



GREAT LAKES REGIONAL COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The EPA's Environmental Justice Thriving Communities grantmaking program aims to strengthen the capacity of underserved communities to address the environmental and public health challenges they have historically faced, as well as current and future challenges. To reduce barriers to the federal grants application process, the EPA selected 10 Regional Grantmakers across the nation to issue subgrants to community-based nonprofits and other eligible organizations, with each grantmaker designing and implementing a grant distribution program best suited to communities in their region.

The Great Lakes TCGM Partnership [was chosen](#) to issue these grants in Region 5 of the EPA, an area that includes Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and 35 federally recognized tribal nations. Starting in 2024, the partners will distribute \$40 million in grants over three years.

We anticipate providing a total of 208 grants: 84 in Year 1, 85 in Year 2, and 39 at the start of Year 3. Grants will be made in three concurrent tiers:

- Tier One: Grants for \$150,000 for assessment.
- Tier Two: Grants for \$250,000 for planning.
- Tier Three: Grants for \$350,000 for project development.

In addition, grants of up to \$75,000 will be available for capacity-constrained communities and community-based organizations through a noncompetitive process under Tier One.

RAC COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Minneapolis Foundation and its partners will identify and invite 10 members to serve on the RAC. In selecting committee members, we seek to align with program goals for grant distribution, with roughly 30% of RAC members identifying as Indigenous or tribal members, 25% working in rural communities, and 45% working in urban communities.

We will also seek representation that spans, as equitably as possible, the six states and 35 federally-recognized Tribes in the Great Lakes region; racial and ethnic groups in the region (African American, Latinx, Asian American, Middle Eastern, etc.); and a broad range of issue-area expertise (including

experience with air quality issues, toxics, brownfields redevelopment, water quality, drinking water access, green jobs and workforce development, etc.). In addition, we seek to build a committee with diverse representation across gender identities, LGBTQIA+ status, and differing abilities.

Furthermore, RAC members will offer a range of expertise, including (but not limited to) experience in the following areas:

- Asthma and other public health issues that are exacerbated by indoor and outdoor environmental conditions
- Fenceline air quality, water quality, industrial effluent discharges, illegal dumping
- Lead and asbestos contamination, pesticides, and other toxic substances
- Healthy homes that are energy/water use efficient and not subject to indoor air pollution
- Improving food access to reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Stormwater and green infrastructure
- Emergency preparedness and disaster resilience
- Promoting occupations that reduce greenhouse gasses and other air pollutants

RAC members will receive compensation averaging \$8,000, plus travel expenses. They will sign a contract that clarifies the expectations and requirements of serving on the committee, which asks them to:

- Commit to an initial one-year term, after which they can re-apply to stay on the committee.
- Contribute approximately 70 hours a year (averaging 17 hours a quarter).
- Attend one in-person meeting per year.
- Consistently attend RAC meetings, which will be held semimonthly (every two weeks) for the committee's first four months and then be adjusted as needed.
- Engage, as they are able, in additional program meetings and events in their local area.
- Distribute program communications through professional email, newsletters, and social media.
- Sign a conflict of interest policy.
- Acknowledge—if they are board members, consultants, or staff members of a nonprofit or other eligible entity—that they **understand that their organization CANNOT apply for a grant through the Great Lakes Environmental Justice Thriving Communities grantmaking program.** (Organizations with which they are affiliated may still apply for funding to the [National](#) Grantmaker, the Research Triangle Institute.)

RAC WORK PLAN

The 10-member RAC will provide grantmaking direction, support outreach and communications, and recommend the slate of grants during each decision-making period. In Year 1, the RAC will help finalize the grant application process, decision-making criteria, and reporting requirements for grantees.

During each round of grantmaking (3-4 rounds per year), the RAC will make final grant recommendations after reviewing applications that successfully complete an initial review process conducted by the partners. The RAC will also recommend severely capacity-constrained organizations

to receive noncompetitive grants, based on their own recommendations as well as referrals from partners and others..

Further, the RAC will provide guidance on communications, outreach, and support services to ensure the program meets the needs of all disadvantaged communities.* RAC members will be asked to inform strategies for:

- Conducting comprehensive outreach to tribal, urban, rural, and remote areas.
- Providing effective technical assistance support to applicants and grantees.

RAC members will also support in assessing and communicating the program's benefits and regional impact. This will include helping design processes to:

- Collect feedback from the broad range of communities in the Great Lakes region.
- Solicit and interpret input and information from the public, grant applicants, and grantees.
- Track and analyze data and information from reports, evaluations, and quality assurance processes.
- Share success stories of grantees as well as overall programmatic impact.

*The EPA defines disadvantaged communities as “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participation in aspects of economic, social and civic life, including Black, Native, Latino, and other people of color; LGBTQ+; persons with disabilities; children; the elderly; religious minorities; and those otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

GREAT LAKES TCGM PARTNERSHIP:

