

[FRL-5338-5]

**Office of Environmental Justice;
Environmental Justice Community/
University Partnership Grants Program
Request for Applications (RFA) for
Fiscal Year (FY) 1996**

Purpose of Notice

The purpose of this notice is to solicit applications from eligible candidates under the Environmental Justice Community/University Partnership Grants Program sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Justice.

Grants Program Overview

The grants program was established to help community groups and tribal governments effectively address local environmental justice issues through active partnerships with one or more institutions of higher education. The Universities/Colleges shall support affected environmental justice community groups and American Indian tribes who engage in or plan to carry out projects that address environmental justice issues. The Universities/Colleges must focus on the design, methods, and techniques to evaluate and solve the environmental justice issues of concern to affected communities. The Universities/Colleges that have experience working with, and capabilities to effectively communicate with, affected communities, in actual partnership with such communities, will be given priority. This grants program will further the federal government's commitment to develop stronger partnerships with stakeholders in order to enhance community-based environmental protection.

The emphasis of this grants program is on meaningful, two-way cooperation between communities or tribes and institutions of higher education serving minority communities and low-income communities or tribes in order to address environmental justice issues. Partnerships must be established with formal agreements (i.e. Memoranda of Agreements) between at least one College/University and at least one socio-economically disadvantaged community which is adversely impacted by an environmental hazard. These partnerships become the catalyst for increasing environmental awareness and involvement in resolving environmental problems, such as exposure to environmental pollutants in minority communities and low-income communities and on Tribal lands.

The main objective of this grants program is to link community residence/organizations and tribes with

their neighboring or affiliated academic institutions to forge partnerships to address local environmental and public health concerns. This effort is designed to ensure that these partners:

- Are aware of basic environmental regulations, laws, concepts, issues, and resources;
- Understand their role in identifying and defining problems, and monitoring contaminants related to environmental exposures;
- Are included in the dialogue that results in shaping future policies, guidances, and approaches to problem solving; and
- Are encouraged to be active partners in developing responses and setting priorities for intervention.

Through these partnerships, communities will be encouraged to become involved in accessing information from environmental databases, in cleaning-up and restoring environmental quality in communities that have environmental insults, and in surveying and monitoring environmental quality.

Number of Grants Proposed: A minimum of four grants are expected to be awarded for fiscal year (FY) 1996, depending on the amount of funding.

Grant Award Amount: A maximum of \$250,000 will be awarded to each recipient, contingent upon the availability of funds. Work funded by this program is expected to begin upon award of the grant. All grants under this notice are expected to be awarded by August 1996.

Grant Term: The grant award will be a maximum of \$250,000, but the project period can extend up to three years, if necessary. However, if the project period extends beyond one year the funding will be dispersed to the grantee over the course of the project period, not all in the first year.

Eligibility: Participation is limited to all institutions of higher education, which are eligible under applicable statutory authorities, including Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges (TCs), and institutions serving Asian-American (AA's) and other minority communities or low-income communities, and which have formal partnerships (i.e., a signed Memorandum of Agreement) with any affected community groups (e.g., community-based/grassroots organizations, churches, schools, or other nonprofit community organizations) or with tribal governments.

The Environmental Justice Community/University Partnerships

may be either a partnership among two single entities or consortium of entities. If a consortium is proposed, the lead academic institution must be identified and be one of the eligible applicants. This lead institution is recognized as the grantee and as such is responsible for all activities under the agreement.

Statutory authorities: The granting authority is multi-media and the grant proposal must address at least two of the following statutes:

Clean Water Act, Section 104(b)(3)
Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001(a)

Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3)
Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act, Section 203

Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10(a) ¹

Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442(b)(3)

Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20(a) ²

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act,

Section 111(c)(10).³

Background: In its 1992 report, *Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk for All Communities*, EPA found that minority and low-income communities may experience higher than average exposure to toxic pollutants than the general population. The Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) was established in 1992 to help these communities identify and assess pollution sources, implement environmental awareness and training programs for affected residents and work with local stakeholders (community-based organizations, academia, industry, local governments) to devise strategies for environmental improvements.

In June of 1993, OEJ was delegated granting authority to solicit projects, select suitable projects from among those proposed, supervise such projects, evaluate the results of projects, and disseminate information on the effectiveness of the projects, and feasibility of the practices, methods, techniques and processes in environmental justice areas.

General: The following questions and answers are designed to respond to frequent concerns of applicants.

¹ Projects under this statute are limited to research or development activities.

² Projects under this statute are limited to research activities (e.g., surveys)

³ Projects under this statute are limited to hazardous substance detection, assessment, and evaluation, and associated human health effects and risks.