



FY 17-18 Climate Change Research Program Solicitation FAQ

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document represents key information and inquiry responses provided to potential research proposers for the FY 2017-2018 funding round of the Strategic Growth Council's Climate Change Research Program. The questions and answers published below provide clarification and additional detail on the FY 2017-2018 Climate Change Research Program Solicitation and upcoming application process.

Due to recent updates to the FY 2017-2018 Solicitation, please note the following items:

- **New Policy - Partnerships with State Entities (Section I, page 1):** In order to avoid conflicts of interest in proposal review and award decisions, State agencies are not eligible to provide letters of support or general statements endorsing research applicants or proposals. Also, departments cannot be an official partner or supporter of research proposals. However, during the post-award phase of this program the SGC will work with grant awardees to identify and assemble State agencies and departments with an interest in specific research projects. The SGC intends to build a collaborative support system with its member agencies that provides awarded research projects with data, information, input, advice, feedback and technical assistance requested by a PI to conduct research, address research questions, ensure meaningful engagement with stakeholders, and fully consider the potential policy outcomes of the research.
- **Addition of Attachment 5 - Quality Assurance Statement (QAS) Instructions:** In response to questions about when and how to submit a QAS (referred to on page 17 of the original Submission), a new attachment (Attachment 5, Quality Assurance Statement) is included in this Solicitation and the QAS is referenced in Sections V.A. and V.C.11.
- **Eligible Costs – Section IV.C.:** Clarifies the 5% maximum for research administrative fees. These costs pay for financial or administrative support staff performing specific project duties. Research management duties (such as project coordination, reporting, etc.) are not considered administrative costs.
- **Summary of Prior Research Funded by the State - Sections V.A. and V.C.9. :** Updated name (formerly Prior Research Summary) and clarification of the requirement for this submission. The update simplifies the information required and no longer asks for samples of past projects and reduces the number of years that need to be reported (from the past five years to three years).
- **Research Proposal Submission Organization and Content – Section V.C.:** Proposals are not required to adhere strictly to suggested format of the templates or directions provided. Flexibility is allowed to assist researchers to better articulate the goals and objectives of the proposed research.

For additional questions and inquiries regarding the Climate Change Research Program, please email the Strategic Growth Council at research@sgc.ca.gov. Answers to questions received in this inbox will be answered via email and posted in a subsequent FAQ document.



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Award Information

What is meant by “modeling” partnerships and a community engagement process?

There is no defined process or approach to developing a model process around engagement for this program. The SGC aims to encourage researchers to develop a model for collaboration and engagement that would best meet the needs of the project while advancing outcome-based research that meaningfully benefits low-income and disadvantaged communities. Section IV.C. of the Research Investment Plan discusses “Incorporating Partners into Research Proposals,” with a number of approaches for creating community engagement research models.

What are the differences between partnership grants versus individual research project grants?

Please refer to Section III.A. of the 2017-2018 Program Solicitation and Section V.A. and V.B of the Program’s Research Investment Plan for details on the distinction between the two types of grants.

Under the Research Partnerships category, what is meant by a "broad focus" on the research priority areas?

Research Partnership Grants provide an opportunity to develop and model collaborative research partnerships to explore one or more of the research priority areas described in Section IV of the program’s Research Investment Plan. Rather than focusing on a specific research question, these grants will allow for a wider scope of inquiry.

Research Priority Areas

For Research Priority Area #1, how does the SGC define vulnerable populations? Is this another way of referring to Disadvantaged and Low Income Communities?

Vulnerable populations should not be understood to be the same as Disadvantaged and Low-Income Communities. While these categories may overlap in some cases, the use of vulnerable populations in this Solicitation refers to populations that are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The SGC will be using the definition cited in the 2018 Update to the Safeguarding California Plan: “Vulnerable populations include, but are not limited to women; racial or ethnic groups; low-income individuals and families; individuals who are incarcerated or have been incarcerated; individuals with disabilities; individuals with mental health conditions; children; youth and young adults; seniors; immigrants and refugees; individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP); and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQQ) communities, or combinations of these populations.” Please refer to the 2018 Update to the Safeguarding California Plan (<http://resources.ca.gov/docs/climate/safeguarding/update2018/safeguarding-california-plan-2018-update.pdf>) for more guidance.



Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Can state agencies provide support letters for or be partners on a research proposal?

In order to avoid conflicts of interest in proposal review and award decisions, State agencies are not eligible to provide letters of support or general statements endorsing research applicants or proposals. Departments also cannot be an official partner or supporter of research proposals. However, during the post-award phase of this program the SGC will work with grant awardees to identify and assemble State agencies and departments with an interest in specific research projects. The SGC intends to build a collaborative support system with its member agencies that provides awarded research projects with data, information, input, advice, feedback and technical assistance requested by a PI to conduct research, address research questions, ensure meaningful engagement with stakeholders, and fully consider the potential policy outcomes of the research.

Who is eligible to be a lead applicant?

Only those institutions listed in Section IV.A. of the Solicitation are eligible to serve as a lead applicant. These institutions include: Universities of California, California State Universities, federally-funded national laboratories located in California, and private, non-profit colleges and universities located in California.

Are the separate Centers or Institutes of the University of California, or any California State University or private university in California, eligible to be a lead applicant? Can the UC Office of the President be either a lead applicant or a sub-recipient?

Any entity that is a subdivision of one of the four eligible applicant institutions (i.e. department, institute, foundation, etc.) may serve as the lead applicant, as long as they serve under the authority of the eligible institution.

Can one applicant submit multiple applications?

Scientists and other employees can serve as a Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI on up to two proposals. In the event that an individual exceeds the PI proposal limit, proposals received within the limit will be accepted based on earliest date and time of proposal submission (i.e., the first two proposals received prior to the deadline will be accepted and the remainder will be returned without review).

Can sub-recipients or partners serve on multiple submissions and multiple awarded grants?

Yes.



Does the requirement to be in one of the four eligible institutions listed in Section IV.A. of the Solicitation only apply to the lead institution or all of the institutions on a group proposal?

This only applies to the lead institution.

Are entities located outside of California, for-profit businesses, energy service providers, national non-profits, community colleges, K-12 schools, college or school districts eligible to be sub-recipients? They are not included in the diagram on page 21.

Yes, these entities are all eligible to be sub-recipients. The diagram on page 21 of the Solicitation is meant to serve as an example of a grant recipient/partner relationship. It is not an exhaustive list of eligible sub-recipients.

Are there specific types of partners that SGC would want proposers to prioritize?

Appropriate partnerships will depend on the type of grant requested and the subject area covered. The SGC's goal in encouraging proposers to develop robust, diverse multi-stakeholder partnerships is to build connections between researchers and non-traditional research partners that can expand collective capacity in communities and facilitate collaborative knowledge-sharing. Examples of possible non-traditional research partners include, but are not limited to: community-based organizations – including civic, community, and advocacy groups; federal research agencies and departments – such as NOAA, USGS, etc.; local land use agencies, departments, and organizations; local health agencies, departments, and organizations; non-profit organizations – including conservation, environmental justice and natural resources; open space landowners and recreation providers; private sector businesses; regional agencies – focused on transportation, resources, and infrastructure; regional climate collaboratives; and tribes. Individuals and organizations searching for relevant partners for their proposals are invited to join the SGC's LinkedIn Group: "Climate Change Research Program Networking Hub" at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12105245>

Can sub-recipients live outside of the US?

Sub-recipients can live outside of the country. However, they must be able to enter into a contract with the lead applicant, who is responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of the State of California, including the Contractor Certification Clauses, Darfur Contracting Act Certification, and the Iran Contracting Act Certification.

