Awards. Communities must gather information, assess, and understand the problem(s) before they can thoroughly develop a plan and then implement those plans to address and eventually resolve the problem(s). These awards will be available for capacity-constrained community-based organizations and/or “entry-level” applicants to assist them during the initial

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

steps of their work to address specific issues impacting them locally by conducting assessments of environmental and public health concerns.

Tier I – Foundational Support (Noncompetitive). Tier I awards include a noncompetitive sub-category for Foundational Support, which provides support for organizations needing assistance developing organizational capacity prior to executing a full-scale project. The noncompetitive up to \$75,000 subawards will be awarded to severely capacity-constrained, community-based nonprofit organizations in recognition that these organizations experience additional barriers and have limited capacity to pursue federal funding.

Severely capacity-constrained community-based organizations may apply for a noncompetitive Foundational Support award. The initial administrative review will confirm whether the organization meets at least one of the criteria for a *severely capacity-constrained* community-based nonprofit organization.

What You Need to Know

A noncompetitive, Foundational Support award is a type of funding that is allocated based on specific eligibility criteria for those applying for Tier 1 awards, rather than through a competitive process. Decision to award is made by one of the Community Advisory Boards serving the program area.

Tier II – Planning. Tier II awards will be available for organizations who already have a strong understanding of their local environmental and/or public health issues and are ready to formulate a community-wide plan to address those issues. Developing key cooperative partnerships with community stakeholders is an essential part of developing a community-wide plan and later implementing that plan. Therefore, partnership development will be a key aspect of the Tier II subgrants.

Tier III –Development. Tier III awards will be available for community-based nonprofit organizations and other Eligible Subrecipients who already have a strong understanding of their local environmental and/or public health issues, have already formulated a community-wide plan addressing those issues, and/or are now ready to develop the technical aspects of the project (i.e., implement the project on the ground). Developing key cooperative partnerships with community stakeholders is an essential part of developing a community-wide plan and later implementing that plan. Therefore, partnership development will be a key aspect of the Tier III awards as well.

Note: Tier III awards proposing construction activities will be required to comply with federal cross-cutting requirements. Applicants must demonstrate that they have systems in place, or a plan to have such systems in place immediately after the grant award, to comply with CAA § 314 and the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts prevailing wage requirement, the Build America Buy

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

America domestic preference requirement, and other cross-cutting statutory and Executive Order requirements (E.O. 12898) that apply to federally funded construction projects.

Description of the Project

You will first be asked to provide a descriptive **title for your project**. This title should be brief, and you will be limited up to 15 words.

Next, you will be asked about the **proposed project start date** in MM/DD/YYYY format. This should be the date that you would plan for your project to start. You may refer to [Set: Getting Started – Application Submission and Review Timelines](#) for suggested dates.

You will also be asked to provide the **proposed duration of the project**. This should be entered as the total number of months needed to complete the project.

Tier I-Foundational (<i>Noncompetitive</i>)	6-12 months
Tier I-Assessment	6-12 months
Tier II-Planning	6-24 months
Tier III-Development	6-24 months

This section will also ask whether **you are working with other partners on this project**. This includes other organizations or entities you may be collaborating, consulting, or contracting for this project. You do not need to have a financial or other form of agreement for an organization to be considered a potential partner for this project.

If you are working with partners, you will be asked to provide the name of the organization. Please provide the full name of the organization and do not use acronyms unless part of their legal name. A Letter of Support is optional and not required to show partnership.

Next, you will be asked to provide a short **description of your community and its environmental and/or public health issue(s)** that your proposed project is designed to address. Your description can be up to 500 words. Your response can include, but is not limited to, background on the issue(s) in your community, highlighting the current state of concern, as well as the ongoing effects to your community.

In this section, you will provide an **overview of your proposed project's expected outcomes, key activities and the geographic area** that will benefit from the project, including relevant details like zip codes and community information. Question response word limits range from 100-500 words, typically 1-3 paragraphs.

