

Fiscal Year 2023-24 Access Clean California Solicitation Question and Answer (Q&A) Sessions

Written Staff Responses

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Introduction

The California Air Resources (CARB) staff held two Questions and Answer (Q&A) sessions for the FY 2023-24 Access Clean California Solicitation on March 21 and April 8, 2024. The full Solicitation, as well as the Addendum, can be found here: [Low Carbon Transportation Investments and AQIP Grant Solicitations | California Air Resources Board.](#)

The questions and answers in the document include both questions reviewed via email before the two Q&A sessions and questions and answers asked verbally during the first Q&A session (verbal questions were not taken during the second Q&A session). To minimize repetition, similar questions have been combined and answered together.

The following written responses serve as an update to and take precedence over verbal responses provided during the Q&A session. This document includes references to the Solicitation, Addendum and associated appendices. Language in the Solicitation, Addendum and appendices takes precedence over any additional language provided in this Q&A document, except for clarifications provided in the Solicitation Errors & Clarifications section. Use the following links to reference the relevant Solicitation, Addendum and appendices:

- [Addendum to Grant Solicitation](#)
- [Access Clean California Solicitation](#)
- [Access Clean California Appendix A](#)
- [Access Clean California Appendix A, Budget Template](#)
- [Access Clean California Appendix A, Scope and Timeline Template](#)
- [Access Clean California Appendix B, Sample Grant Agreement](#)

As outlined in the Solicitation, CARB will not answer questions regarding this Solicitation outside of the Q&A sessions.

Solicitation Errors and Clarifications

Access Clean California Solicitation Appendix A, Attachment 4:

- In the Budget Details Tab, the comment box that appears when the user selects cell E12 currently states: "Input all indirect costs here. Indirect costs should account for no more than 1% of the total requested funds." This should read: "Input all indirect costs here. Indirect costs should account for no more than 5% of the total requested funds."

Questions and Written Responses from Q&A Session 1

- Question:** Can you please explain the difference between how the Solicitation is defining a Letter of Support and Letter of Commitment?

Answer: A letter of commitment typically comes from an organization with an anticipated role in the Solicitation application - like a subcontractor - whereas a letter of support can come from any organization regardless of their role in the implementation of the project as described in the Solicitation application. Please also refer to page A-9 of [Appendix A \(The Application\)](#), which states that subcontractors should submit a letter of commitment.
- Question:** Can you please explain the difference between a subcontractor and subrecipient and whether they should provide Letters of Support or Letters of Commitment in Support of our proposal?

Answer: In the context of this question a subcontractor and subrecipient have no substantive distinction. As such, a letter of commitment would be appropriate for either subrecipient or subcontractor, so long as the organization has an anticipated role in the implementation of the project as described in the Solicitation application. (see also response to Question 1 above).
- Question:** If a team of organizations partners on a bid with a single prime, do the non-prime partners need to go through an open procurement process before finalizing their placement on the team?

Answer: The term "prime" is not used in the Solicitation, but if CARB staff is interpreting the term correctly, non-prime partners are essentially subcontractors to the Grantee. The subcontractors do not go through the Solicitation process. Subcontractors are required to meet the applicable requirements. Page C-40 of [Appendix B \(Sample Grant Agreement\)](#) states the following: "The Grantee is required, where feasible, to employ best contracting and procurement practices that promote open competition for all goods and services. Grantee shall obtain price quotes from an adequate number of sources for all subcontracts."
- Question:** The Budget attachment says to use loaded labor rates that include overhead and fringe. Overhead typically includes indirect costs. Are these indirect costs subject to the 5% total CARB funding limit, or because they're "already identified or reimbursed as a direct cost" are they excluded from this limit? Also, should column C of the Budget Details page of [Appendix A, Attachment 4](#), called "Direct Labor Plus Expenses" include fully loaded labor rates (including overhead and fringe benefits) or should overhead and fringe be included in column E, Indirect Costs (non-labor)?

Answer: CARB understands that different organizations may calculate overhead and indirect costs differently and will work with the selected funding recipients to determine the best approach for tracking indirect costs during grant implementation. CARB recommends that each applicant choose whichever column makes most sense to them based on their accounting practices and definitions, and to make note of this in their application.

5. **Question:** On page A-9 of Appendix A, the solicitation application states that all subcontractors should each provide a qualification narrative, resume and letter of commitment as part of the solicitation application. For small community-based organizations, providing these materials can be burdensome and thus raises an equity issue. Is there any flexibility in terms of what materials community-based organizations are required to submit?

Answer: CARB's solicitation requirements were drafted to be compliant with the laws, consistent with other state funded grant programs and to include a set of minimum requirements applicable to all subcontractors who will receive state funding under the grant. The solicitation terms cannot be altered at this stage. However, please note that the solicitation does not set standards as to how complex or elaborate these materials should be. Therefore, CARB staff will consider accepting a variety of formats and materials so long as they comply with the basic requirements stated in the solicitation.

Note to reader: *After the release of the solicitation, CARB scheduled a second Q&A session. Information on this second Q&A session was provided through [public notice](#), and a summary of the questions and answers from the second session follows below.*

6. **Question:** Can CARB provide a list of the existing OP Network CBOs?

Answer: A list of the Access Clean California outreach partners is provided on the project website: [AccessCleanCA.org](https://www.accesscleanca.org). Under the About button on the top navigation bar, please select the Outreach Partners link. Alternatively, you can go directly to [AccessCleanCA.org/partners](https://www.accesscleanca.org/partners).

