Transcript

2014-2015 EPA ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM:
EE MODEL GRANTS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
JANUARY 14, 2015[1]

>> OPERATOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome everyone to the Environmental Education Model Grants conference call. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise.

If you should need assistance during the call, please press star then zero and an operator will come back online to assist you.

Ms. Karen Scott, you may begin your conference.

>> KAREN SCOTT: Welcome. This is the 2014-2015 EPA Environmental Education Grant Program. Today's webinar is on the EE or Environmental Education Model Grants request for proposals that was published in November. My name is Karen Scott. I am your presenter today. I am with the EPA Office of Environmental Education.

The EE Model Grants RFP is the first of two RFPs that were issued in 2014 by the Office of Environmental Education. The deadline for proposals to this particular RFP that we are talking about today, the EE Model Grants RFP, the deadline is February 2, 2015.

A few more logistics to go over. If you are listening through your computer, make sure your speakers are on and the volume is turned up. If you have trouble with the audio on your computer, click "meeting" and "Audio Setup Wizard" in the upper left-hand corner of your screen or simply call the phone line, which I'll go over in a minute.

You may also need to close your connection and try entering the room again, again, if you are having trouble with audio. If you have trouble hearing the webinar even after you do all of that, you may call the phone line, and we give it to you here, 866-528-5873, and provide the operator the conference ID, which is written here for you. That's 59549158.

If you have trouble during the webinar with the phone line, hit star zero to get the operator, and she can assist you with the phone line.

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[1] Includes minor edits for clarity.

Also during the presentation, we are going to have a few periods of time when you can submit questions. We are going to ask that you submit all of your questions about the presentation in the chat box in Adobe Connect. No questions will be taken through the phone lines or through the computer audio. A limited number of questions will be able to be addressed today, and only during the designated Q&A sessions. Also, only questions of universal interest will be addressed during this webinar.

If you have questions that are unique to your situation, please send them to eegrants@epa.gov. We will do our best to respond to those over the next few days.

Also, the EE Grants Program has a frequently asked questions page online, and I'll be giving you that website later in the presentation. Some of the questions posed today may subsequently be posted to that FAQs page with appropriate responses.

We will ask you to -- and I will be going over this again later -- that you check the FAQs page before you submit any questions to eegrants@epa.gov.

So what we will cover today. First we're going to go over the basics of the Environmental Education Grant Program in general, and then some of the basics of specifically the RFP we are dealing with today, the EE Model Grants RFP. We will also go over who and what we can and cannot fund through this program. We will go over budget and cost items, the contents of proposals and the review and selection process for awards, and we will include helpful resources and tips for success. Finally, we will go over where you can find more information and how to ask questions after the webinar.

EE Grants Program Introduction and Basics of the EE Model Grants Request for Proposals:

So what is the Environmental Education Grant Program here at EPA? First of all, it's a program sponsored by the Office of Environmental Education, which is part of the Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education. We provide financial support for projects which design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, and/or techniques.

The purpose of this grant program is to increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues, promote environmental stewardship, and provide the public with the skills necessary to weigh various sides of an environmental issue and take responsible actions.

You'll notice throughout this presentation that I will be emphasizing both the environmental aspect and the educational aspect of our program. Both are important to us.

So the basics of what you should know about the EE Model Grants Request for Proposals. First and foremost, the deadline is February 2, 2015. That means if you are going to hand deliver an application, it must be hand delivered by close of business on that date. It must be post marked by that date if you are going to be sending it in by either the post office, the U.S. Post Office, or through a delivery service like UPS or FedEx. Or if you prefer to submit it electronically, it must be submitted to the online grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on February 2.

We anticipate awarding three grants from this RFP, and all of those will be awarded from our Headquarters office. No awards will be made from the regions under this RFP.

The approximate amount of each award will be $192,200. No awards will be made for more than that amount. So please do not apply for more than $192,200.

All proposals must be for model, replicable environmental education programs. And I will be describing what we mean by that in a moment.

All proposals must include both educational and environmental priorities. And I will be giving you those priorities in a few moments.

Also, both matching funds and a subgrant program are required in this program. In the budget and cost section of this presentation, I will be going over that in detail.

So what are model, replicable projects as we define them? What we are looking for are projects that will advance and strengthen the field of environmental education. We also expect these projects to be easily replicated in other settings; for example, a variety of geographic locations, with various audience types, in different educational settings, and so forth. And new this time around -- note, we have not required this before, but this time we are requiring that in order to demonstrate replicability, all proposals must say how they are going to locate the project in two different locations during the project period, and each of those locations must be in a different state or U.S. territory.