Description of the Benefitting Community

EPA uses the term disadvantaged community to describe historically underserved communities. To answer this question, please use the [EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities Map](#) to check if your project will benefit one or more disadvantaged communities identified by this tool. You will be

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

asked whether your project will benefit one or more disadvantaged communities, as identified by the data layer.

You will also be asked to provide a brief summary about the **geographic area(s) that will benefit from this project**. Your response will be limited to 250 words and may consist of a bulleted list of relevant information, including zip codes (preferable), county, community, and/or neighborhood information.

In addition, the application asks about the **number of people that will directly benefit from this project**, along with space to **provide a brief description of how you came up with your estimates** for the project. This is intended to reflect the size of the impact your proposed project will create in the community by measuring the number of people who benefit from the proposed activities. You can list any tools or resources used to support your estimation, including U.S. Census records. Space is limited to 150 words. (Note: Please do not include estimates of the number of people who benefit indirectly from the proposed activities.)

What You Need to Know

EPA uses the term *disadvantaged community* to describe historically underserved communities. Use one of the publicly available tools such as the [IRA Disadvantaged Communities Map](#) to check if your project will benefit one or more disadvantaged communities.

Next, you will be asked to identify the **topic areas** related to your project. Your proposed project may address more than one environmental issue or health issue related to the environment from this list, provided by EPA.

- 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 gases and other air pollutants
- Environmental justice training for youth

If your project does not clearly align with any of these categories, you can select “Other” and provide a brief description, such as “Conducting initial Brownfield assessment.”

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)

Lastly, you will be asked about whether your project will need a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). To help answer this question, applicants are highly encouraged to complete the [QAPP Decision Support Tool](#) to determine whether your proposed project will require a plan before any data collection activities are allowed to begin.

If a QAPP is needed, it does not need to be completed prior to receiving the award. Selecting “No” or “Don’t Know” for any question does or does not impact the application or the eligibility for funding.

What You Need to Know

You do not need to have an approved QAPP prior to submitting your application. Upon a notice of decision, you will receive additional instructions if your project requires a QAPP.

If awarded, your assigned Cultivating Healthy Environments **project officer** will work to ensure your QAPP is complete and receives approval prior to the relevant work beginning. Each region (and some states) may have varying requirements. It will be important for the grantee to work with the Cultivating Healthy Environments team and with EPA to ensure compliance with quality assurance requirements.

Human Subject Research

If your project will be collecting information from individuals, you may be asked to complete an optional assessment to determine whether your project constitutes human subjects research (HSR) according to the EPA HSR regulations, codified at 40 CFR Part 26 Subpart A (Protection of Human Subjects). Whether or not your project may constitute HSR according to the federal regulations is not always easy to determine. Your project must satisfy the definitions of BOTH “research” AND “human subject” to be considered human subjects research per 40 CFR 26.102:

It is required that institutions consider the definition of HSR sequentially when assessing their project. First, does the project constitute “research,” and second, does the research involve “human subjects.” If the project does NOT constitute “research,” then it should NOT be deemed HSR. Similarly, if the project DOES constitute “research,” but does NOT involve “human subjects,” then it should NOT be deemed HSR.

If awarded, your assigned Cultivating Healthy Environments project officer will work to ensure your HSR determination is complete. You will receive guidance about any determined reviews that may require an Institutional Review Board (IRB). If your project activities include human subjects research, a determination, exemption and/or approval will be needed prior to the relevant work beginning.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 3: Budget Information

Your budget should clearly identify the costs and expenses to complete the proposed project. You should make every effort to ensure costs are realistic and to estimate costs accurately.

A budget template is not provided for this application, however, applying organizations are highly encouraged to develop their budgets using existing forms under the Federal Grant structure, such as the [R&R Family](#) or the [Standard Form \(SF-424\) Family](#), including the SF-424A for non-construction and the SF-424C for projects involving construction. You must provide an itemized budget as a supplementary document along with the total amounts provided on your online budget submission. Amounts included in a budget and budget narrative are estimates; payments will be based on actual expenditures. It is highly recommended that your itemized budget be accompanied by a budget narrative, which provides a detailed explanation and description of your estimated costs, by category, needed to accomplish your proposed project activities. Your budget narrative will aid the administrative review and processing for a recommended award. You may be asked to provide additional budget detail if you do not submit enough detail.

