Funding Year 2026-2027 Proposal Solicitation Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in this year's solicitation. Starting in fiscal year 2021-2022, the CARB Research Program has changed several components of the annual solicitation process. Below is a list of changes made from previous fiscal year solicitations:

1. Hosting the solicitation on the Empower Innovation website
2. Providing scoring criteria specific to each project
3. Holding a public meeting on the solicitation and posting the recording on the solicitation webpage
4. New deliverables and requirements for community-based projects and projects with an equity component (requirements vary by project)
   a. Implicit bias training for awarded research teams
   b. Submit a cultural competency statement with pre-proposal applications
   c. Demonstrated experience in community engagement
   d. Community engagement plans in project proposals
5. Scoring to encourage sub-contracts with new research partners
6. Equity Implications Section
7. Plain-language outreach deliverables
8. Discussion of equity implications in the final report
9. Feedback provided to all applicants

The following questions are those that CARB staff typically receive during the solicitation process. The answers provided are based on the staff's interpretation of the questions received. It is every applicant's responsibility to review the application instructions in the solicitation packet and the full scope of the project they are applying for, including the scoring criteria.

We hope that the information below will provide additional guidance for all prospective contractors. CARB staff can answer questions from applicants through direct communication if the answers to the questions are publicly available. If an applicant would like information related to the proposal related to information not publicly available, we recommend that they ask the question at the public solicitation meeting on April 1, 2025, so that staff can answer the questions publicly and all interested parties can access the answer to the question. If you are unable to attend the public meeting, a recording of the event will be available on the solicitation website.

Frequently Asked Questions

Proposal Selection and General Questions

Can I still submit a pre-proposal if I miss the letter of interest deadline?

Yes, we will still accept pre-proposals even without a letter of interest (LOI). We still appreciate it if prospective contractors submit a LOI because it helps us assess the level of interest in particular projects and thus helps us in our research planning efforts.

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 1 projects in this first round, therefore 1 applicant 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 feedback on areas for improvement.

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 vulnerable 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, staff 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 do not charge overhead on any UC subcontractors. It is likely that each subcontractor will have their own indirect costs; however, CARB policy is to request that non-UC/CSU subcontractors honor the same 27% indirect cost rate that the UC/CSU is 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 (with the exception that UC's will not include any portion of a UC subcontractor in the MTDC).

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

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. Private subcontracting, where the main contractor awards a private subcontract/consultant without competitive bidding, is limited to 25% of the total contract or $50,000, whichever is less. If the total private subcontract/consultant exceeds 25% of the total contract or $50,000, whichever is less, an attestation memo describing why the expertise within the subcontract cannot be found within the UC or CSU systems is required. If sufficient justification as to why these services cannot be provided within the UC or CSU system, it is possible that the entire contract may not be approved. Therefore, limiting the subcontract to below 25% of the total contract or $50,000, whichever is less, is advised.

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

That is not a requirement at this initial stage of the process. 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 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 for subcontractors that are not competitively bid, a letter is sent notifying the proposers requesting that an overhead rate parallelling UC/CSU's 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 principal 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 non-governmental organizations 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.

Can members of CARB advisory groups be part of this pre-proposal?

Members of CARB advisory groups, or alternatives to the advisory body members who are appointed by the Board, **may not** be signatories to the contract, be listed as completing tasks in the scope of work or communicate with CARB regarding CARB's decision on the proposed contracts. The CARB advisory groups include:

- AB32 Environmental Justice Advisory Committee
- AB 617 Consultation Group
- Scientific Toxic Review Panel
- Research Screening Committee
- Natural and Working Lands Expert Advisory Committee (new, under AB 1757)

If an active CARB advisory group member makes a prohibited appearance or communication subject to Government Code section 87104 as described above, the application will not be eligible for an award.

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 principal investigator, or new to CARB), this can be described more fully in the description of relevant experience section. In the pre-proposal template, we provide a table at the beginning to clarify who the team members are, what their affiliations are and whether they have worked on a CARB contract in the past.

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 curriculum vitae (CV) section or relevant experience section? What should be included in the relevant experience section?

There is no page limit for CVs and relevant experience sections. 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. CVs for each team member should be provided. Each CV should provide the review panel with a detailed account of your professional and educational history to decide whether you're a good fit to implement the project (or specific tasks within a project) you are proposing. CVs should include your contact information and any relevant skills, awards and honors, grants and scholarships, publications and presentations, licenses and certifications, fieldwork, community service, languages, and any other qualifications relevant to the work you are proposing to do, including your lived experience. Professional references do not need to be included.

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?

Only pre-proposals chosen for development into full proposal require implicit bias training. Please read the statement of work and scoring criteria carefully for that information. There is a table in the workshop presentation slides and on the main pre-proposal solicitation website that summarizes equity requirements. 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 should be complete or scheduled within 30 days of contract execution. 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-co-principal investigator or subcontractor to round out the needed experience.

Below is a table that helps clarify some of these requirements. Please also see the pre-proposal template provided on the solicitation website.

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 case, researchers 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
Individual CVs or Statement of Qualification for the Team	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
Racial Equity Implications Section	No limit	Provide responses to the prompts provided in the Pre-Proposal Template
Cultural Competency Statement (Varies by project)	2	Discuss prior engagement efforts and lessons learned from those experiences; In the context of the proposal: - Discuss your research team's perspective(s) on equity in knowledge production, especially in the context of doing research with and/or about marginalized communities. How does your team situate your research work in non-academic (policy, cultural, public, etc.) domains? 2. Describe your research team's approach and practices to support self-evaluation and self-critique, the ways the

| | | team examines your beliefs and cultural identities, and how these relate to your ongoing research work and work proposed here. |
| | | • 3. How does your research team consider and address power dynamics in your work? How does your research team cultivate supportive and equitable relationships with academic and non-academic research partners and research subjects? Describe your team's specific approach, actions, and accountability measures. What are your team's practices to protect against harmful and/or extractive relationships? |