



# Thriving Communities Network (TCN) Brownbag Series

February 27, 2024

*Levelling the Playing Field: Ensuring that historically underserved communities and community-based organizations are able to access IRA and BIL funds for priority projects.*

# What is the TCN?

For decades, communities have requested resources and tools to successfully compete for federal funding.

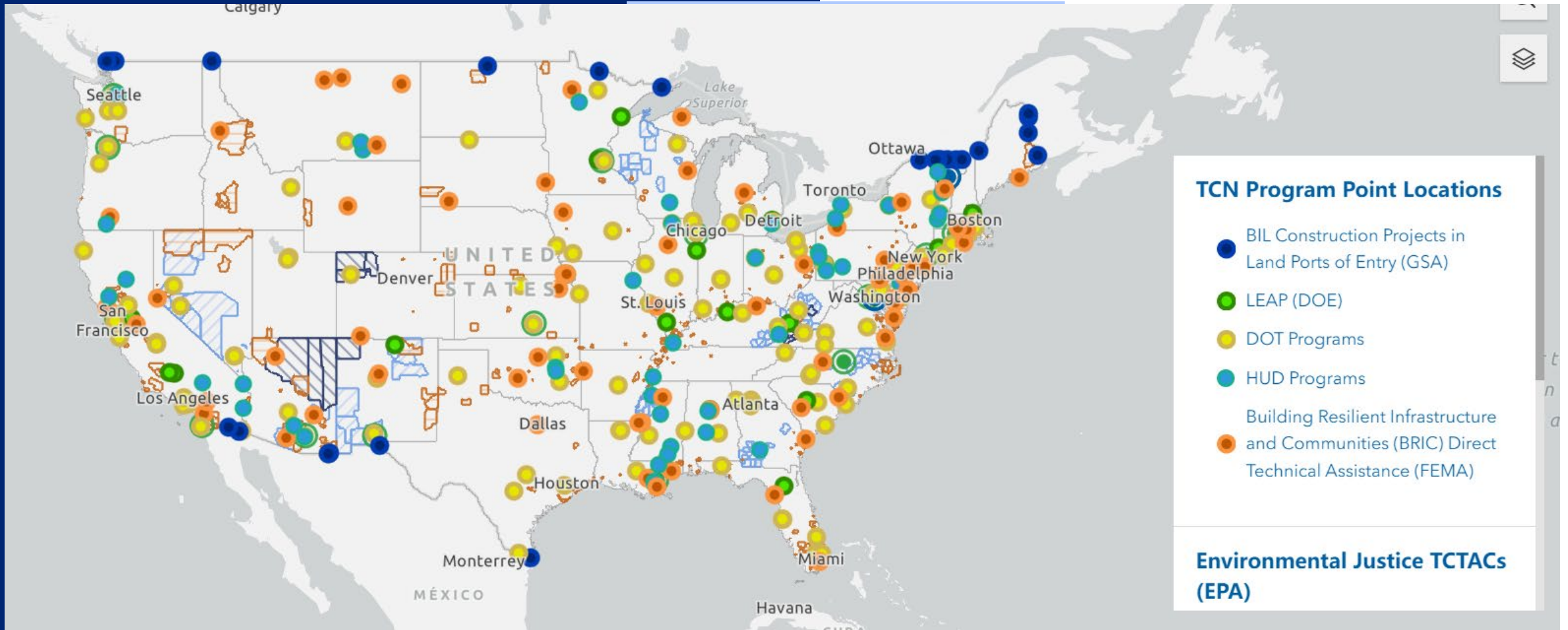
Created in 2022, the Thriving Communities Network (TCN) is a federal interagency effort to coordinate place-based technical assistance (TA) and capacity-building resources for urban, rural, and Tribal communities experiencing a history of economic distress and systemic disinvestment.

These federal resources include grant and financial management support, pre-development assistance, community engagement, planning, and project delivery support.