7. **Question:** As it relates to the tasks CARB described in the Outreach Coordination sub-section of the Solicitation's Scope of Work: (1) Can CARB provide a list of California Energy Commission (CEC), California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Investor-Owned Utilities (IOU) equity incentive programs with whom Access Clean California is currently or will be coordinating? Similarly, does Access Clean California currently facilitate relevant discussions with CEC and CPUC? And, (2) Can CARB provide a list of relevant CARB Equity Projects programs and administrators?

Answer: (1) Access Clean California does not have a definitive list of programs with whom the project should be coordinating currently or in the future. On behalf of Access Clean California, CARB and the current program administrator have been in regular contact with the agencies noted above to stay informed and to identify opportunities to collaborate on outreach and other efforts related to any climate equity incentives projects these agencies fund or administer, where feasible. Specific programs discussed so far include the CPUC's suite of low-income customer assistance programs - such as the California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE), Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA), and Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) - and the CPUC's related effort to develop a concurrent application system under Senate Bill 1208 (Hueso, Chapter 840, Statutes of 2022). Access Clean California has also met

regularly with several of the larger IOUs regarding their respective electric vehicle (EV) rebate incentive programs.

(2) There is not a definitive or exhaustive list of relevant CARB Equity Projects as it relates to the tasks identified in the Outreach Coordination subsection of the Scope of Work. CARB may create new or sunset existing Equity Projects during the term of this Solicitation. The CARB Equity Projects are identified in each fiscal year's [Low Carbon Transportation Investments Funding Plan](#) (Funding Plan). The Equity Projects in the [Fiscal Year 2023-24 Funding Plan](#) (page 36) include, in addition to Access Clean California, the following: Clean Cars 4 All, Financing Assistance for Lower Income Consumers, California E-Bike Incentive Project, California Integrated Travel Project, Sustainable Community-Based Transportation Equity Mobility Projects, and Sustainable Community-Based Transportation Equity Planning and Capacity Building Project.

8. **Question:** As it relates to the tasks described in the Outreach Partner Support subsection of the Solicitation's Scope of Work, can CARB provide a copy of the report from the 2023 capacity building pilot that describes lessons-learned?

Answer: The 2023 capacity building pilot is currently being implemented, and thus CARB has not yet received a report on the lessons learned. The design of the 2023 pilot is itself informed by the lessons learned from an initial capacity building pilot conducted through Access Clean California in 2021. The lessons learned from the 2021 pilot were shared at the Community Capacity Building Summit, which was hosted in collaboration with the Strategic Growth Council on January 14, 2022. [A recording of that summit is available on YouTube](#), and the following is a summary of the key recommendations, or lessons learned:

- Coalition building allows groups to shift away from a false competition narrative to the more viable pursuit of knowledge sharing and collective power building;
- Flexibility in funding requirements allows communities to better meet the state's climate readiness needs;
- Acknowledge the different challenges faced by different individuals due to identifies such as race, class, gender, and immigration status in project and grant processes;
- Invest in transportation programs that directly address racial justice; and
- Invest in intergenerational climate work and cede power to youth that will live with the consequences of our current decisions regarding climate change.

Just as with the 2021 pilot, CARB will make lessons learned from the current pilot publicly available when completed.

9. **Question:** As it relates to the tasks described in the Application Streamlining and Case Management sub-section of the Solicitation's Scope of Work: (1) Which climate equity incentive program applications would be streamlined? And (2) How is CARB defining "case management" and to which equity incentive programs would this apply?

Answer: (1) Access Clean California does not have a definitive or exhaustive list of incentive programs that would be streamlined under this Solicitation. Access Clean California prioritizes streamlining access to the relevant CARB Equity Projects, as well as any other climate equity incentive available to California residents, where feasible. (2) The solicitation does not define case management, nor does it specify which programs it should apply to. It is up to the applicant to interpret the term based on their experience and expertise in the context of meeting the overarching objectives of the Solicitation.

10. **Question:** Can CARB provide examples of other related climate equity incentive projects?

Answer: The term climate equity incentives is defined in the Terms and Definitions section of the Solicitation: In the context of this solicitation this term refers generally to all consumer-facing and equity-focused incentive programs aimed at helping California residents access clean transportation, clean energy, energy efficiency, etc. Examples of such programs include PG&E's [Pre-Owned EV Rebate Program](#) and its [Empower EV Program](#).

11. **Question:** What are CARB's budgeting guidelines for organizations that have a federally negotiated indirect rate?

Answer: CARB does not have any formal guidelines for organizations that have a federally negotiated indirect rate. As stated on page 9 of the Solicitation, indirect costs shall not exceed 5% of the total grant amount. Indirect costs are actual costs incurred for services or activities that are not directly tied to a specific project objective but support a common or joint purpose. Allowable indirect costs are a pro rata share of general management (overhead) costs for operations that support the work performed under the Grant Agreement, such as accounting, budgeting, payroll preparation, personnel services, utility costs, rent and centralized data processing not already identified or reimbursed as a direct cost.

12. **Question:** Are awarded grant funds from a different CARB funded program allowed to be considered leveraged/matched funds?

Answer: No, funding provided by CARB for other programs is not considered match funding for this Solicitation.

13. **Question:** Why are for-profit organizations not eligible to apply to this solicitation?

Answer: As stated on page 11 of the Solicitation, this competitive solicitation is open to federal, State, or local government entities or agencies, and California nonprofit organizations with relevant experience. As such, for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply. This is based on CARB's interpretation of the relevant statutes, regulations, and guidelines that govern the grant programs, with input from the public and key stakeholders. The Access Clean California program priorities and guidelines are part of the [Board-approved Funding Plan](#), and focus on providing resources to nonprofits, community-based organizations, and similar grassroots organizations to help families in low-income and disadvantaged communities learn about, apply for,

and participate in clean transportation and clean energy incentive programs. Please note, though, that for-profit organizations can sub-contract with the grantee, and thus receive a portion of the funding indirectly.