Budget Categories

Your budget should be presented using the following categories to show the total costs of your proposed expenses as described below. You will be asked to enter costs into nine (9) budget categories - personnel (salary and wages); fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; contractual; construction (if applicable); other; and indirect costs. If you do not have a cost for a category, enter \$0 (zero) into the form field.

Category	Description
Personnel	Enter the funds needed for employee salaries and wages involved in the program. Do not include costs for consultants, contractors, or subrecipients. Refer to 2 CFR §200.430 ; 45 CFR §75.430 to check allowable personnel costs.
Fringe Benefits	Enter the funds needed for employee fringe benefits, which are additional allowances and services provided by employers beyond regular salaries. Typically, fringe benefits are calculated as a percentage of salary based on employee type (full-time or part-time). Only direct cost fringe benefits should be entered here. Do not include fringe benefits for consultants, contractors, or subrecipients; those should be listed under “Contractual” as part of the contract value. Refer to 2 CFR §200.431 ; 45 CFR §75.431 for details on eligible fringe benefits.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Category	Description
Travel	Enter the funds needed for project-related travel, including transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses for employees on official business. Travel costs for non-employees (consultants, contractors, subrecipients) should go under the “Contractual” category. Local travel for employees such as mileage and public transit reimbursement should be listed in "Other." Travel costs should follow the applicant's travel policies and 2 CFR §200.474; 45 CFR §75.474 .
Equipment	Enter the funds needed for equipment for the program. "Equipment" refers to tangible property, including IT systems, with a useful life of over one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. The acquisition cost includes the net price, plus any necessary modifications, accessories, and related charges (like taxes or shipping). Equipment costs should follow the applicant's equipment policies and 2 CFR §§200.2, 200.313, 200.439; 45 CFR §§75.2, 75.320, 75.439 .
Supplies	Enter the funds needed for supplies, which are tangible items that do not qualify as equipment. A computing device is considered a supply if its cost is less than \$5,000 per unit. Supply costs should follow applicant's supply policies and 2 CFR §§200, 200.314, 200.453; 45 CFR §§75.2, 75.321, 75.453 .
Contractual	<p>Enter the funds needed for contractual costs in the program. This includes all service contracts, consultants, subrecipients (subcontractors), third-party evaluations, procurement, and any third-party rental or lease agreements for equipment or rental property used for the program.</p> <p>EPA expects recipients of funding to comply with competitive procurement contracting requirements as well as EPA's rule on Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in EPA Programs in 40 CFR Part 33. EPA does not accept justifications for sole source contracts for services or products available in the commercial marketplace based on a contractor's role in preparing an application.</p>

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Category	Description
Construction (if applicable)	<p>Construction costs are allowable for Tier III projects only.</p> <p>Enter the funds needed for construction, excavation, or major renovation under the program. Construction refers to building or creating new space, such as a new structure or adding wings, floors, or enclosed areas. Major renovation involves structural changes (like to the foundation, roof, or walls) to expand floor space or change the use of a facility. Construction and major renovation are not allowed without specific authorization, and additional grantor approval may be required.</p> <p>Construction costs must comply with federal cross-cutting requirements. These requirements include, but are not limited to, National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC § 470); Endangered Species Act (P.L. 93-205); federal nondiscrimination laws, financial management policies, and executive orders on the protection of wetlands and flood plains and other crosscutters can be accessed here: https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-subaward-cross-cutter-requirements. If awarded, grantees will receive support from their program officer to work with EPA Subject Matter Experts to understand the compliance required for your proposed activities.</p>
Other	<p>Enter the total of all other program costs not listed elsewhere. These may include participant costs, printing, training costs, staff development, and direct administrative costs. Real property purchase costs (principal and interest) are not allowed without specific authorization. Consult with the grantor agency if including these costs, as they may require additional details and approval.</p>