Eligible Projects

Do proposals need to show direct benefits to disadvantaged communities in order to be eligible, or can it benefit these communities indirectly?

Research projects and partnerships should be designed to address and facilitate achieving climate outcomes in low-income and disadvantaged communities. Some research may not



focus directly on these communities, but would have broader benefits that would impact low-income and disadvantaged communities over time. Such benefits could be achieved through direct connection with communities and community-based organizations, explicit examination of replicability of projects in low-income and disadvantaged communities, or other mechanisms that demonstrate how research investments will be leveraged to support low-income and disadvantaged communities.

Do research proposers need to quantify benefit to low income and disadvantaged communities?

Quantifiable measures are not required, but rather a description of how the research will consider and respond to potential benefits for these communities.

Do the benefits for disadvantaged communities have to be climate-focused? Can it be health equity? Or related to contamination issues?

Benefits for disadvantaged communities do not have to be climate-focused – economic, environmental, and public health benefits would all respond to this threshold requirement.

Can you clarify how proposals related to climate adaptation and vulnerability can meet the threshold requirement of facilitating greenhouse gas emission reductions? Do these proposals need a separate component to qualify?

Proposals should discuss how this research, over time, could enable, assist or accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in California. A quantifiable result is not required here, but rather a description of how the research findings will contribute to the body of knowledge available to reduce or mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Do proposals need to focus on a specific research topic, or can they cover broader, more general topics?

Research project grants will be awarded to individual researchers or research groups to examine a specific research topic, while Research Partnership Grants will be awarded to research consortia, collaboratives, centers, or institutes with a focus on a broader research priority area. Researchers must specify which of the four research priority area(s) the research proposal is addressing, and answer one or more applicable question(s) posed in Appendix C of the Solicitation.

Can the proposed project be a project that has already begun and/or will continue afterwards?

Ongoing projects may be eligible in some cases, but only if the SGC grant would fund a new element of the project that would be completed during the program's timeframe and with clear deliverables that build on other funded research.



Eligible Costs

Please provide a definition of equipment vs. material and supplies.

Equipment is defined as an item of non-expendable, tangible personal property, having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the recipient organization for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000.

Will the SGC entertain outreach and engagement proposals that include local stipends or similar costs as a means to incentivize participation by Disadvantaged Communities and similar groups?

Yes, a lead applicant may include budget items that support meaningful community engagement as long as they are strictly used to incentivize the participation of low-income and disadvantaged communities. Budget line items reflecting such costs should include clear and concise descriptions explaining the researcher's assumptions for providing economic incentives to attract participation and/or clear explanations that justify the need for stipends. Please note that the SGC cannot approve costs that are not allowed through the State of California's contracting policy. The cost of supplying food at a meeting, as an example, is not a reimbursable expense.

Can you provide a definition of administrative costs?

Administrative costs that directly apply to the accomplishment of a project or partnership may account for up to five (5) percent of the awarded funds. "Administration of the grant" may include, but is not limited to activities required for processing the Grant Recipient/Partner costs, reporting, invoicing, etc. Administrative costs generally pertain to payment for staff that provide financial or administrative support that is specific to the project. Research management duties (such as project coordination, reporting, etc.) are part of the research scope, and not considered administrative costs. Administrative costs may include, but are not limited to: staff salaries and benefits, supplies, and other resources used to administer the grant. This definition supersedes any definition of administrative costs provided by other California Climate Investment programs.

Does the indirect rate cap of 25% apply to sub-recipients?

Yes, the indirect cost rate that is identified by the lead applicant would also be the maximum allowed for sub-recipients.

Since we are considering graduate student researchers for this project, will the State allow for payment of tuition and fees? What about for out-of-state student fees?

Yes, budgets can include student tuition and fees (costs charged by the University to graduate students enrolled in a program), including out-of-state student fees.



Proposal Information and Submission Instructions

How should we structure a proposal for a Research Partnership Grant? Should we follow the proposed format, or is more flexibility allowed?