The model, replicable projects must also be examples of quality practices, methods, and/or techniques of environmental education. And finally, we expect them to create a vision for how to inspire behavioral change and promote environmental stewardship.

As I mentioned before, both educational and environmental priorities are important to us. Because of that, we do list both educational and environmental priorities in the RFP that you must choose from and identify in your proposal as what you will focus on.

The educational priorities include: Capacity building, educational advancement, community projects, human health and the environment, environmental education teaching skills, and career development.

Environmental priorities include: Addressing climate change and air quality; taking action on toxics and chemical safety; making a visible difference in communities; protecting water; and launching a new era of state, tribal, and local partnerships. Note that you only have to select one from each of those categories, one educational priority and one environmental priority. You may select more than one in each category, but you must be clear as to what your focus will be.

Another important part of the program is partnerships, and I get a lot of questions about partnerships. We mention them in several places in the RFP. They are not required. However, we do believe that partnerships can strengthen your project by helping you with your recruitment plans, for getting a good number and diversity for your audience. It can increase the variety of and accessibility to the expertise you need to create a model project. And it can assist you in meeting the matching funds requirement since partners can contribute to your matching funds.

Note, too, that up to 5 points can be given to you for partnership letters of commitment that you submit. If you choose to have no partners, you should explain in your application, in your proposal, how you plan to achieve a successful project without partners. Either way, whether you submit partnership letters of commitment or an explanation of how you will conduct your project without partners, you can get up to 5 points in that category. And I will be explaining more about the scoring process in a few moments.

Important to EPA is reaching a broad spectrum of audiences. We are always seeking ways to expand our reach. As such, we hope to fund projects that focus on a variety and range of educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences. By

that, we mean that dealing with environmental challenges requires a very diverse population and a population that is informed and environmentally literate. Every community needs citizens of all ages willing and able to use critical thinking skills to solve problems to protect our local environmental.

We hope that your projects include low-income, minority, and tribal communities whenever appropriate. We also hope that you include communities that are more likely to be adversely affected by environmental risks.

Question and Answer Session 1:
I will stop here now to take questions that are submitted through the chat box. While you are submitting those questions -- I know some of you probably already have submitted questions -- but while you are finishing those up, I am just going to give you a couple of examples of questions that I have already received, and a couple of these are very frequently received through that eegrants@epa.gov.

The first question that I am getting pretty frequently right now is whether this is the only -- whether the RFP that we just published and that I am discussing today is the only RFP that is going to be published for 2014, and if the regions will be giving any awards.

So as I said before, using funds from fiscal year 2014, there are two RFPs. The one we are discussing today is the EE Model Grants RFP, but there is another one out right now that's called EE Local Grants RFP. From the EE Local Grants RFP, the awards will be made in the regions. They will not require model, replicable projects, but they will require subgrant programs where you have to give out subgrants of $5,000 or less. And those awards will be made for approximately $91,000. A separate webinar regarding the EE Local Grants RFP will be held in February.

I am also getting a lot of questions about whether the projects have to focus on teachers and/or students or if you can include other community members. Community members of any age would qualify as audience members in a project that we would fund, not just teachers and students.

Okay. So at this point, I can take a couple questions.

Someone is asking what does "U.S. territory" mean when stating two different locations must be identified? Can it be within your state?

I'm not sure by that if you are asking if the U.S. territory

can count as a state, and it would. So, for example, if you wanted to locate your project in both Puerto Rico and in the State of New York, yes, that would count as two different locations in two different states or territories.

Okay, another question- Can we have a second prime or a partner that receives more than $5,000? Actually, I am going to be going over that type of thing in the budget section.

So another questioner asked: By protecting water, does that mean drinking water only?

Protecting water can be a very broad interpretation. You can interpret that as meaning a project that protects drinking water. You can also be talking about water resources, the amount of water we have available to us. It can mean wastewater. There are a lot of different ways you can protect water.

I think maybe one more question, and then we'd better move on. Can we demonstrate replicability in more than two locations? Yes, certainly. If you have the capability to demonstrate replicability in three, four, five, however many locations you feel you can afford and you have the capacity to do, that would be fine. Just make it very clear in your proposal how many different locations you do intend to locate the project in. We are just requiring as a minimum that you locate it in at least two different locations in two different states or territories.

Eligibility:
Okay. So moving on. We are going to get into eligibility, who and what we can and cannot fund. This is all in Section III of the RFP, so I won't read it all to you. Hopefully you've all read the RFP by now very thoroughly and you are very aware of this. Basically, we can fund local education agencies, colleges and universities, state education or environmental agencies, and tribal education agencies. I have an asterisk there on the slide by tribal education agency because we have a very strict interpretation of what that means. So if this applies to you and you still have a question about what a tribal education agency is and whether or not you are eligible to apply, please write to me at eegrants@epa.gov. But note there is a further explanation of it at the bottom of that page.