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Category	Description
Indirect Costs	<p>If you are applying for a Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III cost-reimbursable award (not a fixed price award), your budget may include indirect costs. Indirect costs are operational costs that are not directly related to a single project. This term is also referred to as “overhead” or “shared costs.” Indirect costs are those for a common or joint purpose across more than one project and that cannot be easily separated by project. It is important that costs included in the indirect cost pool must not be charged as direct costs. Indirect costs must follow 45 CFR 75.414.</p> <p>For your budget, you will need to determine whether to use either a de minimis rate or an approved rate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ De minimis rate. If the apparently successful applicant has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement from a federal agency, the recipient may choose to charge a <i>de minimus</i> rate of 15% of modified total direct costs (see 2 CFR 200.414(f)). ➤ Approved rate. Your organization may (less common) have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) or may be awaiting approval of an indirect cost proposal.

As you enter your totals into the application form, you may consider the following:

- If you have no costs for a budget category, you should enter \$0 (zero) into the form field.
- The form will automatically add your budget costs together to provide the total amount (\$) requested for this project. Be sure to check this total with the total in your budget files.
- Detailed, line-item descriptions of expenses will be uploaded in a separate document. Please use these categories as headings in the line-item budget so that the two documents can be cross-referenced.

What You Need to Know

Your project may use funds only for reasonable project purposes consistent with the award and grant regulations ([45 CFR 75](#)). Review of the proposed budget will check to confirm costs are allowable in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E](#).

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) does not have a cost sharing or matching requirement.

EPA and the Cultivating Healthy Environments program does encourage leveraging other resources to promote sustainability. However, this information should not be included in your budget calculations. You may instead provide a summary of this information in the Budget Narrative.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Unallowable Costs

As you build your budget, it's important to be aware that some activities are considered ineligible activities and therefore unallowable, if awarded. The following are examples of ineligible activities under the awards to be made from this program include:

- Lobbying as restricted in [2 CFR 200.450](#).
- Legal advice, services, or representation
- Travel for federal employees
- Costs for other activities that are unallowable under [2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E](#).

This is not an exhaustive list of ineligible activities. All activities receiving EPA funding are subject to requirements for cost allowability in applicable regulations including limitations on consultant fees in [2 CFR Part 1500](#). Additionally, only activities described in the EPA approved scope of work are eligible for funding.

What You Need to Know

Your submitted budget will be reviewed by the Cultivating Healthy Environments Team to ensure all costs are allowable. You may be asked to revise your budget if it contains one or more ineligible activities or unallowable costs. This does not prevent your application from being considered for award.

Upload Budget Attachments

Next, you will be provided a space to upload your accompanying budget documents. Your budget should include the following two (2) documents.

- 1) **Line-Item Budget:** Shows a detailed breakdown of all costs associated with the project. Please use the Budget Categories as headings in the line-item budget so that the two documents can be cross-referenced.
- 2) **Budget Narrative:** Provides a written explanation of the costs included in your Line-Item Budget, offers context and justification for each expense and should be in the same order as budget items.

You are allowed to provide your budget materials in your choice of format. We highly encourage to develop their budgets using existing forms under the Federal Grant structure, such as the R&R Family or the Standard Form (SF-424) Family, including the SF-424A for non-construction and the SF-424C for projects involving construction.

You may also provide any optional documents and attachments, which may include:

- Copy of your current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) approved by the respective federal agency
- Copy of your organization's documentation showing nonprofit status, if your organization does not have tax-exempt status (optional)

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 4: Submission Questions

The last section of the application consists of two (2) parts.

Technical Assistance

The first part asks whether your organization received any technical assistance (TA) specific to the application. If yes, you will be asked to select the TA provider(s) from the list or given space to identify the provider.

What You Need to Know

You are highly encouraged to complete these optional questions. The information collected is used for general reporting purposes only and does not impact the scoring of the application in any way.

Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (EJ TCTACs) are institutions and organizations that work to support the communities and the organizations already doing essential environmental and energy justice work. These EPA-funded technical assistance centers recognize that low-income communities and marginalized populations bear the brunt of climate change and environmental damage. Organizations based in these communities know what they need, but they often don't have access to the opportunities or investments to make those solutions possible.

