



Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring Under the American Rescue Plan

Insight & Feedback Session: Competitive Grants and Direct Awards

August 2021

Agenda

- American Rescue Plan Background
- Competitive Grant (\$20M)
- Direct Awards (\$22.5M)
- Next Steps
- Discussion of Consultation Questions

ARP Background

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides \$100 million for the EPA to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID–19 pandemic; \$50 million targeted specifically to advance environmental justice **and \$50 million for enhanced air quality monitoring.**

ARP Background

\$50M to enhance air quality monitoring is divided into the following components (we'll focus the discussion today on the first two):

1. Grant Competition for Community Monitoring (\$20M)
2. Direct Awards to Air Agencies for Continuous PM_{2.5} Monitoring and Other NAAQS Pollutants (\$22.5M)
3. Enhanced Regional Capacity for Short-term Community Monitoring Needs (\$5M)
4. Administrative Support (\$2.5M)

Grant Competition for Community Monitoring (\$20M)

- A grant competition that will solicit proposals from community groups, state, local and tribal air agencies individually or in partnerships to conduct monitoring of pollutants of greatest concern in communities with health outcome disparities.
- EPA's primary objective in issuing these grants is to enable communities to monitor their own air quality and to promote monitoring partnerships between communities and state, local and/or tribal governments that:
 - leverage existing air quality monitoring expertise;
 - expand use of community monitoring advisory groups and other approaches that give the community a voice in the monitoring of their air quality; and
 - build a foundation of trusting relationships and enhanced understanding from which sustainable solutions to community pollution problems can be found.

Competitive Grants: Tentative Schedule

Date	Milestone
August 2-5, 2021	EPA Insight & Feedback Sessions
October 2021	Grant Request for Applications (RFA) Opens
December 2021	Grant RFA Closes
Summer 2022	Distribution of Awards

Competitive Grants: Consultation Questions

1. In the communities you serve, what are the most important needs for ambient air monitoring data?
2. What do you think are critical criteria (*e.g.*, partnerships, monitoring support understanding of risk, problem resolution) to include when issuing the grant solicitation for ambient air monitoring? Please comment on the need for set asides for communities.
3. Please comment on the use of ARP funds for regulatory vs. non-regulatory ambient air monitoring.
4. Considering areas with environmental justice concerns, what are the most useful approaches to empower these communities with ambient air monitoring data to help address disproportionate exposures?

Direct Awards: Allocation Priorities and Considerations

Priority Funding:

Upgrade PM_{2.5} Federal Reference Methods (FRMs) to continuous Federal Equivalent Methods (FEMs).

Other Considerations*:

*Prioritize investments in and near communities with EJ concerns.

- Upgrade other NAAQS pollutant monitoring sites.
- Upgrade certain NAAQS gas monitors and/or equipment not meeting performance or completeness goals.
- Other possible PM monitoring investments.

Direct Awards to Air Agencies for Continuous PM_{2.5} Monitoring and Other NAAQS Pollutants (\$22.5M)*

- EPA Regions will distribute funds for direct awards to State, Local or Tribal air agencies (SLTs) for enhanced monitoring of PM_{2.5} or other NAAQS pollutants in and near communities with environmental justice concerns who face disproportionate exposure to these pollutants and health risks which are also associated with increased vulnerability to COVID-19.
- SLTs will use these funds to replace existing filter-based monitors or otherwise enhance existing monitors in and near those communities. These new monitors will provide 24/7, real-time reporting of air quality concentrations.
- Full automation of PM_{2.5} monitors will provide all communities fine particle data of the same quality and allow them to compare continuous data streams in nearby areas.

*Note: EPA will oversee detailed tracking and reporting of these investments.

Direct Awards: Other Considerations

(Prioritize investments in and near communities with EJ concerns)

Upgrade other NAAQS pollutant monitoring sites

- EPA will recognize previous investments in continuous FEM PM_{2.5} monitoring made by SLTs when considering funding for upgrading other NAAQS pollutant sites.
- May include addition of new NAAQS pollutant sites in areas with EJ concerns. Funds for this purpose will require SLTs to commit to operation and maintenance in future years without guarantee of additional funds.

Upgrade certain NAAQS gas monitors and/or equipment not meeting performance or completeness goals

- Includes requests to upgrade aging infrastructure (e.g., hardware and software).

Other possible PM monitoring investments

- Upgrade PM₁₀ FRMs to continuous FEMs.
- Add continuous carbon (e.g., aethalometer or other commercially available methods) at NCORE, STN, and other important PM sites.

Direct Awards: Tentative Schedule

Date	Milestone
August 2-5, 2021	EPA Insight & Feedback Sessions
Summer-Fall 2021	Regions communicate with SLTs and report priorities/needs to HQ.
Fall 2021-Winter 2022	EPA HQ works with Regions on allocations.
Fall 2021	Regional Grant Coordinators will begin the process of distributing new funds and initiating new grants.

Direct Awards: Consultation Questions

1. Do you have any initial thoughts or questions on these allocation priorities and considerations?
2. Do you have any feedback about moving away from filter-based PM measurements to continuous PM measurements?
3. What other PM measurements (beside continuous measurements) do you think are important?
4. In addition to PM, what other criteria pollutant measurements are in need of upgrading?

What's Next?

- EPA will attempt to incorporate today's feedback into the competitive grant RFA and direct award considerations.
- Air agencies wishing to provide additional comments should fill out the feedback form, which EPA will distribute after the session, and return it to EPA by August 13, 2021.