We can also fund nonprofit organizations as long as they are identified as 501(c)(3)s. And we can fund noncommercial educational broadcasting entities, as defined by the FCC. All applicant organizations must be located in the United States or its territories, and the majority of the educational activities must take

place in the United States. Or in the United States and Canada or in the United States and Mexico or in the U.S. territories.

Okay. So what else would affect eligibility besides the eligibility of the organization applying?

Well, first of all, make sure in your application is submitted by February 2. If we receive it after that deadline, we cannot accept it. We cannot review it. It will have to be considered ineligible, and that's it.

The work plan and budget must be complete. We cannot accept an incomplete proposal. The budget must include a request for approximately but no more than $192,200. A minimum match of 25% of the total budget -- and I'll be going over what we mean by that in a few moments. Exactly 25% of the EPA funds must be proposed to be spent on subgrants of $5,000 or less. Again, I will be explaining that in a minute.

The proposal must include both educational and environmental priorities. And I have mentioned that several times because this is fundamental to the program. It's very important that you include both a strong educational component and a strong environmental component.

Applicants must also demonstrate that the proposed project has not been previously funded by EPA. Or, if you have a program that has been funded by EPA and you want to significantly change it, expand it, broaden it, and so forth, make sure that you explain how it's being changed in order to become a replicable model of EE practices, methods, or techniques.

Finally, multiple proposals can be accepted as long as each is for a different project and each is separately submitted.

I've been getting a lot of questions about whether people can apply for both the EE Model Grants RFP and the EE Local Grants RFP, and the answer is yes, you can submit applications for both.

So basically, what we can and cannot fund. We can fund and will fund projects that are based on sound science that teach or enhance critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills that lead to responsible actions to protect human health and the environment.

We cannot fund projects that advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action about environmental issues or simply disseminate

information. We cannot fund lobbying or political activities. We cannot fund non-education-related research or development. We cannot fund technical training of environmental professionals. And finally, we cannot fund construction projects.

Question and Answer Session 2:
I'll break here again for questions, and while people are submitting some more questions, what I am going to do is go over a few questions that I do receive quite frequently.

The top question I probably receive over all other questions is whether a local government agency can apply. In the RFP, we talk about local education agencies that can apply. Every state defines a local education agency differently. So make sure you go to your state Board of Education to find out if you are defined as a local education agency.

You may also submit with your proposal something in writing that demonstrates that you do have the authority to conduct educational programs because many times in the past, we have found that agencies, like municipal utilities, waste management agencies, health departments, et cetera, do have the authority to conduct educational programs. So if that applies to you, make sure you do submit something with your application that demonstrates that you do have that authority.

Another question that I receive frequently is whether or not a consortium of organizations, whether they're, nonprofits or government agencies and so forth, can apply together as a consortium for a grant. We do ask that if you do have a consortium that works together on projects that you choose one of the organizations, one who is eligible as defined in our RFP, as the applicant, and the rest of the consortium be partners on the project. Each of those partners then should submit a Partnership Letter of Commitment. If the partners are eligible, as defined in the RFP, they can receive some subgrants to help conduct the project.

Finally, the last example question I have is one that I get frequently, which is what do we mean by advocacy? And I know sometimes there might appear to be a fine line between advocacy and environmental education, but obviously, a project like one that advocates for new legislation on an environmental issue, for example, would be something we could not fund. We need you to focus on the education of the public about an environmental issue, not just advocating for that issue.

Do we have some questions from the chat box? Emily or Javier,

could you read them?

>> JAVIER ARAUJO: Okay. The RFP states that the technical training of environmental management professionals is an ineligible education activity. Would you please elaborate on your definition of environmental management professionals? Additionally, is training the educators who train the professionals in question also an ineligible activity?

>> KAREN SCOTT: The intent of our program is really to educate the public on environmental issues and what they can do to help protect the environment and keep it safe and clean and so forth. We are not allowed, then, to -- for example, to fund a certification program for someone to become a Wastewater Management Specialist. We cannot do on-the-job training for someone who is training to become a utility worker for the local municipal utilities. So we cannot fund anything that's clearly training for technical kinds of positions like that.

We do sometimes get examples that maybe are a little bit more borderline; for example, I recently got a question about whether we could fund a training program for farmers to learn more about environmental techniques to use on their property, and that would be more of a borderline issue, and something like that we would have to look at individually.

But clearly, the ones where the program would be training just to get certification in an environmental management program or just to be trained to get a job would be something we cannot fund by law.