# Participating Agencies

EPA and DOT co-chair the Thriving Communities Network to coordinate technical assistance with the White House and other Cabinet agencies, which include:





# National Reach

# Introductions

- Two poll questions:
  - Are you a TA provider, federal staff, philanthropy, or other?
  - What types of communities do you primarily work with?
- Please respond in the chat:
  - What brought you here?
  - What would keep you engaged with a Capacity Builder Community of Practice?



## Listserve & Contact Us

- Sign up for our Listserve by scanning the QR code at left
- Please contact [ThrivingCommunitiesNetwork@dot.gov](mailto:ThrivingCommunitiesNetwork@dot.gov) for questions related to the Network



# EPA's Community Change Grants & TA

Alexandra Gallo, EPA







# COMMUNITY CHANGE GRANTS

Environmental and Climate Justice

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Alexandra Gallo

Special Advisor





# INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

TO REDRESS EJ ISSUES IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES



**\$3  
billion**

## **Advancing Environmental Justice**

Through the Inflation Reduction Act, EPA will improve the lives of millions of Americans by reducing pollution in neighborhoods where people live, work, play, and go to school; accelerating environmental justice efforts in communities overburdened by pollution for far too long; and tackling our biggest climate challenges while creating jobs and delivering energy security.

**\$200  
million**

**in ways that deliver effective  
and equitable solutions at scale.**



# OPPORTUNITY

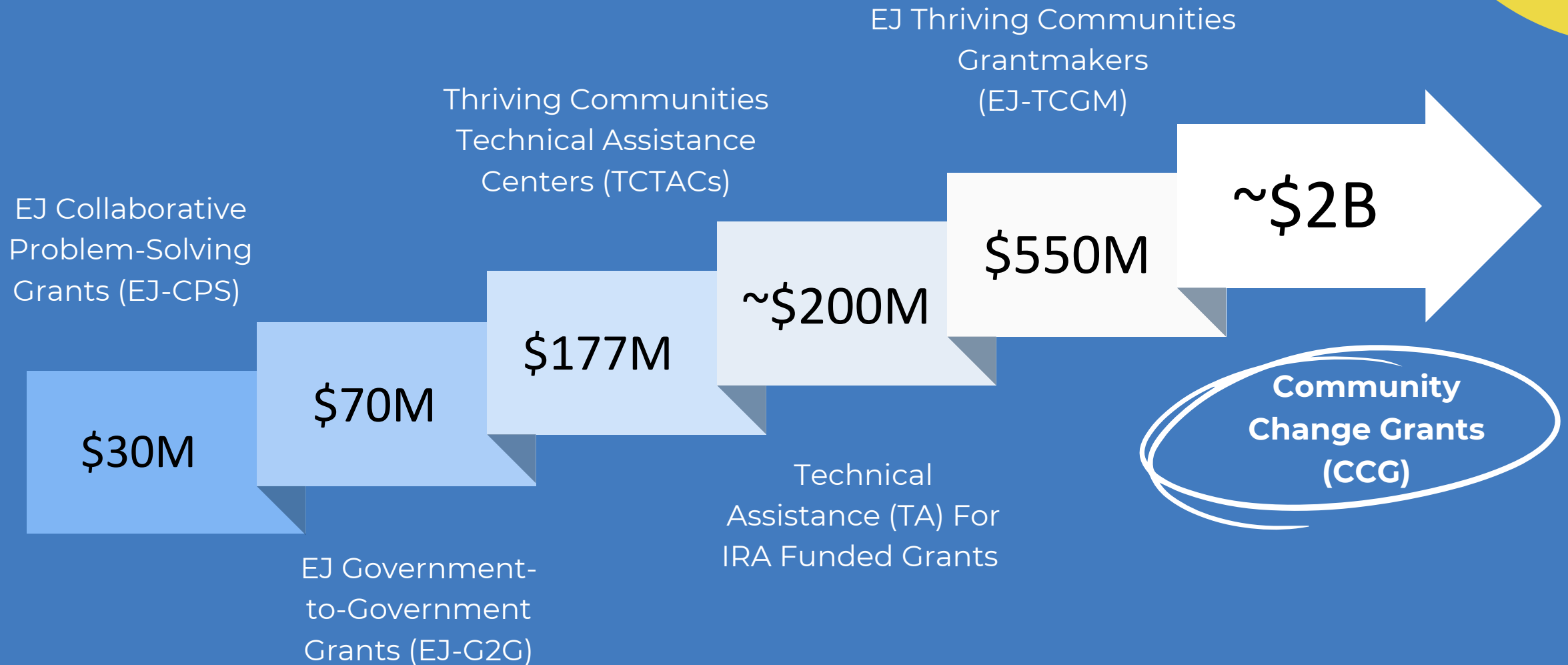
## Alignment

Community ideas were consistent and aligned with EPA's more flexible and equity-driven direction.