We want to provide as much flexibility as possible to researchers and we realize that we may receive a diverse set of proposals, both in the subjects examined and in the research scope. We will not be rigid about the structure of documents, but if you choose to deviate from the structure you need to ensure that outside experts from a variety of fields can easily follow your narrative and use that information to evaluate the technical merit and meaningful engagement criteria identified in the Solicitation.

Is there a template to use for the title page? If not, what information should be included on the title page?

We did not create a template for the title page of the submissions. The required information for this document is listed in section V.C.4. of the Solicitation. The document must be no longer than two pages and include the following information:

- Principal Investigator's last name [hyphen] a brief (one sentence) project description
- Name, affiliation, and contact information (address, telephone, email) for each of the proposal's investigators
- Requested budget amount
- Proposed period for conducting research (start date/end date)
- Principal Investigator's signature line (including printed/typed name and date)

Submission Questionnaire

What if we have more than five partners?

Include five of the most involved partners and include the required Partnership Overview component that should be used to describe all partners and supporters, their roles and responsibilities, and the structure and strategy for effectively applying this collaboration to the research.

Is it necessary to fill out all sections of the questionnaire?

All sections of the questionnaire need to be completed to successfully submit a research proposal. Each question indicates whether or not it is mandatory.

Project Budget

Must all travel be pre-planned?

All travel does not need to be pre-planned. However, proposers should be able to estimate the amount of travel involved and justify potential costs.



Is it allowable to use our institution's standard budget template instead of the one provided for the program?

Yes, however, the project budget must identify specific amounts for any/each sub-recipient or partner and what are the specific costs covered and must not include "equipment."

If we estimate a certain amount of hours for each staff person, is it OK to shuffle hours between staff during the execution of the project?

Normally budgeted payroll (except for senior personnel) is listed by payroll title, so that individuals can be used interchangeably. Please note: invoices cannot charge more for employee time than is identified in the project budget.

How should specialized expertise for troubleshooting be detailed in the budget considering that we do not yet know what the troubleshooting needs will be?

With personnel, the SGC cannot increase the pay rate of individuals/titles identified after award – so consider and plan for all future costs of staff. Make sure to budget in any expertise that you surmise will be needed, although once the work starts you can revise the budget based on the needs of the work. The Parties may reallocate a project task or category budget items of up to ten percent (10%) but deviations of more than ten percent (10%) of project task or category budget items require written approval of the SGC.

What form should the open-access journal articles take? Most journals allow pre-prints (i.e. the same content, but not typeset) to be posted on an institutional website. Would this satisfy the requirement?

Both the Research Investment Plan and the Solicitation require researchers' provide free and open access to final manuscripts of scholarly articles, reports, and other products resulting from the project; and that within one year, that information is submitted to OPR's Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program Adaptation Clearinghouse. We have not identified a format that is needed, but since the SGC is distributing public funds, the public must have complete and transparent access to all published information. SGC will work with awardees when executing a grant agreement for awarded projects, and this will be a required deliverable in the grant agreement for awarded projects, so it is suggested that proposals include the cost of open access publishing in the proposal budget.

Should the budget period be broken down by fiscal year?

Each year should be developed around the State's fiscal year (July 1 through June 30), so year 1 would be the start date through June 30, 2019.

How will payments for open access publishing be handled, since results may not be submitted for review until the end of the project, which is likely to be after the project closeout date (March 31, 2021)?



The SGC will work with project awards during the contracting phase to consider financial vehicles that will support open access publishing after the end of a contract. For submission purposes, researchers should include these costs as part of the budget.

The timeline for award will not work for a cohort of graduate student researchers in the first year. Is there a solution to this?

SGC recommends that researchers include student costs through June, 2021. SGC will work with awarded projects to develop a strategy for reimbursing students cost in the spring semester/quarter of 2021.

Scope of Work

Is there a template for the Scope of Work?