>> JAVIER ARAUJO: Next question is how is the $192,200 the approximate amount of funding if no awards above this figure are awarded? Does this mean that smaller grants in the $20,000 to $30,000 range are not likely to be awarded?

>> KAREN SCOTT: That is correct. We are looking to fund projects that are very close to that $192,200. They cannot go over that amount, but we are hoping to fund projects very close to that amount, and there are a number of reasons for that that I won't go into right now. But we really cannot consider funding projects that come in as low a bid as $20,000 or $30,000.

Okay. Maybe one more quick one.

>> JAVIER ARAUJO: Can the same project be funded by both the local EE Grant and Model Grant? So can one of the project locations be within your state, and can you apply to both funding sources to

fund that project?

>> KAREN SCOTT: You can apply to both of the RFPs for the same project. The likelihood that they -- you would get funded under both would probably be pretty low unless you substantially change the program for one or the other because there's a slightly different focus in each of the RFPs. The RFPs that we're discussing today on Model Grants is really looking for model projects, ones that other projects could emulate across the country and that have to be located in at least two different locations and at least two different states. So we are looking at those as pretty big projects that are pretty ambitious.

The local grants are really supposed to focus more on local environmental issues, and those will be funded by the regions and for much smaller amounts, for less than half the amount of money. So obviously, if you are submitting a proposal to both RFPs, they'd have to fundamentally be very different proposals.

Okay. I think we'll probably have to move on to make sure we cover everything.

Budget and Cost Items/ Contracts and Subgrants:
So moving into budget and cost items, which is sometimes the most complicated and that generates the most questions from people. First and foremost, make sure that when you submit your proposal you are submitting both the standard form 424A, which is a budget form, and a detailed budget or sometimes what we call the budget narrative. Both are required in this grant program. And when you submit both, make sure that the dollar amounts match each other exactly. One of the most common mistakes we find is that people submit the budgets, these two different forms, the 424A and their detailed budget, and the numbers don't match, and then we don't know which we're supposed to be considering. So please make sure that all of your numbers match in both of those budget forms.

On contracts versus subgrants, another common question we get, people want to know what's the difference between the two. Well, contracts are for purchasing services not directly tied to the accomplishments of the goals of the project. For example, if you are going to be hiring buses or bus drivers for transporting students to field sites, that's clearly a contract. That's not directly tied to the accomplishment of the goal.

Generally, contract services in funded projects must be competed.

Subgrants generally do not have to be competed, however. But do not use a subgrant to avoid having to compete for contractual services. Because they are fundamentally different.

Subgrants should go to eligible entities -- again, eligible as we define them in the RFP. And these eligible entities should be using the money, the subgrant money, to help plan or implement the main tasks of the project that directly accomplish the goals set forth in your proposal.

An example I provide here would be giving a subgrant to a nonprofit organization who provides naturalists to guide students on field studies. Because that would be directly helping you accomplish your goals.

Indirect costs. Indirect costs are things like your rent, your admin and office support. Those kinds of costs cannot be reimbursed with our grant money unless you have an indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government. If you do not have such an agreement and you are a nonprofit, a 501(c)(3), you can ask EPA to allow you to use a flat 10% indirect cost rate. So keep that in mind if you do not presently have an indirect cost rate agreement.

Okay. Matching funds and subgrant funds. This is an area where we had a lot of questions last year, and there seemed to be a lot of confusion. So hopefully this will help clear that up.

For matching funds, we require that you provide a minimum of 25% of the total project budget in matching funds. And I give you an example using the math of putting in a request to EPA for $192,200. And then let's say your total budget was $256,267. If you divide that $256,267 by 4 -- in other words, 25% -- you get the minimum $64,067 that you must provide in match. Those matching funds from you cannot be from federal funds. So if you are already getting a grant from the federal government, you cannot say that part of that money that you are getting already is then part of your match for this program. You can, however, use in-kind services as part of your match. So keep that in mind. And by in-kind services, I mean things like salary dollars or volunteer hours and so forth.

So it does not have to necessarily be actual dollars that you are providing. It can be in kind.

Subgrants. In our program, we require that exactly 25% of the EPA funds that you receive from us must go to subgrants of $5,000 or less. So for example, if you put in a request to EPA for $192,200, the total that you must spend on subgrants of $5,000 or less must

be exactly $48,050.

