

# **AIR QUALITY RESEARCH PROGRAM**

**Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
Contract Number 582-15-50047  
Awarded to The University of Texas at Austin**

**Quarterly Report**

**December 1, 2015 through February 29, 2016**

**Submitted to**

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**March 10, 2016**

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#### **OVERVIEW**

The goals of the State of Texas Air Quality Research Program (AQRP) are:

- (i) to support scientific research related to Texas air quality, in the areas of emissions inventory development, atmospheric chemistry, meteorology and air quality modeling,
- (ii) to integrate AQRP research with the work of other organizations, and
- (iii) to communicate the results of AQRP research to air quality decision-makers and stakeholders.

#### **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES FOR THE QUARTER**

Between December 1, 2015 and February 29, 2016, the AQRP led the initial meeting with the Advisory Council, finalized and received approval to release the Strategic Research Plan, and issued the Request for Proposals (RFP).

On February 8, 2016, the AQRP Advisory Council held its first meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the members to the AQRP administration, to instruct the Council on its roles and responsibilities, to share the research findings from the previous AQRP projects as described in the State of the Science assessment, and to meet jointly with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) management to discuss the research priorities for the FY 16-17 funding cycle.

Following the meeting, the Strategic Research Priorities document was finalized, and submitted to the TCEQ for review. On Monday, February 22, the Strategic Research Priorities and the State of the Science Assessment were both approved by the TCEQ for release.

On Tuesday, February 23, the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the FY 16-17 funding cycle was released on the AQRP website. Proposals for research projects focused on air quality issues in Texas, as described in the Strategic Research Priorities, are due from investigators on Wednesday, April 20, 2016.

## BACKGROUND

Section 387.010 of HB 1796 (81<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session), directs the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ, Commission) to establish the Texas Air Quality Research Program (AQRP).

Sec. 387.010. AIR QUALITY RESEARCH. (a) The commission shall contract with a nonprofit organization or institution of higher education to establish and administer a program to support research related to air quality.

(b) The board of directors of a nonprofit organization establishing and administering the research program related to air quality under this section may not have more than 11 members, must include two persons with relevant scientific expertise to be nominated by the commission, and may not include more than four county judges selected from counties in the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria and Dallas-Fort Worth nonattainment areas. The two persons with relevant scientific expertise to be nominated by the commission may be employees or officers of the commission, provided that they do not participate in funding decisions affecting the granting of funds by the commission to a nonprofit organization on whose board they serve.

(c) The commission shall provide oversight as appropriate for grants provided under the program established under this section.

(d) A nonprofit organization or institution of higher education shall submit to the commission for approval a budget for the disposition of funds granted under the program established under this section.

(e) A nonprofit organization or institution of higher education shall be reimbursed for costs incurred in establishing and administering the research program related to air quality under this section. Reimbursable administrative costs of a nonprofit organization or institution of higher education may not exceed 10 percent of the program budget.

(f) A nonprofit organization that receives grants from the commission under this section is subject to Chapters 551 and 552, Government Code.

The University of Texas at Austin was selected by the TCEQ to administer the program. A contract for the administration of the AQRP was established between the TCEQ and the University of Texas at Austin on July 29, 2015 for the 2016-2017 biennium. Consistent with the provisions in HB 1796, up to 10% of the available funding is to be used for program administration; the remainder (90%) of the available funding is to be used for research projects, individual project management activities, and meeting expenses associated with an Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC).

## RESEARCH PROJECT CYCLE

The Research Program is implemented through a 9 step cycle. The steps in the cycle are described from project concept generation to final project evaluation for a single project cycle.

- 1.) The project cycle is initiated by developing (in year 1) or updating (in subsequent years) the strategic research priorities. The AQRP Director, in consultation with the ITAC, the Council and the TCEQ, develop research priorities; the research priorities are released along with a Request for Proposals.
- 2.) Project proposals relevant to the research priorities are solicited. The Request for Proposals can be found at <http://aqrp.ceer.utexas.edu/>.
- 3.) The Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) performs a scientific and technical evaluation of the proposals.
- 4.) The project proposals and ITAC recommendations are forwarded to the TCEQ. The TCEQ evaluates the project recommendations from the ITAC and comments on the relevancy of the projects to the State's air quality research needs.
- 5.) The recommendations from the ITAC and the TCEQ are presented to the Council and the Council selects the proposals to be funded. The Council also provides comments on the strategic research priorities.
- 6.) All Investigators are notified of the status of their proposals, either funded, not funded, or not funded at this time, but being held for possible reconsideration if funding becomes available.
- 7.) Funded projects are assigned an AQRP Project Manager at UT-Austin and a Project Liaison at TCEQ. The AQRP Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that project objectives are achieved in a timely manner and that effective communication is maintained among investigators involved in multi-institution projects. The AQRP Project Manager has responsibility for documenting progress toward project measures of success for each project. The AQRP Project Manager works with the researchers, and the TCEQ, to create an approved work plan for the project.

The AQRP Project Manager also works with the researchers, TCEQ and the Program's Quality Assurance officer to develop an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for each project. The AQRP Project Manager reviews monthly, annual and final reports from the researchers and works with the researchers to address deficiencies.

- 8.) The AQRP Director and the AQRP Project Manager for each project describe progress on the project in the ITAC and Council meetings dedicated to on-going project review.
- 9.) The project findings are communicated through multiple mechanisms. Final reports are posted to the Program web site; research briefings are developed for the public and air quality decision makers; and a bi-annual research conference/data workshop is held.

Step 2 is in progress for the 2016-2017 biennium.

**FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT**

Initial funding for fiscal year 2016 and 2017 was established at \$1,000,000 each, for a total award of \$2,000,000 for the FY 2016/2017 biennium. The funds were distributed across several different reporting categories as required under the contract with TCEQ. The reporting categories are:

Program Administration – limited to 10% of the overall funding (per Fiscal Year)

This category includes all staffing, materials and supplies, and equipment needed to administer the overall AQRP. It also includes the costs for the Council meetings.

ITAC

These funds are to cover the costs, largely travel expenses, for the ITAC meetings.

Project Management – limited to 8.5% of the funds allocated for Research Projects

Each research project will be assigned a Project Manager to ensure that project objectives are achieved in a timely manner and that effective communication is maintained among investigators in multi-institution projects. These funds are to support the staffing and performance of project management.

Research Projects / Contractual

These are the funds available to support the research projects that are selected for funding.

As of the writing of this report, no expenses have been charged to the AQRP account.

**AQRP Budget**

Budget Category	FY16	FY17	Total
Personnel/Salary	\$70,040.00	\$70,040.00	\$140,080.00
Fringe Benefits <sup>1</sup>	\$16,806.00	\$16,806.00	\$33,612.00
Travel	\$150.00	\$150.00	\$300.00
Supplies	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$12,000.00
Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contractual/Research Projects	\$815,000.00	\$815,000.00	\$1,630,000.00
Project Management	\$65,000.00	\$65,000.00	\$130,000.00
ITAC <sup>4</sup>	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$30,000.00
Other	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00
Total Direct Costs	\$992,996.00	\$992,996.00	\$1,985,992.00
Authorized Indirect Costs <sup>2</sup>	\$7,004.00	\$7,004.00	\$14,008.00
Total Costs	\$1,000,000.00	\$1,000,000.00	\$2,000,000.00
Fringe Rate <sup>1</sup>	24%	24%	
Indirect Rate <sup>2</sup>	10% of Personnel/Salary	10% of Personnel/Salary	