

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

TITLE: “WHOLE HOUSE CONTRACTOR CERTIFICATION FOR THE DELIVERY OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN HOME IMPROVEMENT”

ACTION: Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) - Initial Announcement

RFIP NO: OAR-CPPD-04-02

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NO: 66.034

DATES: The closing date for receipt of Initial proposals is March 23, 2004. Applications submitted via U.S. Mail must be received by the deadline date.

Final applications will be accepted, only, from those eligible entities whose Initial Proposals have been successfully evaluated and selected for award. EPA will notify selected applicants not later than April 5, 2004.

The deadline for receipt of Final proposals is May 5, 2004.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds and solicits applications to advance the development of national certification of contractors who can deliver whole house energy efficiency improvements in existing homes. The certification shall address all major energy related systems in homes and improvements that can lead to reduced air pollution and energy savings for consumers. Proposals shall also address quality assurance mechanisms, national delivery of the program, and the impact that certified whole house contractors can have on reducing energy consumption/carbon emissions and enhancing state and local energy efficiency programs.

FUNDING/AWARDS: The total estimated funding for this project shall not exceed \$1,000,000. EPA anticipates award of at least one cooperative agreement resulting from this announcement; however, award of up to three cooperative agreements ranging in value from \$25,000 to \$250,000 per year is possible, to make implementation of the project more efficient, or increase program effectiveness.

Eligible entities are encouraged to submit multi-year applications. All projects must be completed within the project performance period of 36 to 48 months.

CONTENTS BY SECTION

- I. Funding Opportunity Description
- II. Award Information
- III. Eligibility Information
- IV. Application and Submission Information
- V. Application Review Information
- VI. Award Administration Information
- VII. Agency Contact
- VIII. Other Information

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background.

The Climate Protection Partnerships Division (CPPD) is committed to reducing greenhouse gases through energy-efficiency and cost-effective partnerships with industries in all sectors of our economy where emissions reductions can be achieved. ENERGY STAR, one of CPPD's dynamic government/industry partnerships, offers businesses and consumers energy-efficient solutions, making it easy to save money while protecting the environment for future generations.

In 1992, EPA introduced ENERGY STAR as a voluntary labeling program designed to identify and promote energy-efficient products to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Computers and monitors were the first labeled products. During 1995, EPA expanded the label to additional office equipment products and residential heating and cooling equipment. In 1996, EPA partnered with the US Department of Energy (DOE) for particular product categories. The ENERGY STAR label is now on major appliances, office equipment, lighting, consumer electronics, and more. EPA has also extended the label to cover new homes and commercial and industrial buildings. Through the partnerships with more than 7,000 private and public sector organizations, ENERGY STAR delivers the technical information and tools that organizations and consumers need to choose energy-efficient solutions and best management practices.

The Climate Protection Partnerships Division would like to further enhance delivery of energy efficient products, services, and best practices to the residential, commercial and industrial marketplace by funding proposals that advance improvement in national, regional, and local energy efficiency programming.

B. Scope of Work.

CPPD seeks to fund proposals that advance the national certification of contractors who can deliver whole house energy-efficiency improvements in existing homes. Whole house efficiency improvements include envelope improvements, HVAC repair and replacement, plug load and lighting recommendations. Proposals should address certification relevant to an integrated whole-house approach to improving energy efficiency. The certification should address

advanced diagnostics for homes and multiple systems within the home including heating, cooling, the building envelope, and electric baseload. Consistent with current building science, the certification should also address health and safety considerations that are closely related to home improvement activities. Proposals should identify unique constituencies, approaches, and channels for working with stakeholders; demonstrate an understanding of the relevant home improvement technologies and best practices, and the market structure for delivering the technologies to homes and homeowners; describe an approach to ensure the quality delivery of services by residential energy efficiency improvement contractors; identify market barriers to the adoption of best practices; and, delineate strategies for overcoming these barriers.

C. Supplementary Information.

The statutory authority for this action is Clean Air Act, Section 103(b) which authorizes the award of grants for research, investigations, experiments, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effect, extent, prevention and control of air pollution.

II. Award Information

A. What is the amount of funding available?

The total funding for this project is estimated to be \$1,000,000.

