

EPA EJ Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program

JUNE 2024



This fall, we expect that RTI International will begin accepting applications for the EPA EJ Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program. The program will award federal subgrants to address environmental issues in underserved and disadvantaged communities.¹ This grantmaking program is intended to make it easier for groups that are less familiar with federal contracting, including small community-based organizations, to access federal funding.

Region 4 Grantmaker Program vs. National Grantmaker Program

EPA has selected RTI as one of eleven organizations to serve as regional Grantmakers under EPA's Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program. RTI will facilitate awarding \$40 million to projects in EPA Region 4, which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Community Advisory Boards ("CABs") will select the grantees. At this time, people serving on CABs would generally not apply for grant funding, though there are conflict of interest² provisions that would allow for this in certain circumstances. It is anticipated that those serving on CABs would be provided an honoraria for their work.

RTI was also selected as one of three National Grantmakers. RTI will cover Regions 4-7 in the National Grantmakers program.

Who can receive grants from the EPA EJ Thriving Community Grantmaker Program?

Eligible subrecipient organizations

- Nonprofit organizations (federal or state recognition)
- Community-based and grassroots nonprofit organizations
- Philanthropic and civic nonprofit organizations
- Tribal governments
- Native American Organizations
- Local governments
- Institutions of higher education³
- U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States

What types of projects can be funded?

Eligible subgrant projects and funding

At this time, we think that EJ Thriving Communities Subgrants awards can be used for project assessment, planning, and development and land acquisition. Subgrants can be awarded for projects that address environmental issues, including, but not limited to:

- Air quality and asthma
- Fence line air quality monitoring
- Water quality sampling and monitoring
- Small cleanup projects
- Stormwater issues and green infrastructure
- Pesticides and other toxic substances
- Healthy homes that are energy/water use efficient
- Lead and asbestos contamination
- Illegal dumping activities, such as education and small-scale clean-ups
- Emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency
- Environmental justice training for youth
- Environmental job training for occupations that reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollutants

Tier 1 Project Assessment Subgrants

Tier 1 subgrants of \$150,000 will go to organizations in their initial steps of work to address environmental issues. These funds can go to organizational activities such as research, sampling, investigations, surveys, studies, and public education.

Tier 2 Project Planning Subgrants

Tier 2 subgrants of \$250,000 will go to organizations to assist in the partnership development and creation of a community-wide plan to address environmental issues. These subgrant funds can go to organization activities including, but not limited to: planning, partnerships-

building, public outreach, stakeholder coordination, community training, and small land purchases.

Tier 3 Project Development Subgrants

Tier 3 subgrants of \$350,000 will go to organizations that are developing the technical aspects of their project. These subgrant funds can go to activities including, but not limited to: blueprints for construction or cleanup projects, work to get project-related permits, smaller land purchases, implementation of project plans, and public outreach and education.

Application Timelines and Materials

- Subgrant applications are expected to begin no later than fall 2024.
- Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.
- Subgrant decisions are made by a Community Advisory Board, composed of individuals from community-based organizations from across EPA Region 4.

The application process for the Thriving Communities program will open in fall 2024. Please see this summary for information about all the grantmaking programs across the U.S.: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-12/2023-environmental-justice-thriving-communities-grantmaking-program-selectees.pdf>

Visit EPA's website on the EPA EJ Grantmaking Program: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-thriving-communities-grantmaking-program>

FAQ

Are the thriving communities subgrants the same as the Community Change Grants?

No, the Community Change Grants are different. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Community Change Grant, which opened last year, is expected to remain open until November 21, 2024. <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-11/epa-community-change-grants-notice-of-funding-opportunity-november-2023.pdf>

The Thriving Communities Subgrants are awarded by Community Advisory Boards, in a participatory governance structure, which is intended to have less onerous reporting and eligibility requirements for organizations.

Is this program the same as the Thriving Community Technical Assistance Centers (TCTAC)?

No, TCTAC's may assist community groups as they prepare to apply for grants or think about project ideas, for example. RTI has been selected to be a TCTAC as well as a grantmaker, but there are different staff at RTI running these programs.

Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center ("TCTAC") contact information:

<https://www.react4ej.org/>
866-309-4559 or REACT4EJ@gmail.com

Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program email address:

tcgm@rti.org

To receive an invite to a Thriving Communities Information session, or express interest in serving on a Community Advisory Board, email thrivingcommunities@selcnc.org or call Melissa Harrison at 919-967-1450



1 The Request for Applications for Grantmaker proposals, used this definition for underserved and disadvantaged communities: The underserved and disadvantaged communities for which these projects are focused on include, as 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. For purposes of this RFA, "underserved communities" also 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.

2 <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-06/Participatory%20Governance%20and%20the%20Environmental%20Justice%20Thriving%20Communities%20Grantmaker%20%EJ%20TCGM%29%20Request%20for%20Applications.pdf>

3 Institutions of Higher Education may only apply for funding in statutory partnership with one or more community-based nonprofit organizations. For-profit colleges, universities, trade schools, and hospitals are ineligible. <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-01/faqs-the-environmental-justice-thriving-communities-grantmaking-program.pdf>