

Winning Strategies for the Clean Ports Program

The [Clean Ports](#) program is a \$3 billion program created by the Inflation Reduction Act and administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support the port sector's transition to zero-emissions operations, reduce greenhouse gas and other air pollution emissions at ports and in nearby communities, and to ensure that emissions reduction planning incorporates [meaningful community engagement](#).

The program includes a minimum set aside for nonattainment areas (areas that exceed pollution limits for one or more criteria pollutants) and priority will be given to applicants who demonstrate how their project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to applicants who address community needs and environmental justice concerns.

The current round of funding is open through **May 28, 2024**.

#1 Check whether your city qualifies for water or dry port funding—you don't need to be near the ocean to be eligible

For the purposes of the [Clean Ports](#) program, the EPA defines a port as follows:

- **Water port:** places on land alongside navigable water (e.g., oceans, rivers, or lakes) with one or more facilities in close proximity for the loading and unloading of passengers or cargo from ships, ferries, and other commercial vessels. This includes facilities that support non-commercial Tribal fishing operations.
- **Dry port:** an intermodal truck-rail facility that is included in the 2024 Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) [Intermodal Connector Database](#). These criteria include having more than 50,000 20-foot equivalent units per year or 100 trucks per day, or comprising more than 20 percent of freight volumes handled by any mode within a State.

In other words, not only are inland ports eligible but intermodal transportation hubs that are not near a body of water are eligible as well. If you are unsure if your community has an eligible dry port, visit this [list of dry ports eligible for funds](#).

#2 Submit a notice of intent to apply—the process is quick, easy, nonbinding, and optional

The EPA is requesting that all parties interested in applying for funding under the Clean Ports program submit an informal notice of intent to apply by **March 28, 2024**. This optional notice can be for a planning or technology deployment grant (see more detail in Strategy #3). To do so only requires sending an email to cleanports@epa.gov with one of the below subject lines (depending on which competition you will apply for):

- "Notice of Intent to Apply: Zero-Emission Technology Deployment" or
- "Notice of Intent to Apply: Climate and Air Quality Planning."

The body of the email should include the name of the applicant, the estimated dollar amount of the anticipated funding request, and a sentence or two summarizing the project (if known).

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These intent to apply emails are non-binding, meaning it is ok if your community submits one and then later decides not to apply, applies for a different project, or applies for a different dollar amount.

#3 Consider a planning grant

The Clean Ports program concurrently released two NOFOs for related programs with the same deadlines and timelines:

- 1) [Clean Ports Program: Zero Emission Technology Deployment](#), which can be used for zero-emissions port equipment and infrastructure like zero emissions trucks and cargo handling equipment; electric vehicle or hydrogen-powered charging and fueling infrastructure; or related support activities like safety planning or workforce development.
- 2) [Clean Ports Program: Climate and Air Quality Planning Competition](#), which provides funding for ports to perform activities like collecting and analyzing data for emissions inventories, developing a greenhouse gas and air pollutant reduction strategy, and doing related stakeholder and community engagement.

While the amount of funding available for the planning grants is much smaller, the EPA only anticipates making up to 90 zero emission deployment awards, so it will likely be competitive to receive one of those larger grants. Communities are encouraged to also apply for a planning grant even if they are already applying for a zero emissions deployment grant in order to maximize their chances of receiving some funding.

#4 Plan ahead to meet Build America, Buy America requirements

Projects funded by the zero emissions deployment program are subject to [Build America, Buy America](#), which requires that all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. These requirements also apply to subawards and contracts that are part of the project, and applicants should take them into consideration when developing budgets and procurement plans.

#5 Explain how your project fits in with a broader vision for a climate-friendly port

Both grant programs encourage applicants to explain how the project will be sustainable and pollution reduction efforts will continue after the EPA-funded portion is done as well as how the port is planning for climate change resilience and adaptation. The zero emissions deployment NOFO also asks about plans for "scrappage," scrapping of old port equipment replaced by zero emissions alternatives. The [Clean Air Best Practices](#) for ports and port emissions reduction may be a useful resource for developing this portion of the application.

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#6 Explore other funding programs for ports

The Clean Ports program isn't the only funding available for port projects. The EPA has compiled a list of its [grant programs that can be used to reduce port emissions](#) as well as [Case Studies](#).

The [Port Infrastructure Development Program](#) (PIDP) is a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) grant program for improving the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of goods at ports and its [NOFO](#) is open now, with applications due by **May 10, 2024**. Like the Clean Ports program, PIDP funds can be used for greenhouse gas reduction efforts at ports.

Lastly, the Department of Energy, in coordination with EPA and USDOT, has created an [interagency ports web page](#) showing all grants that can be used for port emissions-reduction projects, such as Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) and Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) funding.

**NOFO application deadline:
May 28, 2024**