



EJ TCGM
 Environmental Justice
 Thriving Communities
 Grantmaking Program
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



Thriving Communities
 Grantmaking Program
 EPA Region 3

**Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
 Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program
 For EPA Region 3**

**Frequently Asked Questions
 Last updated 9/3/2024**

Table of Contents

Definitions 1
 Eligibility 3
 Award Tiers 5
 Timeline and Key Dates 6
 Funding and Financial Support 7
 Reporting..... 9
 Grant Application & Management System (Fluxx)..... 9
 Support and Resources11
 Program Governance & Advisory Board12

Definitions

How are you defining Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice, as defined by the EPA, is the *fair treatment* and *meaningful involvement* of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. *Fair treatment* means that no one group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal environmental programs and policies.

This is in keeping with GHHI’s definition of equity as just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Meaningful involvement and participation means that:

- People have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health;
- The public’s contribution can influence the regulatory agency’s decision;
- Community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process; and
- Decision makers will see out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

What is EPA Region 3?

EPA Region 3 includes the states of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia (Washington D.C.) and seven (7) federally recognized tribes (Chickahominy Indian Tribe Providence Forge, VA, Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division, Providence Forge, VA, Monacan Indian Nation Amherst, VA, Nansemond Indian Nation, Suffolk, VA, Pamunkey Indian Tribe King William, VA, Rappahannock Tribe Indian Neck, VA, Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe King William, VA).

Thriving Communities Grantmaking Programs in other EPA regions will launch in fall 2024. Links to the other regional Thriving Communities Grantmaking Programs will be shared in the Resources section as they become available.

How are you defining a “disadvantaged” community?

For GHFI’s Thriving Communities Grant Program, we are using EPA’s definition of disadvantaged communities which is “communities that are underserved and overburdened.” These communities may be experiencing challenges in areas such as climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development, and in many cases have endured decades of underinvestment.

For the Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Disadvantaged Communities map distinguishes census tracts as either disadvantaged or not. Grants funded through this program should directly benefit a community that is considered disadvantaged by the EPA mapping tool. Applicants will be asked to confirm that their project will benefit a designated disadvantaged community using the map: [Link to map](#). See the Eligibility section for more information on exceptions to this rule.

What is meant by Community-Based Nonprofit Organizations (CBOs)? What is meant by Community?

For this program, EPA defines a “community-based nonprofit organization” (CBO) as a public or private nonprofit organization that supports and/or represents a community and/or certain populations within a community through engagement, education, and other related services provided to individual community residents and community stakeholders. A “community” can be characterized by a particular geographic area and/or by the relationships among members with similar interests and can be characterized as part of a broader national or regional community where organizations can be focused on the needs of urban, rural, and/or tribal areas, farmworkers, displaced workers, children with high levels of lead, people with asthma, subsistence fishers, and other similar groups.

Increasing the capacity of community-based non-profit organizations including frontline and grassroots groups is an objective of the Thriving Communities Grantmaker Program.

What are environmental justice projects?

Environmental justice projects address health, economic and social well-being of a community as well as equal access to the decision-making process to maintain a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work. For purposes of the Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program, the EPA has provided the following examples. **Please note that this list is illustrative and not all-encompassing.** If you have a project that meets the definition noted, you are encouraged to submit an application or reach out to us at ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org to discuss your application’s applicability.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality & asthma • Fence line air quality monitoring • Monitoring of effluent discharges from industrial facilities • Water quality & sampling • Small cleanup projects • Improving food access to reduce vehicle miles traveled • Stormwater issues & green infrastructure • Lead & asbestos contamination • Pesticides & other toxic substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy homes that are energy/water use efficient and not subject to indoor air pollution • Illegal dumping activities, such as education, outreach, & small-scale clean-ups • Emergency preparedness & disaster resiliency • Environmental job training for occupations that reduce greenhouse gases & other air pollutants • Environmental justice training for youth
---	---