TCTACs provide guidance and training for grant writing, project management, and/or budgeting for eligible entities making their communities safer, healthier, and greener.

➔ **For more information and to contact a TCTAC, please visit the [EJ TCTAC](#) home page.**

If you received technical assistance from another federal or non-federal technical assistance provider, you can select the provider(s) or enter the name of the TA provider, if not listed.



This information is not shared with reviewers. Your response does not impact the evaluation of your application in any way. If your application received technical assistance, this does not prevent your application from being considered for award.

Authorized Representative

The second part asks for the signature, date, and name of the **Authorized Representative** submitting the application for your organization. This person should have the authority to sign official documents and make commitments on behalf of your organization. This individual may be different from your primary and financial points of contact. This individual is responsible for ensuring the content of the application is correct and accurately reflects your proposed project.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

What to Expect After You Submit Your Application

In this section, you will learn about what happens after you submit your application. The application review is divided into four key steps. Each step is designed to ensure a thorough and fair evaluation. You will be guided and informed with each stage, from the initial administrative review to the final decision, so you know what to expect along the way.

Step 1: Initial Administrative Review

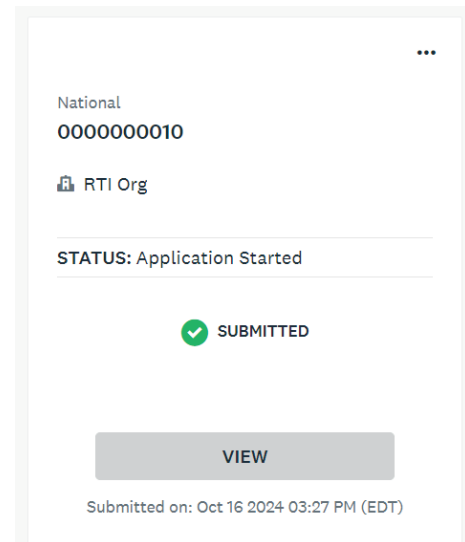
Step 2: External Review

Step 3: Community Advisory Board Review

Step 4: Notice of Decision

Applicants will be able to monitor the progress of their application by logging into the application management system.

The Cultivating Healthy Environments team has designed this program so that the average time it takes for applications to be submitted, evaluated, and awarded is under 6 months.



The screenshot displays a user interface for an application management system. At the top right, there is a three-dot menu icon. The main content area shows the following information: 'National' followed by the ID '0000000010', a lock icon and the text 'RTI Org', and a status line 'STATUS: Application Started'. Below this, a green checkmark icon is next to the word 'SUBMITTED'. A grey button labeled 'VIEW' is positioned below the status. At the bottom, it says 'Submitted on: Oct 16 2024 03:27 PM (EDT)'.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 1: Initial Administrative Review

Upon submission, an application will move immediately to an initial administrative review conducted by the Cultivating Healthy Environments team. The review will confirm the applicant organization's eligibility, as well as the completeness of the content. The initial administrative review is intended to provide a rapid response (less than 10 business days) to the applicant. The review may identify specific sections or critical elements that need additional detail, information or clarification before it may advance in the review process.

What You Need to Know

If your application does not meet the initial administrative review criteria, your application will be promptly returned with the rationale and instructions for next steps.

Checks for Completeness

The administrative review will confirm that all questions have been answered, and the answers are responsive and relevant to the corresponding question. Attachments will be checked for accessibility.

You may be asked to provide additional detail or information to ensure a response is complete and ready for review.

Verify Eligibility

The initial administrative review will also verify that your organization is an eligible entity and able to receive funding under this program. It is important that the information contained within your application is accurate and timely.

- Non-profit organizations do not need to have a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.
- Tribal governments may include state-recognized, as well as federally recognized entities.

If your organization is applying for a noncompetitive Foundational Support award under Tier I. The initial administrative review will confirm whether the organization meets at least one of the criteria for a *severely capacity-constrained* community-based nonprofit organization.

