

2026 Environmental Justice Fund RFP

Characteristics of a Strongly Aligned Proposal

Want to learn what makes a strong application?

To support applicants in preparing competitive proposals, consider the following characteristics of a strong application. These reflect the criteria the Review Team uses in its evaluation:

1. COMMUNITY NEED: Who is/are the priority community(ies) this project will serve? What climate or environmental impacts are they facing, and how are these affecting their health, livelihoods, or wellbeing? **Priority communities: Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, refugees, people with low incomes, youth, and elders.*

Characteristics: A strong application clearly identifies the priority community(ies) the project will serve and shows direct connection to one or more EJ Fund priority communities. It demonstrates a specific, well-informed understanding of the community's environmental or climate-related challenges and explains how these issues affect community health, livelihoods, or overall wellbeing.

2. PROJECT IDEA: How did this project idea come about? How was the priority community(ies) involved with its design?

Characteristics: A strong application shows that the priority community(ies) identified the project idea AND designed the project to address their community's needs.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION: What will you do through your proposed project, and how will you do it? Where will it happen? How will your project address the disproportionate climate or environmental impacts on your community/communities?

Characteristics: A strong application provides key project activities with specific details on location(s) and who will be served, including the number of people who will benefit. It explains how the project addresses disproportionate climate or environmental impacts experienced by the priority community(ies) and shows that the approach is meaningful, community-centered. It also shows the project activities are closely aligned with the applicant's selected EJ Fund funding priority.

4. PEOPLE: Who will implement the project? What lived experiences or skills do they bring? How is the priority community(ies) involved in leading the project and engaged in the

decision-making process? If applicable, who are your partners and what are their roles in this project?

Characteristics: A strong application demonstrates the project team members have skills, lived experiences, and expertise to lead the work effectively. It demonstrates that priority community members take a lead role in the decision-making throughout the project implementation. When partners are involved, the applicant describes authentic, reciprocal collaboration, including meaningful roles and appropriate inclusion in the budget.

5. IMPACT: Describe what success will look like to you throughout the duration of your project. Include any milestones and the positive impacts you anticipate for your community(ies) and/or the environment.

Characteristics: A strong application demonstrates that success is specific, realistic, and directly connected to the proposed activities and the priority communities the project seeks to benefit. Milestones and impacts are clear, specific, well connected to project activities, and directly address the community needs that have been described.

6. RACIAL JUSTICE: What practices and approaches does your organization or group use to advance racial justice? How does this show up in your work, partnerships, or decision-making?

Characteristics: A strong application demonstrates that racial justice is a core organizational value and provides specific examples of how this value guides internal practices and external work. This may include decision-making processes, staffing, community engagement, program design, and efforts to address systemic inequities, support BIPOC leadership, advocate for structural change, or implement equitable policies.

7. PROJECT TIMELINE & PROJECT BUDGET

Characteristics: A strong application includes a clear and realistic project timeline with key activities and milestones. The budget is complete, aligned with the proposed activities, and demonstrates that costs are reasonable and feasible. Together, the timeline and budget show that the project is well thought out and achievable.

8. OVERALL ALIGNMENT AND POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FUND'S FUNDING PRIORITIES

Ultimately, the Review Team will look for proposals that are strongly aligned with the selected EJ Fund funding priority and demonstrate meaningful potential to advance that priority area. All information in the application will be considered when making this assessment.