Now, note here there are a couple of differences between this and how you figure out the match. In the match, we were telling you to take 25% of the total budget. For subgrants, you figure 25% of EPA funds only. Note that for matching funds, what we are requiring is that you provide a minimum of 25% of the total budget. With subgrants, we require that it is an exact amount. No more and no less than 25% of the EPA funds must go to subgrants of $5,000 or less. The reason for that is that we are required by law to provide 25% of grant funds to awards of $5,000 or less. So that's why we cannot allow you to spend anything more or anything less than exactly 25% of your EPA funds for subgrants of $5,000 or less.

A couple of other topic items on budget and cost items that people seem to have some trouble with are program income and food and beverage costs.

By program income, we mean money that a grant recipient earns as a direct result of a grant-supported activity. So for example, if our grant money is paying for a workshop and you charge fees to come to that workshop, then those fees are considered to be program income. We usually expect you to use that program income to pay for eligible, allowable costs that will further your project goals. In other words, to put it back into your project. You may also propose to use some of that program income to finance part of your matching funds.

Food and beverage costs. These are only allowed for a working breakfast or a working lunch or for light refreshments during breaks if you are having a meeting or a workshop, for example. Food and beverage costs are never allowed for evening receptions, banquets, or events where alcohol is served, entertainment is provided, or funds are solicited.

Question and Answer Session 3:
Okay. We'll break here again for questions. I'll go over a couple of questions that I have received in the past, and then we'll take a couple from the audience.

Is there any limit to the percentage of matching funds that can be in-kind contributions, such as salaries or volunteer time?

No, there is no limit. Your entire match could come from in-kind contributions if you wish.

Second question, if our organization does not have an indirect

cost rate agreement in place, should we adjust the budget in our application to allow the addition of indirect costs later if we do get an award?

Yes, you can do that. If you do not currently have an indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government, you can still propose indirect costs in your proposal and then start the application process when you get the award. But note that you cannot start charging indirect costs to the federal government until you have an agreement in place.

You currently do have an alternative if you are a nonprofit, a 501(c)(3), and that is to approach EPA about using a flat 10% rate as your indirect cost rate. But again, you must do that before you begin charging indirect costs to the federal government.

Okay. So we can take a couple questions from the chat box.

>> JAVIER ARAUJO: Okay. I will read them.

When you calculate 25%, does that include indirect and administrative costs, or is it 25% of direct costs?

>> KAREN SCOTT: Sorry. Say that again.

>> JAVIER ARAUJO: When you calculate 25%, does that include indirect and administrative costs, or is it 25% of direct costs?

>> KAREN SCOTT: I have to admit here that I am not an indirect cost specialist, but I believe that is entirely based on the agreement that you have with the federal government. So if you can submit that to me eegrants@epa.gov, I do actually have several others that I have submitted to our indirect cost rate specialist, and I will make sure I get the specific answer back to you as soon as possible.

>> JAVIER ARAUJO: Next question is what about payments to consultants? Are these considered subgrants? By consultants, I refer to individuals with expertise needed to supplement our expertise.

>> KAREN SCOTT: We usually take these kinds of questions on an individual basis. And if you should get an award, something like that may have to be adjusted in your budget if you have not identified it correctly based on your situation.

Sometimes, for example, an evaluator will be hired by the program, and usually we consider the evaluator to be a contractor because they should not be inherently involved in the program where

they cannot have the distance they need in order to be able to evaluate the program. So that would be an example where a consultant would be considered to be a contractor.

But we have had other situations where a consultant or what a project called a consultant was eligible to receive a subgrant because they were an eligible entity (for example, a school district or a university or a non-profit) and were doing work inherent to the accomplishment of the project goals. A subgrantee has to be eligible as defined by RFP, so if you want to hire an individual as a consultant, for example, then you would most likely have to use a contract because individuals are not eligible to receive subgrants.

But again, it's best if I hear exactly or I see exactly what your situation is, so if you could send a question that has more specifics in it to eegrants@epa.gov, that would help.

Required Forms for Applications:
So let's move on to the next topic area. We are going to go over what you have to submit with your application or your proposal.

First and foremost, we have standard forms, of course, because we are the federal government. With every grant application, you have to submit an SF-424. You also have to submit an SF-424A. That's the budget form. We only require that you submit Section B of the 424A. So make note of that because I think other programs require you to fill out the entire SF-424A, but we only need Section B.

We then require that you submit a work plan. The work plan has an 8-page limit. The work plan, though, would only include the project summary, the detailed project description, and the project evaluation. Just those three parts are what we consider the work plan and what come under that 8-page limit.

Note that next to each of these, I've put maximum points. What I am indicating here is how many points total you could possibly receive for each of those different parts of your proposal. Obviously, the detailed project description gets the most points, 45 points. That's where the meat of your proposal will be.

Sections IV and V of the RFP describe all of these in detail. Make sure that you are reading those carefully and read them over and over again as you prepare your proposal. Use them as the guide as to what you put in your proposal.