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible entities include:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Community-based and grassroots nonprofit organizations
- Philanthropic and civic organizations with nonprofit status
- Tribal governments (both federally recognized and state-recognized) and intertribal consortia (i.e., a partnership between two or more tribes that work together to achieve a common objective.)
- Native American Organizations (includes Indian groups, cooperatives, nonprofit corporations, partnerships, and associations that have the authority to enter into legally binding agreements)
- Local governments (as defined by 2 CFR 200.1 – includes cities, towns, municipalities, and counties, public housing authorities and councils of government)
- Institutions of higher education (e.g., private and public universities and colleges, including community colleges)

What is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and how do I obtain one for my organization?

The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is a 12-character alphanumeric value that is used by the federal government to identify entities and to track how federal grant funds are allocated and expended. All applicants must have a UEI to be awarded a grant. Applicants can register for the UEI through Federal [System of Award Management \(SAM\)](#) to be eligible. It is free to get a UEI. After submitting a registration form, it can take up to 10 business days for the registration to become active. An email from SAM.gov will be sent to confirm the active registration. If applicants do not yet have a UEI, we encourage them to do it as soon as possible. Please contact ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org if you need assistance applying for a UEI.

Can multiple organizations collaborate and submit a joint application for one grant?

Yes, as long as one organization serves as the main applicant, which would include fiscal responsibility for the grant and grant reporting. The application, workplan, and budget should clarify the roles of the various organizations and allocations of funding.

Will there be a preference for applicants collaborating within a region?

While collaborative efforts are important in advancing environmental justice, they are not a requirement for this funding opportunity; we leave that judgment to the organization and community to know what is best. Applications should explain how the organization will advance their project and what roles other partners, funded or not funded, might play as a way to explain their project plan.

Can I reapply if I am not selected?

Yes, if the Request for Applications (RFA) is still open, and funds are available for the applicant's tier of interest, applicants are allowed one (1) resubmission of a declined project. GHHI's Thriving Communities team will be able to provide feedback to applicants if requested.

Who is eligible for the noncompetitive award process?

Noncompetitive awards are only available for severely-capacity constrained organizations not positioned to compete for the tier I, II, or III grants at this time. The criteria and process for the non-competitive capacity awards will be shared on GHHI's Thriving Communities landing page later in the fall of 2024. The Region 3 Thriving Communities Advisory Board will make final decisions on the noncompetitive grantees. For more information, please contact ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org.

Are applicants eligible for both the tiered and non-competitive capacity-building grants?

It depends. Organizations that receive the one-year, non-competitive, capacity building grants would be eligible to apply for a competitive, tiered grant at the conclusion of their grant period assuming there are grant resources available. The non-competitive eligibility is restricted to severely constrained organizations who are not currently positioned to apply for the competitive grants at this time. If you believe your organization falls into this category and would like more information on the non-competitive grant program, please email ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org.

Are national nonprofit organizations eligible for this grant?

Yes. A national nonprofit would be eligible if they are conducting work in EPA Region 3, and the grant project(s) benefit a disadvantaged community in EPA Region 3 ([link to EPA mapping tool](#)). To be competitive, the application should demonstrate commitment and workplan that 1) reflects how the project responds to local community priorities and 2) builds capacity among community-based organizations in Region 3.

Local government and higher education typically have higher capacity, why are they included in this program?

The purpose of the Thriving Communities Grantmaking program is to alleviate burden on those communities and organizations who are the most vulnerable and limited in their capacity to access federal grant funds. With that in mind, if an applicant believes that local governments and/or local institutions of higher education are positioned to, in partnership with community, meaningfully address the needs of underserved communities in the target geographic area, then the applicant should explain that in their workplan.

How do we determine if a project is eligible? Can a project be eligible if it does not fall within an EPA disadvantaged community?