B. How many agreements will EPA award in this competition?

EPA anticipates award of one cooperative agreement resulting from this announcement, subject to availability of funds and the quality of applications submitted. Award of three cooperative agreements, ranging in value from \$25,000 to \$250,000 per year is possible if, based on the evaluated results of all proposals, doing so will make implementation of the project more efficient or increase program effectiveness.

Cooperative agreements permit substantial involvement between the EPA Project Officer and the selected applicants in the performance of the work supported. Although EPA will negotiate precise terms and conditions relating to substantial involvement as part of the award process, the anticipated substantial Federal involvement for this project will be:

1. close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance;
2. collaboration during the performance of the scope of work;
3. approving substantive terms of proposed contracts;
4. approving qualifications of key personnel (EPA will not select employees or contractors employed by the recipient.);
5. review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (The final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.);

C. What is the project period for award(s) resulting from this solicitation?

The estimated project period for award(s) resulting from this solicitation is July 2004 through July 2008. All projects must be completed within the negotiated project performance period of 36 to 48 months.

D. Can funding be used to acquire services or fund partnerships?

Funding may be used to acquire services or fund partnerships, provided the recipient follows procurement and subaward or subgrant procedures contained in 40 [CFR](#) Parts 30 or 31, as applicable. Successful applicants must compete contracts for services and products and conduct cost and price analyses to the extent required by these regulations. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify contractors or consultants in their proposal. Moreover, the fact that a successful applicant has named a specific contractor or consultant in the proposal EPA approves does not relieve it of its obligations to comply with competitive procurement requirements.

Subgrants or subawards may be used to fund partnerships with non profit organizations and governmental entities. Successful applicants cannot use subgrants or subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products to carry out its cooperative agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subgrantee must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance under Subpart B Section .210 of [OMB Circular A-133](#), and the definitions of “subaward” at 40 CFR 30.2(ff) or “subgrant” at 40 CFR 31.3, as applicable. EPA will not be a party to these transactions.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Entities.

Proposals will only be accepted from non-profit organizations, as defined by [OMB Circular A-122](#), that are subject to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service tax code.

Non-profit organization, as defined by OMB Circular A-122, means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization which: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. For this purpose, the term “non-profit organization” excludes (i) colleges and universities; (ii) hospitals; (iii) State, local, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments; and (iv) those non-profit organizations which are excluded from coverage of this Circular in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Circular.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching.

Cost Sharing or Matching is not required, as a condition of eligibility, or otherwise, for proposals selected for award.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. How to Obtain Application Package.

The complete grants application package can be downloaded from EPA's website at: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/index.htm>. Potential applicants may request a paper copy of the application package by contacting the agency contact listed in *Section VII* of this announcement.

B. Content and form of Application Submission.

1. **Initial Proposals.** Applicants must submit one original signature Initial Proposal and two complete copies. Initial Proposals may not exceed 15 pages in length and must conform to the following outline:

- a. Overview of the organization, its mission, and related experience (1-2 pages);
- b. Description of key project activities and approaches (3-5 pages);
- c. Brief biographical sketches of key technical experts who will be involved in the project (3 pages maximum);
- d. Detailed budget narrative (3 pages maximum);
- e. SF 424a (2 pages).

Applicants are strongly advised to avoid submission of extemporaneous materials. Proposals that exceed the maximum page limitation will not be considered. The maximum page length shall include any pieces that may be submitted by a third party (e.g., references or letters confirming commitments). [Pages exceeding the maximum length will not be considered.] All application materials must be completed in English. The minimum acceptable font size for application materials, excluding the SF 424a, shall be 10 pitch.

2. **Final Applications.** *(FINAL APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED, ONLY, FROM THOSE ELIGIBLE ENTITIES WHOSE INITIAL PROPOSAL HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY EVALUATED AND SELECTED FOR AWARD. **DO NOT INCLUDE THESE DOCUMENTS WITH THE INITIAL PROPOSAL.**)*

Applicants whose Initial Proposals have been evaluated and selected for award must submit one original signature document and two copies of the completed federal grant application package and narrative workplan. All application materials must be completed in English.