There is no template for the Scope of Work. However, this document must include a project schedule that lists all products, meetings, and due dates. This should include a milestone/outcomes chart that measures results featuring technology transfer, research, outreach, and other specific milestones; as well as outcomes and benefits that will derive from conducting the research. All work must be scheduled for completion by March 31, 2021. For expediency of the research institution, it is recommended that institutions use the State of California's Exhibit A template for Standard Agreements to complete the Scope of Work, as this will be needed in case of award.

Should the Scope of Work be different for a Research Partnership vs. a Research Project proposal?

The Scope of Work should include the same elements and follow the same timing requirements (listed above) for both types of grants.

Project Narrative

Does the SGC have a specific goal/focus that they weigh more heavily on?

The four research priority areas outlined in Appendix C of the Solicitation represent the SGC's preferred focus for this round of funding. There is no preference for one research priority over another. The Advisory Committee that will be scoring proposals will evaluate them according to the criteria outlined in Section IV of the Solicitation.

Could you clarify how you want "meaningful engagement" to be demonstrated in the proposal? In addition to the Project Narrative, could this be demonstrated via letters of support?

Yes, partners should provide letters of support and their involvement should be explicitly described in the narrative section of the proposal. Please note that meaningful engagement will



not look the same for all projects. Refer to Section V.C. of the Research Investment Plan for guidance on incorporating partners into research proposals.

Can you clarify what sections should be included in the project narrative? Are all the subsections under Attachment 4 of the Solicitation required?

The structure should include the three main sections (Description, Research Merit, and Meaningful Engagement), as described in the Solicitation. Proposers do not need to use the sub-section language in Attachment 4, but the narrative should be organized in a way that an evaluator will understand the research objectives, approach/methodology, impacts and outcomes of the project.

Do connections to each of the seven goals have to be explained individually in the narrative section?

The narrative does not need to single out/respond to each goal individually. Instead the proposer should identify key principles of the research and discuss how particular program goals can be advanced through examination in this project. We included a question in the submission questionnaire for proposers to provide a broad overview of how the research contributes to the program goals. The narrative should expand on and connect back to the information provided in this statement.

Biographical Sketches

Does the biographical sketch portion need to list out all personnel involved if we have sub-recipients? Or does it just apply to lead applicant personnel?

The biographical sketch applies to Senior personnel. Partners and sub-recipients that are significantly involved in this work and paid through the project budget should be included. Others who are partnering or serving in a limited capacity can be referred to in the Partnership Overview document.

What information does the SGC require for any non-profit, community organization staff, or for-profit small business team partners or minor sub-recipients?

Clearly describe the research interests and expertise of key personnel and their affiliated research institution(s). Key personnel can be staff in the lead institution and/or partner institutions. For additional partners that have an important or unique role in a project, it is recommended that the proposal uses the partnership overview to identify expertise, roles and responsibilities.

Should the Collaborators and Other Affiliations document be all together in one document?

Yes, the Collaborators and Other Affiliations document should be one document that provides information about all senior personnel and others that submitted a biographical sketch.



Is there a page limit for the Collaborators and Other Affiliations document?

No.

Should biographical sketches include the individuals listed as personnel in the partnership overview?

Yes, if there are partners who are serving as senior or key personnel for the proposed research, then the proposal should include their biographical sketches as part of the submission. If they do not serve as a senior member of the team, it is fine to only include them in the partnership overview, outlining any special expertise or knowledge base being brought to the project.

Should biographical sketches for Other Personnel include the same headings and format as for Senior Personnel, or are standard CVs/resumes acceptable?

If you are submitting information for individuals who are not senior personnel, it should be limited to junior staff paid salaries in the project budget. CVs are acceptable, as long as they are less than two pages in length.

Partnership Overview

Is the Partnership Overview required to list every single personnel staff member?

Every personnel staff member who is listed in the project budget should also be included in this section.