A project is eligible for the grant if it has a focus on environmental justice and is being conducted by an eligible entity and will benefit an EPA disadvantaged community ([link to EPA mapping tool](#)). It is possible that a grant will be made to an organization or project outside a disadvantaged community but seeks benefit the community and residents in a designated disadvantaged community (e.g., addressing water issues upstream from a disadvantaged community where negative impacts are experienced). It is also possible that an applicant may have additional qualitative or quantitative data that shows how the community is disadvantaged. We welcome these applications but will need the application to include this justification.

For applicants wanting additional support using the EPA mapping tools, contact the GHHI Thriving Communities team and/or see this useful tool from the Environmental Protection Network (EPN): <https://www.environmentalprotectionnetwork.org/disadvantaged-communities/>.

Award Tiers

What are the differences among the program tiers?

As noted in the chart below, the tiers vary in focus, award duration, and budget. All grantees can expect the same opportunities for technical assistance though the needs might vary across tiers and projects. All grantees will have the same reporting requirements.

Tier	Award Focus	Award Period	Budget
I	Assessment Projects	1 year	Up to \$150,000
II	Planning Projects	1-2 years	Up to \$250,000
III	Implementation Projects	2 years	Up to \$350,000

To which phase should my organization apply?

The Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grant Program has three tiers described below. We understand these tiers are not linear phases, and applicants should opt for the one that best describes most of their effort. Should your organization need further guidance, we will be holding open office hours during which you will be able to discuss which tier your project may be best suited to. (Note: Office hours will be posted on the website as the information becomes available.)

- Assessment (Tier I): Available for community-based organizations and other eligible recipients to assist them during the initial steps of their work to address specific issues impacting them locally by conducting assessments of environmental and public health concerns.
- Planning (Tier II): Available for community-based organizations and other eligible recipients who have assessed environmental justice issues in their community and are ready to formulate a community-wide plan to address those issues.
- Project Development (Tier III): Available for community-based nonprofit organizations and other eligible recipients who already have assessed their local environmental and/or public health issues, have already formulated a community-wide plan addressing those issues, and/or are now ready to develop the technical aspects of the project (i.e., implement the project on the ground).

Can I apply more than once or qualify for multiple tiers?

There is no limit on the number of applications an organization submits. Applicants can apply for multiple tiers. However, each eligible applicant is restricted to receiving a maximum of two awards of either the same or different tiers during this period of the Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program. Given the desire to invest in communities across region 3, it is unlikely that an organization will receive more than one grant. The two-award maximum applies only to the lead applicant. It does not include applications in which an organization is listed as a partner, but not the lead applicant.

The grant tiers are not set up to be sequential, meaning that an applicant in tier I should expect to apply and receive funding for tier II at the end of their grant period. Rather the tiers recognize that communities are at different stages of readiness to act on environmental justice projects.

If an organization applies for a certain tier but the reviewers disagree, can it be moved to another tier using the same application?

No, because the grant budgets and durations are different by tier. However, applicants would receive feedback that their proposal would be competitive in another tier, and they would be able to resubmit if desired and if funds are available.

Timeline and Key Dates

What are the application deadlines?

Applications will be accepted on a rolling process. The submission deadline for the 2-year awards is November 30, 2024. The deadline for the 1-year award is April 20, 2025.

How long is the review and evaluation process?

The goal is that grants will be made within approximately three months of proposal submission.

Within 15 days of receiving an application, GHHI will determine if the applicant meets the basic threshold criteria (i.e., applicant is an eligible entity and has provided the required application components). If an applicant does not meet the threshold criteria, they will be notified and may rectify the identified issues and resubmit their application within the open RFA window. Proposals that meet the threshold criteria will be fully evaluated within 1.5 months of receipt after which GHHI will conduct financial due diligence and issue the grant agreement.

Will applying early increase the likelihood that an applicant will be selected for an award?

Not necessarily. GHHI cannot provide advice on competition strategy or when to apply. Applications will be evaluated based on the scoring rubric in the Request for Applications. GHHI cannot predict how long funding will be available since this depends on the quality and volume of applications received, but GHHI encourages applicants to take the time necessary to prepare a thorough application that is responsive to the Request for Applications.

Given that the purpose of the program is to reach and fund organizations and communities that have historically been overburdened by environmental justice issues and underserved by public and private investment, GHHI, the Advisory Board, and reviewers anticipate that organizations that are applying for federal funding for the first time may need additional time to prepare applications.

When will the grants be announced?

GHHI plans to announce grants every three months starting in December 2024:

- Round 1: December 2024
- Round 2: February 2025
- Round 3: April 2025
- Round 4: June 2025
- Round 5: August 2025

Funding and Financial Support

How much money will be awarded through the Region 3 Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program?

GHHI will award \$40 million through the Region 3 Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program. GHHI expects to make approximately 171 grants. Once we start to make awards, we will update the GHHI Thriving Communities Website to share how many grants have been made and how much funding is available.

Are there maximum and minimum grant amounts?

The maximum amounts for the grants are noted in the chart below. There are no minimum amounts.

Tier	Award Focus	Award Period	Budget
I	Assessment Projects	1 year	Up to \$150,000
II	Planning Projects	1-2 years	Up to \$250,000
III	Implementation Projects	2 years	Up to \$350,000

Is this funding directly from the EPA or from GHHI? What provisions are there for organizations that lack the capacity to receive federal funds directly?

The funding will come from GHHI. GHHI is serving as a pass through for the EPA funding. As the Grantmaker for Thriving Communities, GHHI has developed a simplified application process, and organizations will receive funding from and report to GHHI. The goal of this program is to reduce barriers organizations may face in applying for federal funding.

Is there a minimum or maximum organizational budget required for any tiers?

No, there are no organizational budget restrictions by tier.

What type of financial statements need to be submitted?

Applicants should submit their most recent organization financial statement (e.g., audit, balance sheet, revenue/expense statement for the past two years). Tier I applicants that do not have a financial statement may explain how the project will be financially managed (does not count towards narrative length). This information ensures that the organization will be successful in managing the funds and achieving programmatic impact. Applicants selected will go through a grant negotiation process before the award is made, where this information and an applicant's operations will be discussed if needed. Selected grantees will also need to provide a W-9 to enable payment.

How will we receive grant payments?

As required by the EPA, this is a reimbursement payment structure. This means grant recipients must draw funds for the amounts needed for actual and immediate cash requirements to pay employees, contractors, subrecipients or to satisfy other obligations for allowable costs under the grant agreement.

GHHI uses BILL.com to ensure a more efficient and secure payment process to all grantees. Upon selection, grantees will work with the GHHI team to register in BILL.com so they can submit invoices and receive payments directly into the organization's bank account. If your organization's banking institution does not readily accept ACH payments (electronic payments), our finance staff will work with you to receive payments by paper checks. Receiving payments by electronic payments is far more secure and efficient and that is the preferred method.

The RFA mentions a Risk Assessment. What is this exactly and what is included?

The EPA requires GHHI, as a pass-through entity, to assess each grantee's ability to comply with Federal statutes, regulations, and the grant terms and conditions. This information is also important to potentially inform technical assistance needs for the applicant post-award, ongoing grantee support and monitoring, and/or conditions to be included in the grant agreement. The assessment will consider such factors as:

- The grantee's prior experience with similar awards or grants;
- Whether the grantee has new personnel or new or substantially changed financial systems;
- Whether the proposed use of funds follows federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the award.

Throughout the Risk Assessment process, the GHHI Thriving Communities team will be in direct contact with grantees regarding the assessment and any related questions or need for additional information.

Reporting

Will grantees be required to report to the EPA?

No. Grantees will send reports and updates to GHHI as the Regional Grantmaker. GHHI is required to and will report to the EPA quarterly on the activities of all grantees and the grantmaking process, including post-award technical assistance services.

What will be the grant reporting requirements?