- a. A complete **FINAL APPLICATION** must contain the following, in the sequential order shown:

1. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance, with original signature.
2. Narrative Statement, in the format detailed below.
3. Other supporting documentation.
4. SF-424 A, Budget by categories and indirect cost rate.
5. SF-424 B, Assurances for non-construction programs.
6. Debarment and Suspension Certification.
7. Certification Regarding Lobbying and SF LLL, if applicable.
8. EPA Form 4700-4 Preaward Compliance review report.
9. Quality Assurance Narrative Statement, if applicable.
10. Copy of Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, if applicable.
11. Biographical Sketch.
12. E-mail address or self-addressed envelope (to receive notification of receipt of application).

b. The narrative statement should conform to the following outline:

1. Project Title.
2. Applicant Information. Include applicant (organization) name, address, contact person, phone number, fax and e-mail address.
3. Funding Requested. Specify the amount you are requesting from EPA.
4. Project period. Provide beginning and ending dates (for planning purposes, applicants should assume funds will be available in September, 2004).
5. Narrative Workplan. Summarize the project and specifically explain how the project meets the evaluation criteria detailed in *Section V(A)* of this solicitation.
6. Qualifications. Summarize your technical experience and knowledge. Demonstrate how your qualifications meet the evaluation criteria detailed in *Section V(A)* of this solicitation.
7. Total Project Cost. Specify total cost of the project. Identify funding from other sources including any in-kind resources.
8. Detailed Itemized Budget. Clearly explain how EPA funds will be used. Provide a budget for the following categories:
 - Personnel
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Contractual Costs
 - Travel
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Other
 - Total Direct Costs
 - Total Indirect Costs: must include documentation of accepted indirect rate
 - Total Cost
9. Reporting Requirements. Discuss quarterly progress (schedule to be established by EPA). Quarterly progress reports should include: a summary of performance progress-to-date, problems encountered, successes achieved, and lessons learned.

C. Submission Date and Times.

1. The deadline for submission of completed Initial Proposal packages is March 23, 2004, 2:00 p.m. EST. All proposal packages must be received in the program office listed below by the deadline. Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered for funding. Electronic or facsimile transmission of Initial Proposals/Final Applications will not be accepted
2. The deadline for submission of completed Final Application packages is May 24, 2004, 2:00 p.m. EST. *(Final applications will be accepted, only, from those eligible entities whose Initial Proposal have been successfully evaluated and selected for award.)*

Because of the unique situation involving U.S. mail screening in Washington, DC., EPA highly recommends that applicants use express mail to submit their proposals. Initial Proposals and Final Applications should be addressed to:

Express Delivery Address (FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc)
U.S. EPA
Attn: Lena Nirk
OAR/OAP/Climate Protection Partnerships Division
1310 L Street, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 2005
Phone: (202) 343-9841

Regular Mail Delivery Address (U.S. Postal Service)
U.S. EPA
Lena Nirk, (Mail Code 6202J)
OAR/OAP/CPD
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria.

Each eligible proposal/application will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth below. Initial Proposals which are best able to directly and explicitly address these criteria will have a greater likelihood of being selected for award. Each proposal will be rated under a points system, with a total of 100 points possible.

Criterion	Maximum Points per Criterion
-----------	------------------------------

