Funding Year 2021-2022 Proposal Solicitation Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in this year's solicitation. This year the CARB Research Program has substantially changed the way the proposal solicitation is run. Below is a list of changes made from previous fiscal year solicitations:

1. Hosting the solicitation on Empower Innovation
2. Providing scoring criteria
3. Holding a public meeting on the solicitation
4. Including various deliverables and requirements on equity (varies by project)
   a. Implicit bias training
   b. Cultural competency statements
   c. Experience in community engagement
   d. Community engagement plans
   e. Sub-contract with non-academic, community organizations
5. Feedback provided to all applicants

CARB staff have responded to multiple questions regarding the solicitation since the release of the solicitation and at the public meeting. Below is a summary of these questions and answers. We hope that this will provide additional guidance for all prospective contractors.

Frequently Asked Questions

Proposal Selection and General Questions

How many pre-proposals are selected for each project?

Only one pre-proposal per project is selected to develop a full proposal. There are a total of 11 projects, therefore 11 applicants will be notified that their pre-proposal has been selected and will have to develop a full proposal. Researchers not selected will be notified and CARB staff will provide a summary of scores for future reference.

Why only racial equity and not age or gender equity?

CARB has previously funded various projects that require disaggregation by age, gender and race. The racial equity requirements being introduced now reflect the agency's increased focus on addressing environmental justice issues which place a disproportionate burden on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. CARB will continue to consider the disproportionate impact of racist transportation and housing policies on underserved communities and the health impacts of exposure to pollutants on sensitive groups. Moving forward, CARB is committed to including research questions related to racial equity and social justice in more research projects.

What is the selection process for pre-proposal to move on to the full proposal stage?

Review panels of topic experts are assembled for each project. Review panels consist of relevant CARB program staff, and in some instances, from other state agencies that CARB frequently collaborates with. The pre-proposals and scoring criteria are distributed to the assigned reviewer panelists. After the panel has reviewed the proposals, they will meet to

share scores and compare comments on the merits of each proposal. The panel will decide, based on the highest scoring pre-proposal, which team will be selected to develop a full proposal. All applicants will be notified whether they have been selected or not. Feedback from the review panel will be provided in this notification. The winning team will be given further instructions on developing the full proposal.

Budget and Contracting

Does the maximum allowable budget include direct and indirect costs?

Yes

There are likely additional indirect costs associated with each listed subcontractor, is that correct? What are the rules for indirect cost for subcontractor and if it's different for in-state versus out-of-state groups?

The prime contractor will be able to charge indirect costs on up to $25,000 of each subcontractor. The exception is that UC's typically do not charge overhead on any UC subcontractors. It is likely that each subcontractor will have their own indirect costs and we would ask that they provide the 25% indirect cost rate that the university is also providing.

What are the rules for calculating indirect cost and are they the same for contractors and subcontractors?

The rules for calculating indirect cost would be the same for our contractors and subcontractors. Indirect costs are based on the Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC is the total direct cost less tuition/fee remission, rent, equipment, and the portion of each subcontract exceeding $25,000.

Is there a limit to how much of the budget can be allocated to private subcontractors?

Private subcontracting, where the main contractor is directly choosing the subcontractor, is limited to 25% of the total direct cost or $50,000, whichever is less. Private subcontracting can be up to 50% but an additional attestation memo describing why the expertise within the subcontract cannot be found within the UC or CSU systems is required. The prime contractor must be responsible for the majority of the work and should be receiving at least half of the total direct costs of the project. If the Department of General Services does not agree with the content of the attestation memo, it is possible that the entire contract may not be approved. Therefore, limiting the subcontract to below 25% or the total contract cost is advised.

Otherwise, if the main contractor bids out the subcontract work, the prospective subcontractor may perform more than 50% of the work. For UC/CSU contractors, please work with your contracts and grants office to plan for the bidding process.

Does the office of contracts and grants at my institution need to review pre-proposals?

That is not a requirement here. Once a pre-proposal is selected for development into a full proposal, then the selected researchers must have the proposal reviewed by their respective contracts and grants office. This will enable the correct salaries, overhead rates, etc., to be included in the budget.

Does the 25% overhead limit for UCs/CSUs apply to subcontractors that are not part of the UC/CSU system?