Grantees will work with their assigned program officer to submit quarterly updates through GHHI's Fluxx web-based grants management portal. The quarterly updates will allow grantees to report on progress toward their identified goals, important learnings to share, and feedback on where additional technical assistance or support is needed. GHHI will share all progress reports, learning and feedback with EPA through its required quarterly reports.

Grant Application & Management System (Fluxx)

What is Fluxx?

Fluxx is a web-based system that GHHI will utilize for this program to accept applications, review applications, and manage grantee information including quarterly reporting. A link to Fluxx is found directly on the Thriving Communities landing page.

What browser is intended to best work with the grants application and reporting portal?

Fluxx is configured to work optimally in Google Chrome. Other browsers will work as well.

My Fluxx login information is not working. What is the problem?

The username and password must be entered exactly as provided/created. Occasionally, the username and/or password will have random spaces or characters that are difficult to distinguish. Please contact ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org if you need any assistance with the Fluxx system.

I accidentally deleted the email that provided my login information. How do I access that information?

Please notify our grants management team for assistance at ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org. We recommend saving the initial email or saving your login information in a secure location and/or project file.

When completing the application online, can we save it and return to it later?

Yes, our grants portal allows you to save and come back to the application at a later time. Please ensure you save your work often, **as the grants portal does not automatically save**. You may save your work by clicking the blue "Save" button on the bottom right-hand side of the page (a notification will appear at the top if your work is not saved properly).

You will find your saved application in the “Drafts” under Applications when you log back into the grants portal to work on your application.

On the application form, I see a “Save” button, but I do not see a “Submit” button. How do I submit the application?

The “Submit” button will not appear until the document has been saved and closed. When you are ready to submit, click “Save” and “Submit”.

I am unclear about a section/field on the application form. Where do I go for answers?

If you are unclear on a specific section of the application or form, please contact us at thrivingcommunities@ghhi.org. We are always trying to improve our application process and the grantmaking platform for submission. We welcome all feedback, questions, and comments - so, do not be shy!

Is there a size limit for application attachment documents?

No. There is no limit to the size of the attached documents that can be uploaded as part of your application.

Can I revise my application after it has been submitted?

Unfortunately, you cannot revise an application after it has been submitted. Once you have submitted your application, you will no longer be able to edit or revise the content unless requested by Program staff. Please note that applications missing the required information or supporting documentation will be returned to you for revision. If you submit your application in error, please reach out to thrivingcommunities@ghhi.org for assistance.

Portions of my text are disappearing when I save my request/requirement. What should I do?

Please be aware that the “≤” and “≥” symbols may be misread as HTML in the portal, causing text to disappear when saved. To avoid this issue, either replace the symbols with words or place a space between the symbol and the next character in the text.

Can grantees have multiple people access a grant application?

Multiple individuals can access the application if a login is established in the system for each individual. To create a login for someone at your organization, please contact us or have them register on the landing page. The Fluxx system allows you to assign specific roles to individuals under your organization’s account. Should you need any assistance, please contact us at ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org.

How can I view previously submitted applications/reports?

After logging in to your Fluxx account, please navigate to the area you wish to review. This includes “Submitted,” “Active,” or “Approved” applications or grants or reports. You may find these listings in the banner on the left side of your screen under the program logo.

Support and Resources

Are there information sessions planned that will provide additional guidance about the grant application process or accessing technical assistance?

Yes, we will post dates for our in-person, virtual events and “office hours” on our web landing page www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/thrivingcommunities as they become available.

Can my organization or I meet with someone on your team to discuss our project on a one-on-one basis?

Out of fairness to all applicants, we cannot provide individual consultation or feedback on your project.

We can and will provide support to applicants through webinars, office hours, and through this FAQ document to discuss the application process and the application criteria and eligibility. In addition, we welcome e-mails and phone inquiries with questions about eligibility, the application process, clarifications on the Request for Applications. Please contact us at: ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org or 1-443-687-7343.

Additionally, the EPA Region 3 Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTACs) is available to support community-based organizations in advancing environmental justice efforts. The TCTACs are funded by the EPA to provide training and to help community organizations navigate the federal grant application systems, develop strong grant proposals, and effectively manage grant funding. You can request support at their [website](#).

Can you provide translation support?

The Request for Application is provided in English and Spanish. We are eager to work with you to make other translation or accessibility services available. Please contact us at: ThrivingCommunities@ghhi.org or 1-443-687-7343. At this time, the EPA requires that applications be submitted in English.

Are there any application templates?

Yes, optional budget and workplan templates can be found on the Thriving Communities landing page and in the Fluxx system. Applicants are required to submit a workplan and budget but are not required to use these templates.

How do I determine if my community is on the EPA Disadvantaged Communities map?

We are happy to walk you through the map to determine your community’s designation or to provide additional information on the map. We also encourage you to check out this resource from the Environmental Protection Network (EPN) <https://www.environmentalprotectionnetwork.org/disadvantaged-communities>.

Are there opportunities for feedback or review as we work through the application process?

GHHI’s Thriving Communities team can provide feedback to both unsuccessful and successful applicants after the proposal review period.

Unsuccessful applicants will be eligible to reapply if funds are still available at that time.

Program Governance & Advisory Board

What is EPA's role and GHHI's role in this project?

GHHI serves as a “pass-through entity” for the EPA for this program. GHHI has collaborated with EPA on the design of this program for Region 3 and will administer the grants, grantee support, and grantee reporting.

Will GHHI and the regional Grantmaker be required to impose the same federal rules on the grantees that EPA would require if they were granting the money directly?

Yes, the federal regulations flow down to grantees. GHHI will work with grantees to ensure they understand and comply with all regulations

How is GHHI ensuring these funds reach organizations that historically have not had access to funding, especially those that are currently underfunded?

GHHI is committed to seeing that these funds reach organizations and communities that have historically not had access to federal funding. GHHI is doing this in several ways: 1) Selection and accountability to an Advisory Board comprised of organizational representatives with lived and professional expertise in environmental justice issues; 2) Ongoing in-person and virtual engagement sessions to promote the funding opportunity and to hear from communities across the region; 3) A review and selection process that assures funds will go to organizations and projects that will benefit disadvantaged communities; and 4) Targeted outreach throughout the application period to ensure diverse representation from disadvantaged communities across the region. GHHI is also committed to seeking feedback on ways that the Program can continue to reach out to, listen to, and learn from communities and organizations across the region.

How will GHHI ensure equitable distribution of funding?

GHHI will work with its Advisory Board to track applications submitted and grants made by state, metro area, community type, project tier, and project type with a goal to fund eligible and high-scoring projects that 1) respond to local environmental justice priorities, 2) benefit disadvantaged communities across the region, and 3) build the capacity of community-based organizations across the region. Doing this acknowledges variation in regional and community context. Proposal reviewers will be selected based on understanding of and commitment to environmental justice principles in addition to expertise in community change, organizational development, and EJ work. Additionally, GHHI will continue targeted outreach throughout the application period to reach potential applicants positioned to lead EJ work in disadvantaged communities across the region.

Who are your technical experts in EPA Region 3?

Our technical assistance partners are Howard University, Virginia Poverty Law Center, and Children's National. In addition, we will hire additional technical assistance providers based on grantee feedback and need.

Who is on your Advisory Board?

Our Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program Region 3 Environmental Justice Advisory Board members and the organizations they represent are listed here. Advisory Board members were selected by GHHI and approved by EPA for their experience, expertise, and community perspective on environmental justice and equity from across Region 3.

Will the Advisory Board select the non-competitive grants?

Yes, the Advisory Board will be reviewing and selecting non-competitive grant awardees. We expect to post more information about the criteria and selection process for the non-competitive capacity grants later this fall.