<p>Benefit to the public: Describe the importance of the project and its potential in delivering an infrastructure of certified technicians who can recommend and perform whole house energy efficiency improvements that lead to the public good of reduced air pollution and energy savings. The Initial Proposal shall describe: (1) the scope of the certification, its ability to address all major energy related systems in homes, and their relevance to high-quality energy efficiency improvements in existing homes as well as the certification of contractor skills in advanced diagnostics for homes and multiple systems within the home including heating, cooling, the building envelope, and electric baseloads as well as health and safety considerations that are closely related to home improvement; (2) beyond the certification itself, the quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the skills and best practices covered by the certification are actually incorporated into contractors’ work and delivered to existing homes in the field; (3) the ability of the certification and quality assurance mechanisms to be delivered nationally as markets can support them; (4) the estimated impact of the proposal on reducing energy consumption/carbon emissions and/or enhancing the design of national, state, and local energy efficiency programs, as well as health and safety considerations that are closely related to home improvement; and (5) anticipated outcomes of the project. (6) Briefly describe your contribution to market transformation in terms of engaging relevant and unique constituencies and stakeholders, formulating goals, identifying market barriers, developing strategies to overcome market barriers, and implementing key activities with discrete tasks and time lines. CPPD will review proposals for their potential to create lasting change in the market for energy efficient services, best practices, and products on a national scale.</p>	45
<p>Past experience: For Initial Proposals, briefly describe organizational experience developing technical standards, certifying technicians to those standards, accrediting contractors or third parties, and promoting building trade best practices related to energy efficiency improvements to the contractor community. Experience with weatherization contractors is desirable. In addition, the proposal shall demonstrate the organization’s experience in developing quality assurance programs for technician oversight.</p>	30
<p>Experience of key personnel: For Initial Proposals, briefly describe the experience of key personnel identified, and designate a primary contact who will be responsible for the implementation of the grant and will serve as a liaison with CPPD staff. CPPD will review biographical sketches to determine if staff experience is commensurate with activities proposed.</p>	15
<p>Cost effectiveness: Applicants shall describe their ability to leverage grant funds. CPPD will review budget narratives (SF 424a) to determine if costs are reasonable and commensurate with activities proposed.</p>	10

B. Other Factors.

EPA reserves the right to make decisions on applications based on factors that help ensure geographic equity and the demonstration of a variety of different technical approaches.

C. Review and Selection Process.

Each Initial Proposal will be evaluated by a team chosen to address the range of activities

associated with reducing greenhouse gases through energy-efficiency and cost-effective partnerships with private industry to achieve emissions reduction. The Evaluation Team will base its evaluation solely on the selection criteria disclosed in this notice (*see Section V(A), Evaluation Criteria*).

Completed evaluations will be referred to a Selection Committee that is responsible for further consideration and final selection. The highest numerically-ranked proposal(s) (subject to the quality of proposals, availability of funds, and consideration of *Section V(B), Other Factors*) will be selected for award and required to submit Final Applications.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices.

Following final selections, all applicants will be notified regarding their application's status.

1. EPA anticipates notification to *successful* applicant(s) will be made, via telephone, electronic or postal mail by June 8, 2004. This notification, which advises that the applicant's proposal has been selected and is being recommended for award, is not an authorization to begin performance. The award notice signed by the EPA grants officer is the authorizing document and will be provided through postal mail. At a minimum, this process can take up to 90 days from the date of selection.
2. EPA anticipates notification to *unsuccessful* applicant(s) will be made, via electronic or postal mail by April 30, 2004. In either event, the notification will be sent to the original signer of the application.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

1. A listing and description of general EPA Regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at:
http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/applicable_epa_regulations_and_description.htm.
2. Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs may be applicable to awards, resulting from this announcement. Applicants *selected* for funding may be required to provide a copy of their proposal to their [State Point of Contact](#) (SPOC) for review, pursuant with Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. This review is not required with the Initial Proposal and not all states require such a review.

C. Reporting Requirement.

Quarterly progress reports will be required. The quarterly progress report should include: a

summary of performance progress-to-date, problems encountered, successes achieved, and lessons learned. The schedule for submission of quarterly progress reports will be established, by EPA, after award.

VII. Agency Contact

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lena Nirk, US EPA, Office of Atmospheric Programs, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. (MC 6202J) Washington, DC 20460, Phone (202) 343-9841, Fax (202) 343-2202; e-mail nirk.lena@epamail.gov

All questions while this funding opportunity is open should be e-mailed to: cppd.grant-funding-inquiries@epa.gov. Answers will be posted, bi-weekly, until the closing date for this announcement at the OAR Grants/Funding website (http://www.epa.gov/air/grants_funding.html).

VIII. Other Information

Applicants should clearly mark information in their application which they consider confidential. EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with Agency regulations at 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no award as a result of this announcement. The EPA Grant Award Officer is the only official that can bind the Agency to the expenditure of funds for selected projects resulting from this announcement.

Formal disputes challenging the Agency award decision, will be resolved using the Dispute Procedures at 40 [CFR](#) 30.63 and 40 CFR 31.70.