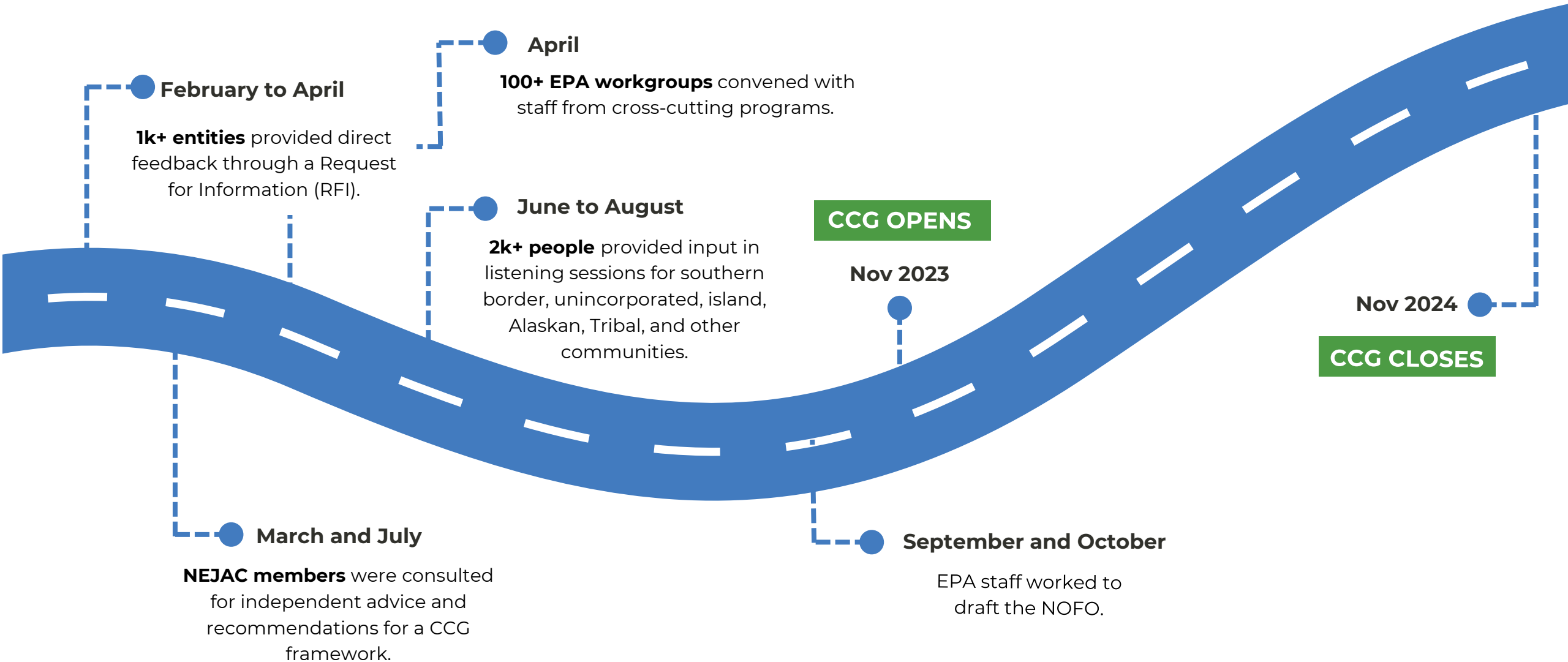
## Flexibility

IRA legislation was broad enough to flexibility to design a program to accommodate innovation.

# EJ INVESTMENTS



# ENGAGEMENT





# OUTCOMES

## A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

### Holistic Approach

Systems-level framework that integrates people, infrastructure, and can tackle multiple community priorities.

### Innovative Grantmaking

Break down inefficiencies while maximizing community representation and deploying funds rapidly.



# COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH



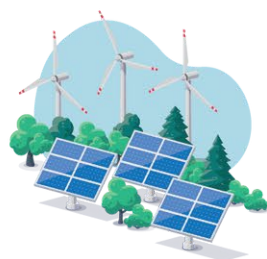


# COMMUNITY CHANGE GRANTS

**ARE INTENDED TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE CONCERNS:**



Provide resources for community-driven projects.



Unlock access to resources from the federal government and other sources.



Invest in strong cross-sectoral collaborations.



Empower communities and strengthen capacity to drive meaningful positive change.



Strengthen community participation in government decision-making.





# PROGRAM INNOVATIONS

## Rolling Applications

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis to provide flexibility to the maximum extent practicable.




## Innovative Evaluation

Each track has its own evaluation process, with oral presentations for Track I, and are reviewed approximately monthly for final consideration

## Expedited Selection

Evaluating and selecting applications on a rolling basis facilitates in expediting awards to communities.



# Technical Assistance



- [Community Change Technical Assistance \(CCTA\)](#)
  - Broad-based pre-award and post-award TA
  - Submit an on-line [TA Request Form](#)
  - Call to make a TA Request or ask questions: 1 (800) 540-8123
  - Email: [EJ\\_TechAssist@epa.gov](mailto:EJ_TechAssist@epa.gov)
- [Community Change Equitable Resilience Technical Assistance \(CCER TA\)](#)
  - Submit an on-line [TA Request Form](#)
  - More limited and tailored TA focusing on disaster-prone areas
- [Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers \(TCTACs\)](#)

# Eligibility

Applications must meet **all** eligibility criteria, as outlined in Section III of the [NOFO](#), to be considered for funding.

Comply with the content and submission requirements.

Meet the statutory partnership requirements in Section III.A.

Projects must benefit disadvantaged communities (see Section III.D.)

Projects must be completed within three years.

Applications to conduct scientific research; assessment, removal, or remediation of Superfund sites; or community relocation are ineligible.

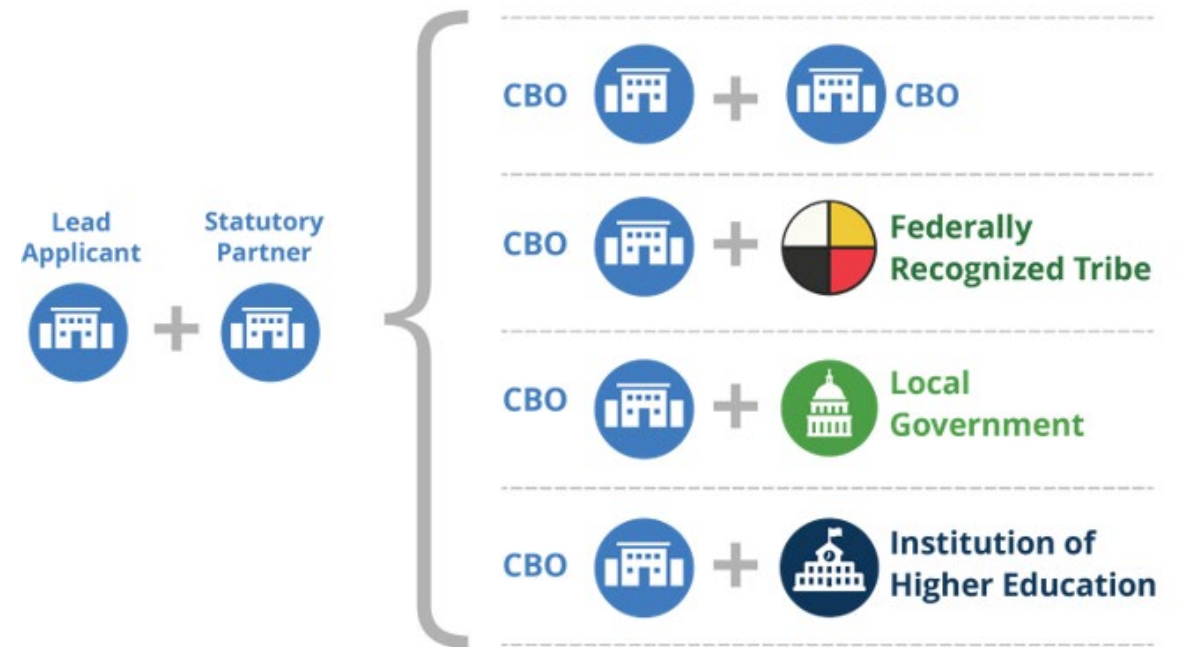


# Statutory Partnership

Applicants must either be a partnership of two community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) or a partnership between a CBO and a federally recognized Tribe, local government or institution of higher education.

Partnerships must be documented and meet certain legal requirements (see Appendix B).

Additional information on eligibility and partnerships can be found in Section III of the [NOFO](#).

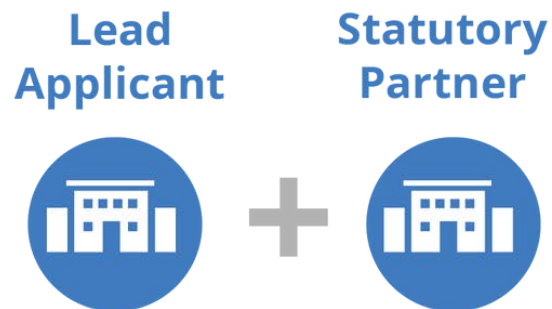


Note: While the CBO does not have to be the “Lead Applicant,” all statutory partnerships must include a CBO.

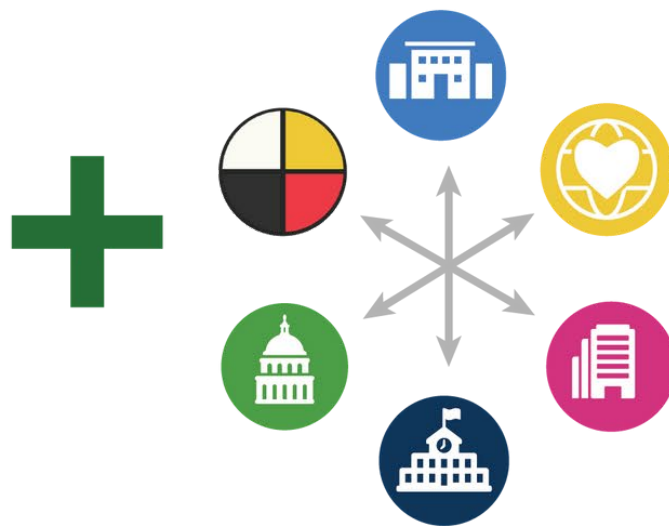


# How It Works

## FORM A STATUTORY PARTNERSHIP



## IDENTIFY COLLABORATING ENTITIES TO LEAD PROJECTS

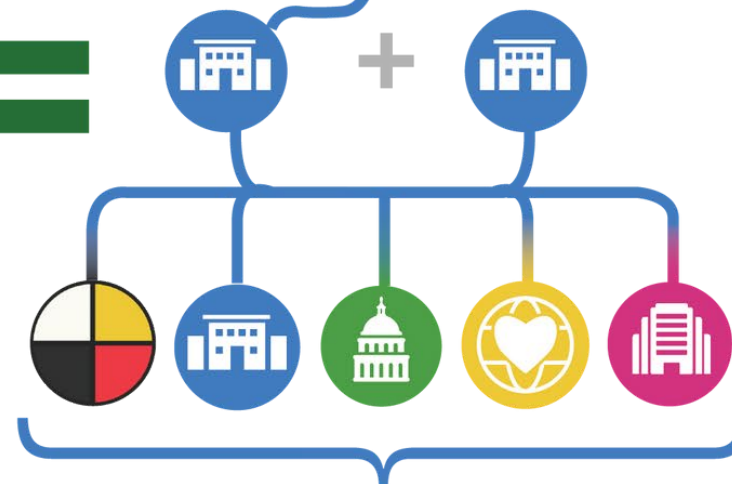


## THE COLLABORATIVE



Lead Applicant

Statutory Partner



Collaborating Entities

# TARGET INVESTMENT AREAS



**\$50M**

**Disadvantaged  
Unincorporated  
Communities**



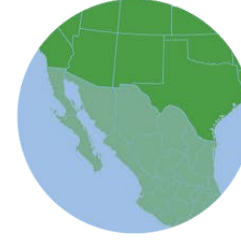
**\$150M**

**Tribes in  
Alaska**



**\$300M**

**Tribal  
Communities  
(lower 48 states + HI)**



**\$100M**

**Southern  
Border  
Communities**



**\$50M**

**U.S. Territories**

These Track I investment area amounts are approximate and may be adjusted based on the quantity and quality of applications received.

# CALL TO ACTION

WE HAVE TO MEET THE MOMENT



**Meet communities where  
they are.**



# Thank you!

For more information, please contact [CCGP@epa.gov](mailto:CCGP@epa.gov).





# Environmental Protection Network's TA Offerings

Michelle Roos, EPN





# **Environmental Protection Network**

## **Pro Bono Capacity Building Technical Assistance Program**

**February 27, 2024**



# Environmental Protection Network

- 501c3 founded in 2017
- 650+ volunteers, mostly EPA alumni (and [staff across the country](#))
- Build capacity of environmental agencies and the communities they serve:
  - National Environmental Policy
  - Mentoring, Recruitment, and Retention
  - Educating Congress
  - Resource to the Press & other NGOs





# Pro Bono Technical Assistance

- Connect communities with former EPA engineers, scientists, lawyers
- Support frontline communities; NGOs; and under-resourced State, local and Tribal agencies
- Navigate bureaucracy and regulations
- Access funding opportunities
- 160+ volunteers have assisted 700+ inquiries
- Partners with many of the EPA/DOE TCTACs