No, there is not an overhead limit for subcontractors. However, total cost of the research is a factor in proposal evaluation. In addition, when CARB receives overhead rates in excess of 25% for subcontractors that are not competitively bid, a letter is sent notifying the proposers requesting that a 25% overhead rate be used. This practice reflects the no-bid contracts and flexible terms and conditions provided to contractors and their subcontractors.

Is non-resident tuition eligible in the proposed budget?

Yes, it is eligible.

What is the length of the contracts?

Most research projects are 24-36 months long, where the last 6 months are used to review and edit the draft final report. White papers are typically 12-18 months long.

Team Requirements

Can researchers from a CSU lead a project?

Yes, any researcher from a UC or CSU can lead a project as a principle investigator.

Can we include a researcher from a private university on the research team?

Yes, as long as that researcher is a sub-contractor and the principal investigator is from either a UC or CSU university, the team can include researchers from the private sector, including NGOs or community advocacy groups.

Do we have to sign up on Empower Innovation in order to apply for a proposal?

No, that is not a requirement, but we are encouraging researchers looking for collaborators to leverage Empower Innovation as a valuable tool.

Pre-proposal Requirements

Do we need to respond to all tasks listed in the Statement of Work?

The most competitive proposals will respond to all listed tasks.

Does the 5-page limit include curriculum vitae and cultural competency statements?

No, the 5-page limit is only for the description of methods proposed to address the solicitation objectives

How do we prove in the application that we have assembled a multidisciplinary team?

Please provide the curriculum vitae or statement of qualifications for the entire team. If you are collaborating with a new researcher (new to the principle investigator, or new to CARB), this can be described more fully in the description of relevant experience section.

Can one proposal be applicable to multiple projects? Can researchers apply to multiple projects at once?

No, we recommend that separate pre-proposals be submitted for each project. Separate proposal review teams are being assembled for each project, and there are no plans for combining projects at this stage.

Is there a page limit on the CV section or relevant experience section? And, what should be included in the relevant experience section?

There is no page limit. This can be approached in different ways. The team may briefly describe (1-2 paragraphs) what the most relevant experience the team has related to the objectives of the project and optionally provide a table listing current or recently completed projects with columns for project title, funding agency, funding level, current status or start and end dates.

Should letters of support be included in the pre-proposal?

If you are able to get letters of support, particularly for community engagement or if you are receiving in-kind support for equipment or other deliverables, please do. These can be included as part of the relevant experience section and or as attachments to the cultural competency statement.

Do we need to do implicit bias training prior to turning in the pre-proposal?

The requirement for implicit bias training varies by project. Please read the statement of work and scoring criteria carefully for that information. There is a table in the workshop presentation slides that summarizes equity requirements. Generally speaking, any project that requires community engagement will require implicit bias training, a cultural competency statement and prior experience in community engagement. The advantage of a multidisciplinary team is that researchers knowledgeable in these areas can join your team and provide the appropriate resources. If implicit bias training is required for the project you're applying for, the training does not need to be complete prior to the contract being initiated. However, a commitment to take implicit bias training once the project has started, or evidence of past training on this topic should be clearly stated in the pre-proposal.

If I have relevant research experience but little experience with community engagement, how can I get community support?

We recommend putting together a multidisciplinary team and including a community advocate as a co-principle investigator or subcontractor to round out the needed experience.

Below is a table that helps clarify some of these requirements

Pre-proposal Section	Page limit	Suggested outline
Proposed Research Plan	5	• Title that clearly indicates which project you're applying for • List of researchers and associated institutions • Abstract • Introduction/Objective • Work plan (divide by Task number where applicable)

		• Note that some tasks include community engagement, in which caseresearchers should describe their engagement plans here • Benefit to the state and/or expected outcome
Preliminary budget	1	Please use budget form provided on solicitation landing page
CV or Statement of Qualification	No limit, include all researchers on team	
Relevant Experience	No limit	• Introductory paragraph explaining anticipated contribution from each team member and relevant experience • For projects requiring community engagement experience and/or implicit bias training, please provide that information here • Optional: Table including list of all relevant projects with columns for project title, funding agency, funding amount, project status and/or start and end dates
Cultural Competency Statement (Varies by project)	1	Discuss prior engagement efforts and lessons learned from those experiences; In the context of the proposal: • What differences in cultural background and socioeconomic status exist between the researcher and communities being engaged with? • What language barriers may exist? • What power dynamics exist that could influence the interaction between the researcher and community members? • Acknowledge these differences and discuss how the project team will ensure community members are heard and how their expertise and priorities will be centered throughout the project.