- Provided physical address is located (organization's mailing address) in an IRA-identified disadvantaged community
- Whether the project will benefit project intended to benefit a disadvantaged community
- Whether an applying organization's budget (use the information from last fiscal year) was less than \$500,000 in the last fiscal year.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Initial Budget Review

The initial administrative review will also check the Budget and Budget Narrative for your proposed project. The review will check the line-item budget with the budget narrative for an itemized labor and other direct costs appropriately to explain how the applicant arrived at each unit cost, the number of units for each line item; and the source for unit costs (e.g., quotations, historical experience).

You may be asked to provide additional detail or information to ensure your application budget and accompanying justification for costs is complete and ready for review.

Risk Review

All applications under review will receive an initial risk review by the Cultivating Healthy Environments team to identify any immediate barriers to funding. The purpose of the risk review is to evaluate your organization's award history to assess financial and contractual risk. We need to ensure all prior awards were managed well and demonstrated sound business and financial practices. As part of this process, the risk review may consider the following:

- Review any applicable past performance
- Review audit reports and findings
- Analyze the budget
- Assess your organization's financial management systems
- Ensure your organization's continued eligibility

For this review, we use SAM.gov to ensure your organization is not excluded or debarred from receiving federal awards. We also use Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) to assess your organization's financial risk.

- ***What if my organization is newly formed?*** In the absence of an award history or financial profile, the Cultivating Healthy Environments team may ask you to provide additional information.
- ***Will you let me know the outcome of the risk review?*** Yes, you will receive information that your organization passed, or a request for additional information. If the review identifies a significant risk that cannot be resolved, the Cultivating Healthy Environments team may place specific conditions on the award or choose not to fund your application. For more details, see [45 CFR 75.205](#).
- ***Does this information affect the review of my application?*** No, this information will not be shared with reviewers. The Cultivating Healthy Environments team will notify you of the outcome of your administrative review and risk assessment.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Request for Revisions

If additional or clarifying information is needed, the Cultivating Healthy Environments team may request revisions or changes to your application to ensure it meets the threshold for eligibility and review. Revised applications may be submitted within the same review cycle, provided the review cycle date has not passed. The Points of Contact will receive an email notification providing details, instructions, and requested due date to ensure your application can advance to the next stage.

Notice of Completion

Once the Initial Administrative Review is completed, the status of the application in SM Apply will be updated to reflect whether the application has been **'Advanced'** in the review process or **'Returned'** to the applying organization. You will receive an email notification when your application status has changed. You may also log into SM Apply to view the current status of your application at any time.

For applicants who did not submit applications online, please contact info@thrivingenvironments.org



Any application that is not eligible, incomplete, or non-responsive will not move forward in the review process.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 2: External Review

Once the Initial Administrative Review is complete, your application review status in SM Apply will change to **‘Under Review’** to indicate that your application has advanced to either the external review or the Community Advisory Board review. The type of award application, along with the organization and project information will be used to direct the next step of your application’s review.

The external review will consist of a review by two to three (2-3) reviewers. At least two of the reviewers will be reviewers with experience addressing or living with environmental and health-related issues. This may include previous applicants and grantees. Tier II and Tier III applications will also include a reviewer with technical expertise to evaluate scientific feasibility of proposed projects.

At a minimum, reviewers will be asked to consider the feasibility of the proposed project, its alignment with the overall Cultivating Healthy Environments program goals, and how it will benefit specific disadvantaged and underserved communities.

What You Need to Know

Applications for noncompetitive awards will not receive an external review. The applications will be forwarded for consideration and award determination by the respective Community Advisory Board (CAB).

Check for Conflict of Interest

To ensure impartiality, each reviewer of your application will be screened for potential conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is when someone might benefit personally from their actions. This can occur when personal, financial, or other interests could potentially influence or appear to influence a person’s decisions and actions in their role as a reviewer. The conflict-of-interest policy will be posted online.