The detailed budget is something I discussed before. This is in addition to the budget form SF-424A. We do not require a specific form for your detailed budget, but we do ask that you use the same order and categories as you do on the 424A but that you add a lot more detail. We want a narrative of exactly how you are going to spend your money in each of those categories.

Make sure that all the numbers on the 424, the 424A, and your detailed budget match each other.

Finally, we require that you submit appendices. These appendices are a timeline, a logic model, partnership letters of commitment, and a statement of your programmatic capability and past performance. Again, I have listed the maximum points you can receive for each of those items that you submit with your proposal. And again, in Section IV and V, all of those are described in detail as far as what we are looking for.

Evaluation of Applications:
Okay. So how do we review and select these proposals for funding? First of all, all applications are reviewed for eligibility when we first receive them. And you will be notified within 15 days if we find your application to be ineligible.

If the application is found eligible, it is submitted to a panel of reviewers to evaluate it. The panel of reviewers are assembled by Headquarters, and the panel will include experts in environmental education. Section V of the RFP is where you will find what points are assigned to each of the factors. The top possible score would be 100.

After all the applications are reviewed and scored, they are ranked from highest to lowest, and the Selection Official here at EPA is briefed on those scores, rankings, and other factors that can be considered for final funding selection. The other factors -- and these are listed in the RFP -- the other factors that may be considered would be the educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences that are addressed in the highest-ranked proposals.

When you are conducting your projects, and even as you start formulating your proposals, you may want to look at several publications that will help you. If you are planning to train educators, we urge you to look at the Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators. If you plan to develop materials to be used in EE programs, look at the Guidelines for Excellence in EE, which is a series of publications.

All of these are available on our website, which we list here.

And as you prepare to set up an evaluation of your project, consult the site, My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant, or MEEERA, and we give you the link there for that particular website.

All of these materials and websites have been at least partially developed through EPA funds, and again, we urge you to look at those wherever appropriate.

And I believe the site for the link for the Guidelines is under construction right now, but the link should still work for you. But do let me know through eegrants@epa.gov if you have any trouble getting into those publications.

Tips for Success:
We list a number of tips for success here, and to save a little bit of time, I am not going to go over all of them today, but there are a few I especially urge you to pay attention to.

First and foremost is make sure you demonstrate adequate match and exact subgrant amounts in your proposal. That was probably the single most frequent mistake last year by applicants, so please do pay special attention to the match and subgrant amounts that you include in your budget.

Next, do not assume that your reviewers know your program, that they know the terminology that you use in your program, that they know the acronyms that you use in your program. Do not assume that they know any of that. Spell everything out for them.

Make sure you check your math and check it again. And again. I can't urge this enough. You need to make sure that your entire application, your entire proposal is accurate and consistent.

And finally, make sure you do submit an adequate plan to measure and evaluate your success in your project.

And please start early. Right now, it's January 14. These applications are due February 2. Make sure you leave time to review and edit your proposal before you submit it.

Please read the RFP and the online FAQs thoroughly before you begin your proposal and as many times as you need during the writing process. You may want to refer to the FAQs again a day or two before you submit your proposal.

If you are choosing to use grants.gov to submit your proposal online, have your Authorized Organization Representative register on the grants.gov site now. Don't wait. This can take up to several weeks to get accomplished.

And finally, send questions to eegrants@epa.gov, but please only after you have read the RFP and the FAQs thoroughly.

Question and Answer Session 4:
I am going to quickly go over a couple of questions that I've received frequently and then look at a couple more that we've gotten through the chat box.

Okay. Very, very often I get questions from people saying would it be better if we did this or if we did that in our proposal? Most of these questions are really asking me to comment on the merits of a proposal idea, and I cannot do that. It is illegal for me to comment on the merits of a proposal idea before the review process begins. So please don't even ask.

Second question that I get a lot is could you give some examples of programs that have been funded in the past? Please go to our website. All the projects that we have funded since 1992 are listed with short descriptions on our website. They're listed by state and by year.

Okay. And now I can take a couple more questions.

One question -- this is a good one -- I get this a lot -- do references need to be included in the 8-page limit for the work plan?

I am not sure if by references you mean citations to research. If you mean that, no, those citations will not count in the 8-page limit. You can include those as a separate attachment if you would like.

If by references you mean people who are supporting you, who are giving you a reference because they support your project, I urge you to please not submit letters of reference or support. We do not need them. We will not look at them. We only need Letters of Commitment.

And if you mean some other sort of reference, please write me at eegrants@epa.gov.

Another question: Is the project summary limited to only one

page?