**Region 7**  
**Shonali Palacios**



**Regions 1, 2 & 5**  
**Tribal Liaison**  
**Davina Resto**

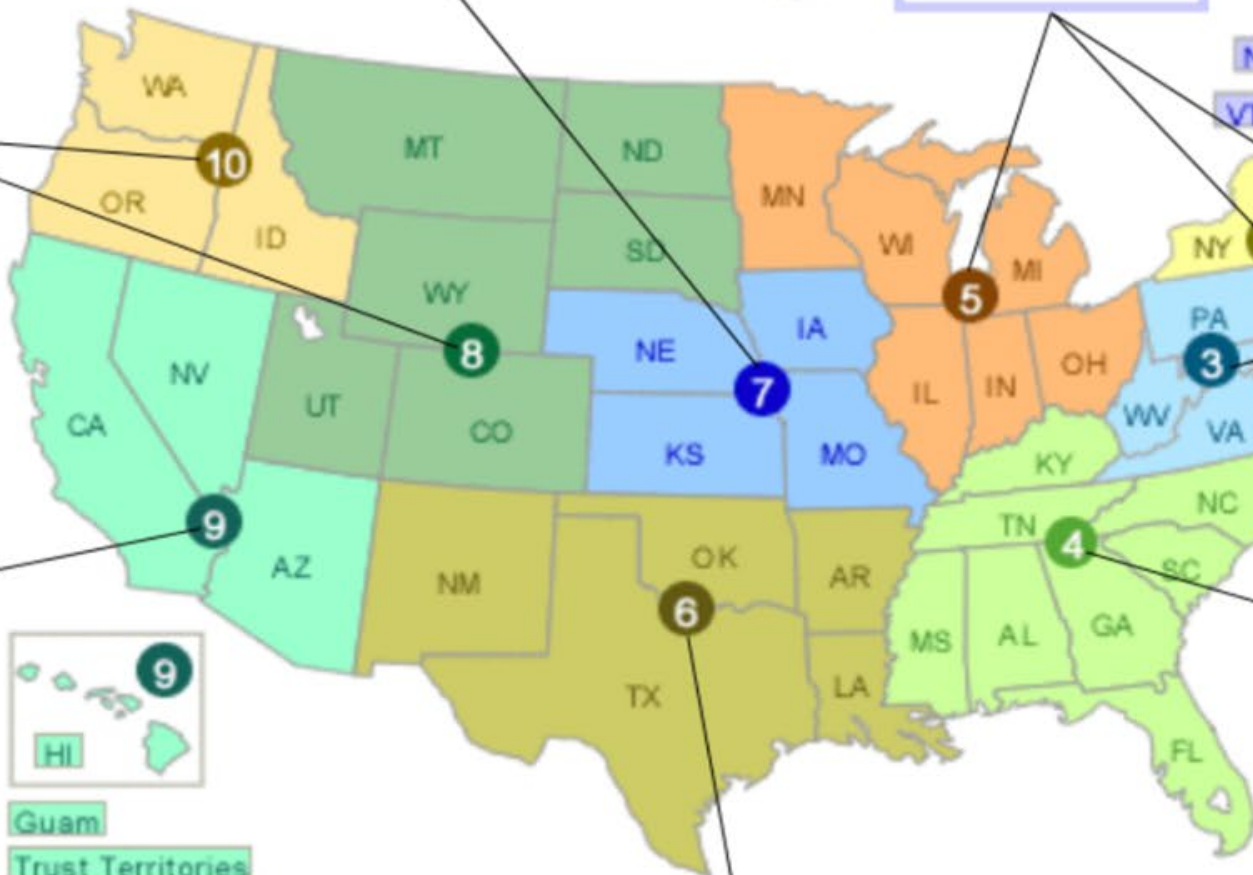
**Regions 8 & 10**  
**Rudy**



**Region 9**  
**Katia Carranza**



Guam  
Trust Territories  
American Samoa  
Northern Mariana Islands



**Region 3**  
**Nora Ripley-Grant**



**Region 4**  
**Sierra Taliaferro**

**Region 6**  
**Mitchelle Mukeli**



**PR and US VI**  
**Lizbeth García Conde**



**Community Outreach Manager**  
**Kya Williams**



**Senior Grants Specialist**  
**Génesis Sánchez**

EPN provides  
increasingly  
individualized support  
for disadvantaged  
communities to acquire  
funding and justice

**Funding Opportunity Guides & Updates**

**Webinars and Convenings**

**Office Hours**

**1:1 Support**



**Environmental  
Protection Network**





# EPN Technical Assistance Resources

- Webinars and convenings to find partners and ask questions about funding opportunities, including [SAM.gov](#) registration office hours every other week
- [Federal Funding Application Guides](#): templates, samples, surveys, checklists, etc
- Biweekly(ish) [newsletter](#) of Federal Funding Updates
- 1:1 support, including brainstorming, reviewing drafts, grants management
- There is no fee, no application, no prep, no process, just send an [email](#), call, or go to our [website](#).

## Inquire Here

*Please email, call, or fill out our inquiry form for assistance or to learn more about EPN's pro bono Capacity-Building Technical Assistance Program, including our Community Air Monitoring Grant Support Group.*



# FreshWater Accountability Project, OH

- Came to EPN about numerous fracking & contamination issues
- EPN volunteers helped/are helping the community:
  - Connect to EPA staff
  - Submit comments on a state wetlands permit
  - Successfully apply for Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities \$
  - Manage that grant with support from EPN's air monitoring grantee group





# Atma Connects Safe Water Network, PR

- EPN volunteers helped/are helping:
  - Successfully apply for an EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement
  - With ongoing expertise in PFAS and wastewater to combat illegal construction of septic tanks and wastewater contamination.







# Challenges

- We try to meet communities where they are, which is often at the very beginning
- Insufficient funding for grant writers or staff support
- Money is predominantly for government agencies or larger “CBOs”
- Many groups not prepared to manage funding if they get it
- Funding coming out fast, but in the wrong order



**Thank you!**



# Q&A





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