If a conflict is identified, the application is reassigned to an alternate reviewer for consideration. A reviewer conflict does not impact the recommendation of the application in any way. Reassignment of a reviewer ensures all applications are reviewed impartially and does not prevent an application from being considered.

Review Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will be asked to read, review, and respond to a short series of questions about the application.

- Feasibility of the proposed project
 - Ex: Is the budget reasonable and sufficient for the proposed activities?
- Alignment with the overall Cultivating Healthy Environments program goals (refer to [Overview of Opportunity](#) section)

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

- Overall objectives and goals of the project
- How the project will benefit disadvantaged and underserved communities as designated by EPA

Reviewers may also be asked to provide input about:

- Whether the proposed activities may involve environmental operations or collection of environmental data information
- Whether the project may involve human subjects research

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 3: Community Advisory Board Review

One of the primary goals of the Cultivating Healthy Environments program is to promote a community-driven, community-led decision-making process. The Cultivating Healthy Environments' regional Community Advisory Boards (CAB) will establish shared accountability in EPA grantmaking processes that meaningfully center the local interests of communities in determining funding awards for states and tribal nations across EPA designated regions across various topics focused on addressing environmental burdens.

The CAB membership will include representatives from across the EPA regions eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Each CAB will include eight individuals with lived expertise, including people who lead environmental justice efforts, are directly impacted by disproportionate burden of environmental hazards, have shared commitment to advance healthy environments, and community-level improvements, and understand community context within their region. Roles and responsibilities of the CAB member are contingent on potential or current conflicts of interest as determined by the grant application.

Check for Conflict of Interest

To ensure fairness and impartiality in the assignment process, each application is also screened for any potential conflicts of interest with each member of the CAB. If a conflict is identified, the application is reassigned to an alternate CAB for consideration. A conflict discovered during the CAB review does not impact the review and recommendation of the application in any way. Reassignment of applications in the event of conflict of interests ensures all applications are reviewed fairly and without bias.

Review of Applications

CAB members will meet on a regular basis to review applications and issue funding decisions. Each application will be assigned to two CAB reviewers who will summarize the application's strengths and weaknesses and advocate for the application when the group meets to discuss. The CAB reviewer will each be responsible for reviewing the application and the feedback from the external review. Full application packets together with reviewer comments will be available to all CAB members during their review process.

Evaluation and Selection by Community Advisory Boards

The CABs are responsible for determining funding awards across various topics focused on addressing environmental burdens and ensuring distribution of funding that best meets the program goals. Under this program, funding decisions on submitted applications and the selection of awards will be made by the Community Advisory Boards and not EPA. Each CAB considers the

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

reviewer input, assesses the project feasibility, and reviews the potential impact on disadvantaged and underserved communities.

When making funding decisions, the Community Advisory Board considerations for funding may include, but are not limited to:

- Amount of available funds
- Responses and feedback from the external review process
- Composition of the larger portfolio of funded projects, including the diversity of project types and geographic distribution.

What You Need to Know

All awards are subject to the availability of funds, the quality of the applications submitted, and other applicable considerations.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Step 4: Notice of Funding Decision

The Cultivating Healthy Environments team anticipates awarding projects on a quarterly basis, depending on the availability of funds. The Cultivating Healthy Environments team has designed this program so that the average time it takes for applications to be submitted, evaluated, and awarded is less than six (6) months.

A notice of decision will be posted to the application management systems and emailed to the provided points of contact.

Funding Decision Types	Description of the Funding Decision
Funded – As Is	Decision to fund the proposed project.
Funded – Conditional	Decision to fund the proposed project, with minimal changes proposed project based on feedback.
Funded – Non-Competitive	Decision to fund a Foundational-Capacity Building project (non-competitive) to the applying organization
Not Funded	Decision to not fund the proposed project.