        We used to say that you could only spend one page on the project
summary. Now we just simply include it as part of the work plan.
But I would urge you to try to keep the project summary to just one
page so that you have plenty more pages -- the rest of the 7 pages --
to spend on the rest of the work plan because, obviously, your
detailed project description is going to take up the most space.

        Is there a page limit on the detailed budget? No, there is not.
You can send as much pages as you want on the detailed budget. We
do want that to be very detailed with a good narrative.

        And I see it's almost 10 after. I will take one more question,
and then we should move on.

        Should we include partnership letters from anticipated
subawardees? Good question. I get this question a lot. The
partnership letters should only be from true partners. You can give
your partners subawards. The subawards can be part of that $5,000
or less part of your program. You can also give partners subawards
for more than $5,000. But either way, if they are a true partner,
yes, you need a letter from them. But not all subawardees will be
partners. In fact, I would say that probably for most of you, the
subawardees who are receiving $5,000 or less are probably not true
partners. They are probably simply organizations whom you have
selected to help carry out some of the details of your project. But
they're not partners. Partners should really be those organizations
that have helped you form the project from the beginning or are really
integral to helping you conduct the project, not just carry out a
few tasks.

        Okay. I am going to move on, and if we have time at the end,
I'll take a few more questions.

Helpful Resources:
        Okay. Where do I find more information? As I said repeatedly,
we have lots of information on our website. We list the website
there. And on that site, you will find a frequently asked questions
page that probably has a hundred questions or more. I've lost track
of how many. There are many, many questions there under many
categories. So please do refer to that, especially before asking
a question to the EE Grants email address.

        We also have a helpful resources tab on that page, so please
do use that. It will help you formulate your proposals. Like I
said, you can access publications there. You can get some helpful

tips for making your proposal better and so forth.

We also have a summary of all the past grants we have awarded since 1992, so if you want to see examples of the kinds of projects we have funded in the past, that's a great resource.

And in case I didn't mention it before -- (Laughter) -- we have a frequently asked questions page. Here's the link for it here. It's a great resource, too. It just has lots of information there that will help you clarify details in the RFP, so please do read it thoroughly. But if you still have additional questions, especially ones that apply to you individually, don't hesitate to submit them to eegrants@epa.gov.

A PDF of the presentation today will be posted to our website, but again, nothing in the presentation is meant to supersede anything in the RFP or the Solicitation Notice.

And again, my name is Karen Scott. If you have general questions about the Environmental Education Grant Program here at EPA, you can send them to me at Scott.Karen@epa.gov. But if you have particular questions about an Environmental Education Grant Solicitation Notice or RFP, please submit them to eegrants@epa.gov. You will get a much faster response about an RFP question if you do submit them to that eegrants@epa.gov email address.

Thank you very much, and I can probably take a few more questions. So let's see what we have here from the chat box.

Question and Answer Session 5:
What is the difference between total grant funding and EPA funding on your example?

I think what you are asking there is maybe what is the difference between the total budget and the EPA funding. I am going to assume that's what you mean. The total budget would be the amount of money that it's going to take to enact your program, so that would be the amount of money you are getting from EPA plus the matching funds. So we're expecting that we are not going to be paying for everything that's going to be done in your program. You are going to have to submit some money, too, or in-kind services. So that total budget amount includes that match.

So what you need to do is figure out how much it's going to cost to implement your program, figure out what 25% of that would be, and then that would be your minimum match for your project, for your proposal.

Okay.   Next question, in the RFP it states that the grant period can be one or two years. Can it, however, be 18 months? Yes, it can be one or two years or anything in between.

Can the audience be university students or only high school? The audience can really be any age, whether they're formal students in a formal program or whether they're community members, or members of an organization. The audience can be any age and just about any setting you can think of except technical professional.

Next question. Will we have to ask our subgrantees to submit reports to us?

Well, we cannot dictate to you how you run your subgrant program. But we will expect you to report to us what is being accomplished in your project. And since we expect the subgrantees to be doing substantive work on your project, you will have to be reporting to us what is being accomplished by the subgrants. So it would make sense to me that you would want them to submit reports to you so that you could make your report to us, but again, we cannot dictate that to you.

Next question. Can the subawardees be chosen through an internal RFP, or should they be known when the proposal is submitted?

You do not have to know who your subawardees will be when you submit your proposal. What you will have to do is explain how you will be selecting them, though. So we do expect to see a good, detailed plan of how the subgrantees or subawardees will be chosen in your proposal.

It says for model grants, we're talking 20 total grants during 2014 down from 111 in 2011. Is that right?