Do Research Project Grant applications also need to complete the "partnership overview" section?

The partnership overview is optional for those submitting research proposals for a Research Project Grant, and mandatory if submitting a proposal under the Research Partnership Grant.

Letters of Support

Do the Letters of Support come from project Partners?

Yes, letters of support should come from partners on the proposed research.

Summary of Prior Research Funded by the State

Is the past performance criteria area just for the lead applicant or do we need to list the past performance for our subs as well?

The summary of past performance is only required for lead applicants.

If the lead Principle Investigator (PI) has no direct experience with state agencies, can past performance be demonstrated by showing other (non-state) projects managed or by highlighting state research performance of co-PI's?



It is not necessary to submit information about past performance if the PI(s) have not worked on a state sponsored research project in the last three years. The purpose of this document is to determine that the PI(s) is in good standing with other state research programs.

For the summary of prior research funded by the state, please clarify if just a list is required, or if descriptive information on the past projects is necessary? Also, how many past projects should be provided?

Please provide a list of past projects that includes the following information for each research project listed: project title, project status, the project's Principle Investigator(s) (PI), the sponsoring research institution, contract number, and the name and contact information for the State's Agreement Manager. Provide a brief summary describing technical and business experiences of the PI(s) and/or sponsoring institution executing each project. Examples should be for work that has taken place within the last three years; managed by this proposal's PI or lead applicant (e.g. department or research center); received funds by a State of California agency, department, commission, council or board; and relates to the proposed work. Please include past projects managed by proposal's PI(s) within the past three years.

Evaluation and Review Process

There is an inconsistency in the Solicitation on the scoring criteria weight for research merit and meaningful engagement. Can you clarify what the correct breakdown is?

We apologize for this error, which has been corrected in the most recent version of the Solicitation. The correct scoring weight is 65% for research merit and 35% for meaningful engagement.

To what extent is SGC interested in seeing an alignment and projection with other related programs?

One of the goals of this program is to leverage and complement existing research funding and policy innovations to accelerate climate change research, innovation, and policy and technology deployment. However, the SGC aims to avoid duplication of other research projects funded or considered for funding by the SGC or other State agencies, so attention should be paid to complementing and aligning with existing State work in innovative ways.

Does SGC reserve the right to fund parts of a proposal, or does it have to be the entire proposal?

Yes, the SGC reserves the right to fund specific components of a proposal. In this event, the Recipient and SGC's Agreement Manager will reach agreement on a reduced Scope of Work and funding amount deemed appropriate.



Please provide an example of what would be included in an appropriate and adequate quality assurance statement.

Directions related to compiling, applying and handling data are now available on SGC's website (Attachment 5 of the Corrected Solicitation). As with the budget, this document serves as a template that can be used or substituted with an established data management plan.

Award and Administration Information

Can the SGC pay some portion of the grant funds up front?

By law, the SGC can only enter into a Cost Reimbursement agreement, unless the Legislature specifically provides another means of contracting funds. Currently, the only exception is with National Labs. Model agreement language for DOE contracts allows for advanced payment of a portion of the work to be performed.

What if we have personnel changes?

It is recommended that personnel titles be included with proposals and the salary rate. In the event that a particular staff member is no longer working on the project, their replacement will have to be of similar title and not to exceed the capped salary range.

Can you explain your method of grant funding disbursement?

The lead applicant will submit invoices to the state on a quarterly basis. That institution must pay sub-recipients for any work completed on a task before submitting an invoice to the SGC staff to receive reimbursement.

Other

Will you distribute a list of participants from SGC's Pre-Application Workshop/Webinar?

SGC did not include a release statement as part of registration that would allow us to publically identify registrants of the workshops. Proposers who are searching for relevant partners for their proposals are invited to join the SGC's LinkedIn Group: "Climate Change Research Program Networking Hub" at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12105245>

Will there be future rounds of funding for this program?

It is unclear at this time as funding for this program depends on legislation.