If your proposal is selected for funding, you will be assigned a Cultivating Healthy Environments Project Officer and Grant Coordinator to assist your organization with the contractual process.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Award Notice and Requirements

Award Process

If your application is selected to receive an award, the Cultivating Healthy Environments team will ask your organization to submit the following information to process your award:

- Tax identification number (TIN)
- W-9 Form
- Self-Certification Form
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)
- EFT/Wire Form (optional)

The Cultivating Healthy Environments team will work with you ensure that all the information is accurate and complete. Each grantee will also be assigned a Grant Coordinator to:

- Assist with completing the award process
- Ensure compliance with EPA subgrant policy and reporting requirements
- Process invoices for approval and payment

Project Accountability

Each grantee will be assigned a **Project Officer** by the Cultivating Healthy Environments team. **Project Officers (PO)** will meet regularly with grantees to:

- Encourage timely completion of required reporting of project activities and progress towards achieving outcomes
- Confirm whether (or not) the project requires a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)
- Confirm whether (or not) the project involves Human Subjects Research (HSR)
- Provide supplemental administrative resources to support the project requirements, including initial guidance to meet quality assurance requirements and/or human subjects research determination
- Help identify the extent to which additional technical assistance is needed to address project challenges and capacity building needs
- Promote at least one success story based on the activities completed, submitting photo(s) if applicable.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Closing

Thank you for applying to address long-standing environmental and health challenges within historically underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Consider Serving as a Reviewer

If you do not have an application currently under review, you are encouraged to consider serving as an application reviewer.

Application reviewers should be passionate about environmental justice and bring a wide range of expertise. Folks with experience addressing or living with environmental justice issues are highly valued. We also welcome people with technical expertise in environmental quality assessment, including but not limited to areas such as collecting and analyzing environmental samples, developing and interpreting construction blueprints, conducting environmental assessments, or collecting and analyzing survey or interview data.

Reviewers must be authorized to work in the United States and have access to the internet and a computer, smartphone, or tablet is required to access applications and provide feedback. Reviewers will be compensated for their time. If you're interested, contact us today at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862.

Letters of Support

Applicants are not required to provide a letter of support from the community; however, letters may be included if they provide helpful context or other information pertinent to the review of the application. Including one can strengthen the application by demonstrating community backing and engagement. If provided, the letter should be added as an additional document or addendum to the application; suggested page length of one (1) page for reviewer consideration.

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

Defining Terms

For this opportunity, the Cultivating Healthy Environments program defines the following terms.

Community-based Nonprofit Organizations (CBOs)	A public or private nonprofit organization that supports and/or represents a community and/or certain populations within a community through engagement, education, and other related services provided to individual community residents and community stakeholders. A “community” can be characterized by a particular geographic area and/or by the relationships among members with similar interests and can be characterized as part of a broader national or regional community where organizations can be focused on the needs of urban, rural, and/or tribal areas, farmworkers, displaced workers, children with high levels of lead, people with asthma, subsistence fishers, and other similar groups.
Underserved and Disadvantaged Communities	Defined by Executive Order 13985 , “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life...”. This includes communities such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; children, the elderly, members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. The definition includes “environmentally overburdened communities” (that is, communities adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental, climate and human health harms and risks including remote, rural, and urban communities), and disadvantaged communities.
Environmentally Overburdened Communities	Communities adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental, climate and human health harms and risks including remote, rural, and urban communities ¹
Nonprofit organization	Nonprofit organization at 2 CFR 200.1, the term “nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization that is operated mainly for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purpose in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit; and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operation of the organization.
Competitive Award	A funding opportunity that requires applicants to compete through a formal process to be selected for the award.
Noncompetitive Award	A funding opportunity given to an organization that meets specific eligibility criteria without requiring a competitive process. ²

¹ Defined by Executive Order 13985, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/02/16/executive-order-on-further-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>.

² Source: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-02/EJ%20TCGM%20RFA%20Feb%202023.pdf>

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.

List of Acronyms

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DUNS	Data Universal Numbering System
EJ	Environmental Justice
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NICRA	Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
RTI	RTI International
TCGM	Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
SAM	System for Award Management

Need Help?

Our team is here to support you throughout the process. If you have any questions about your submission or need clarification on any part of the application, contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org or +1 (424) 855-0862. If at any time you do not understand an information request, you can contact us at info@thrivingenvironments.org.