



# The Minority Institutions Assistance Program (MIA)

## Office of Exploratory Research



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## Introduction

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), through its Office of Exploratory Research (OER), operates a special program to provide Federal assistance to Minority Institutions. The Minority Institutions Assistance (MIA) Program was initiated in 1981 in response to Executive Order 12320 (September 15, 1981), to increase research support for eligible minority institutions and to provide fellowships for students attending these institutions. This Order is now superceded by Executive Order 12677, dated April 28, 1989.

## Eligible Institutions

Eligible Minority Institutions under OER's MIA Programs are those identified by the Secretary of the Department of Education as Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU's), and the Hispanic Association of Colleges or Universities (HACU's).

## Programs

Presently the MIA Program has three separate components: a Research Assistance Program for faculty; an Undergraduate/ Graduate Fellowships Program; and a Summer Intern Program for students who have successfully completed the Student Fellowships Program. The three programs are described separately below.

### I. Research Assistance Program

The MIA Research Assistance Program is a part of the regular competitive research grants program, managed by OER. MIA grant applications are processed, evaluated, and reviewed by the same criteria as all other applications. The differences between the MIA and the regular competitive program are: (1) the MIA institutions may upon request receive preapplication assistance and (2) a limited amount of money is set aside to fund MIA applications recommended for funding by the Peer Review Panels.

The Objectives of the program are:

- ° To identify existing and potential environmental research capability within minority institutions and to assist them in participating in EPA research activity;
- ° To help minority institutions to become more competitive with other institutions for Federal funds;
- ° To provide an opportunity for minority students to gain research experience in environmental science fields; and
- ° To promote good working relationships between the Agency and participating institutions.

**Terms and Restrictions for Research Assistance**

- ° Consideration will be given only to applications submitted by institutions identified by the Secretary of the Department of Education as HBCU'S, or HACU'S.
- ° In contrast to the regular grants program, preapplication assistance is available upon request. A potential investigator may submit a preapplication for informal scientific review and determination of its relevance to Agency research goals.
- ° The Application Forms (SF 424 and 424A), instructions and procedures are the same as those used for EPA's regular research grants, except that "MIA", as well as the "discipline" should be typed in Block (10) on the face page to identify the program to which the application is directed. Use one of the following designations for "discipline":

Environmental Health  
Environmental Biology  
Chemistry and Physics, Water  
Chemistry and Physics, Air  
Environmental Engineering

- ° All of the research topic areas described for the regular research grant program are applicable to the MIA Program and the publication "Solicitation for Research Grant Proposals", is available on request.

### **Preapplication Assistance**

In order to provide meaningful preapplication assistance, a fully developed proposal must be submitted. Concept papers or preliminary ideas do not provide sufficient material for a preapplication scientific review. Discussions with the MIA Program Manager of the OER staff may be helpful in the selection of the area of research. The MIA Program Manager is:

Ms. Virginia Broadway (RD-675)  
Research Grants Staff, OER  
Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460

The preapplication proposal should be prepared in the same style and completeness as if it were a formal application.

Preapplication proposals are reviewed by OER staff for Agency relevance and scientific merit. The service is provided only for those institutions qualifying under the MIA Program terms and restrictions for research assistance.

### **Format of Research Application**

A complete set of instructions is available in the Addendum to Form SF 424 located in the Application Kit for Assistance. The Addendum can also be used as a check off list to assure your application is complete. If there are further questions concerning instructions, please call the MIA Program Manager.

## **Review Process of Formal Research Applications**

All applications will initially be reviewed by the Agency to determine their legal and administrative acceptability. Acceptable applications will then be reviewed by an appropriate peer review panel. This review is designed to evaluate and rank each proposal according to its scientific and/or technical merit as a basis for recommending Agency approval or disapproval.

The Peer review panels use the following criteria in their review:

- ° Quality of research plan (including theoretical and/or experimental design, originality, and creativity).
- ° Qualifications of principal investigator and staff including knowledge of subject area.
- ° Potential contribution to scientific knowledge.
- ° Availability and adequacy of facilities and equipment.
- ° Budgetary justification.

Proposals which receive a panel's approval based upon scientific merit are further evaluated by EPA officials for relevance to the Agency's mission and budget appropriations. It is emphasized that scientifically approved applications must be germane to EPA's mission to be funded. A summary of the scientific review and recommendation of the panel(s) will be provided to each applicant.

## **Peer Review Panel Membership**

Each peer review panel is composed primarily of non-EPA scientists and engineers who are acknowledged experts in their respective disciplines. OER encourages the participation of scientists and engineers from minority institutions in all five review panel disciplines. Interested scientists should contact the MIA Program Manager.