Okay. I'm not sure exactly what that means because in the Model Grants program this year, which is only being conducted from Headquarters, we are only going to be issuing 3 grants total, at least as far as we anticipate right now. So the 20, I'm not sure where the 20 comes from.

In the Local Grants program, each region is going to be issuing three grants, so that will be a total of 30 grants across the country for the local grants program. So I'm not sure what the 20 means. But those are the numbers we are dealing with this year. There are only 3 Model Grants being issued from Headquarters, and from Headquarters only this year. And 30 local grants spread across the country and the regions for 2014.

How many applications do you anticipate receiving? It's varied every year. We've gotten as many as 1500 applications one year, and that year we could only fund approximately 15 of those applications, so you can see there the ratio was, you know, pretty low. But other years we received maybe 150 applications and we've funded 20 or 30 of them. So we've gotten quite a variety from year to year. But I would anticipate here at Headquarters for this one probably receiving several hundred applications, and we are going to be awarding 3 grants. It's a very competitive program.

The next question says, would pilot projects that could serve as model projects be considered, or do you expect to fund existing programs?

Oh, we would love to fund a program that has not been done before. So no, it does not have to be an existing program. You can come up with an idea for something that you've never done before that as far as you know no one has done before, and we would love to fund that. So no, it does not have to be an existing program, and in fact, if it is an existing program, we expect you to tell us how -- especially if it's one we funded before -- we expect to know how it would be changed in order to make it a new model, replicable program.

Could we get an example of a difference between dissemination of information and education? That's a very good question.

Really, I think the biggest distinction between disseminating information and education would be that critical thinking/ problem-solving skills development that we expect to see in an education program. So you know, to me, that would be the difference between, say, someone simply holding a town hall meeting and telling people that, let's say, that some fracking is going to be done in their area, and they are informing the people of the fact and what are the possible environmental effects from doing the fracking. You know, that would be dissemination of information.

But if you had a program where you were conducting workshops for the community to learn more about it and try to figure out for themselves what they thought about it and what they wanted to do about it, that would be more education than dissemination of information.

I think we'll take one or two more, and then we can wrap it up.

It says can a subgrant include a stipend for an educator to attend a professional development opportunity as well as dollars for them to do a project or to pay for buses for field trips and so forth?

Okay. Again, let me make clear that a subgrant has to go to an eligible entity. So you could not give a subgrant to a teacher because a teacher -- an individual teacher -- is not an eligible entity. You could, however, give a subgrant to a school district, which is an eligible entity, and tell that school district that you wanted the subgrants to go to such things as stipends to teachers, buses for field trips, and so forth. So that would be one way to accomplish that end but still stick to the rules that we've laid down in the RFP.

We just got a question, I understand that there will be a PDF copy of this webinar, but will this recorded webinar version be available as well? We hope so. So you will be able to access the webinar in writing, and we hope an audio recording of it as well. So if you have colleagues, for example, that were not able to participate today, that would be one way that they could get this information.

One more. What is the fundamental difference between this and the local grants, aside from the funding amount?

Great question to end on, so this will be the last question. As I said before, there are two RFPs out right now from this program. The one we are discussing today, which is called the EE Model Grants Program, and another RFP that is out there called the EE Local Grants RFP. We will be having a webinar on the EE Local Grants RFP in February. We haven't set a date yet, so please watch our website for that date. And you will be learning more about that program then.

But basically, the fundamental difference between the two is that in the Model Grants Program, we are looking for a fairly large project, you know, $192,200 worth, of project that is going to really have a vision of how we can move the field of environmental education forward and demonstrate that vision by creating this project that you locate in two or more locations to show that it's not something that can just be done in one spot; it can be done in a lot of different locations. And that it's something that's innovative or, you know, trying to find ways that can help people better understand the environment. I think probably in new ways, but certainly in ways that can be held up as a model of really excellent environmental education and one that others could look to as something that they, too, would and could replicate in their region, in their locality.

The local program -- the reason we did a local program as well is because we also recognized that there are a lot of great ideas out there of programs that simply want to educate the local community

about local environmental issues. So the purpose of us having two different ones is to be able to have a model program that other people could emulate that's probably a big program, perhaps a little more complex than the local programs that are really focusing on a local community and a local environmental issue.

And with that, we are just about at 2:30, and like I said, I think that that's probably a good place to end. But I do urge you to send more questions that you might have, especially ones that are particular to your situation. Send those to eegrants@epa.gov. And if you do intend to consider putting in an application for the EE Local Grants Program as well, please do watch our site for the advertisement of that webinar, which will be held in February.

Thank you very much for participating. I look forward to seeing applications from all of you.

Thank you. Good-bye.

>> This concludes today's conference call. Participants may now disconnect.