## **Application Procedures**

Application forms, instructions, and other pertinent information are available in the EPA Research Grant Application/Information Kit. It is recommended that interested investigators review the material in this kit before preparing an application for assistance. The kits are available from:

Grants Operations Branch  
Grants Administration Division (PM-216F)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20460

or

Research Grants Staff  
Office of Exploratory Research (RD-675)  
Office of Research and Development  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20460

## **II Student Fellowship Program**

The objective of the Fellowship Program is to encourage students enrolled at minority institutions to develop careers in **environmental research** via the environmental sciences, biological sciences, physical sciences, computer sciences, engineering, and mathematics. Awarded fellowships provide payment of full tuition and fees, a \$250 book allowance and a monthly stipend for one academic year.

### **Terms and Restrictions for Student Fellowship Assistance**

- ° Consideration will be given only to applicants who are enrolled full-time in a **four year** minority institution (HBCU or HACU) and must be at least a junior at the time of application. The applicant must also be in good standing with that institution.
- ° The applicant must be a senior or graduate student with a cumulative grant Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher on a scale of 4.0
- ° Student Fellowship applications must be properly executed on EPA Form 5770-4. Failure to complete all forms with appropriate signatures will delay processing or disqualify the application. Each application must enter "MIA" in the upper left-hand corner of the face page.
- ° Applicants must be citizens of the United States, its territories, or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the U. S. for permanent residence.
- ° If selected for a Student Fellowship, the applicant must agree in writing, at the time of award that he/she will participate in the EPA Summer Intern Program, following completion of the fellowship. (See Summer Intern Program in this publication).
- ° The Environmental Protection Agency reserves the right to limit the number of awards to a particular college or university.

### **Review Process for Fellowship Applications**

All applications will be reviewed by an appropriate fellowship panel and evaluated for the following:



1. individual's orientation towards and commitment to a career in the Environmental Sciences, Physical Sciences (Chemistry, Physics), Biological Sciences (Microbiology, Ecology, Marine Biology, Biochemistry), Computer Science, Mathematics or Engineering;
2. Grade Point Average (GPA) verified by college transcript;
3. applicant's statement objectives and personal goals;
4. recommendations by the sponsor and faculty;
5. employment experience related to the field of study; and
6. the sponsor's summary of plans for the applicant's proposed training and facilities available to him/her.

#### **Application Procedure**

Each year (around January) the solicitation for the EPA Student Fellowship Program is sent to all eligible minority institutions with applications due in March or April. Application forms, instructions, and other pertinent information are available in the EPA Fellowship/Traineeship Application Kit. It is suggested that a faculty or staff member be responsible for the oversight of preparation and timely submission of applications by students. Application assistance is available from the MIA Program Manager.

#### **III. Summer Intern Program**

Subject to the availability of projects, all fellowship recipients are required to serve in a 10 - 12 week summer internship at an EPA facility. The internship is a continuation of the fellowship during the summer immediately following the academic year in which the fellowship is

awarded. The program was started in 1985 with the objective of allowing students to apply their newly acquired skills to real-world environmental problems. The program provides greater motivation to those students who are truly interested in environmental conditions to target their continuing education and, ultimately, their careers to the environment.

Under the program, fellows are matched to projects at various EPA sites. They receive travel accommodations to the work site at the beginning of the internship and back home at the end. While at the EPA site, interns receive a weekly stipend to cover living expenses.

#### **Terms and Restrictions for Interns**

- ° Eligibility for the summer program is extended only to current holders of minority academic fellowships. No one else is eligible to apply. (See Minority Fellowship Program in this publication.
- ° Students in this program are assigned to a specific project at an EPA facility and is supervised and overseen by a mentor. The mentor gives the student guidance and advice during the summer assignment and serves as the student's supervisor.
- ° Appointments are for approximately three months, from early June through late August.
- ° Mentors assist interns in locating and arranging adequate and affordable housing and day-to-day transportation to and from the project site.
- ° Interns receive a stipend to cover expenses for food, housing, day-to-day transportation to the work site, and travel to the project site at the beginning of the internship and back to their permanent residence at the end.

#### **Assignment Procedures**

Between December and March of an academic year, current fellows are contacted concerning upcoming summer assignments. Based on their area of study and personal interests, they are interviewed

by EPA organizations offering summer assignments, a match is made and an assignment start date is scheduled. Interns begin their assignments in accordance with that start date.  
For more information, contact:

Alvin Edwards (RD-675)  
Research Grants Staff  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460  
(202) 382-7473

Additional Information

For administrative and technical information please contact:

Ms. Virginia E. Broadway  
MIA Program Manager  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460  
(202) 382-7473

