

Questions and Answers about the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program Request for Proposals titled  
"Gulf of Mexico Program Cooperative Agreements 2015" RFP NUMBER: EPA - GM - 2015-1

Version 2; Posted August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Q&As with an asterisk, found on page 2, 3, 4 & 5, have been added to the original Q&A posted on August 13<sup>th</sup>

**Overall and Process Based Questions**

(Please see pg. 3 for the start of specific priority area/activity based questions.)

Question: Please confirm that the proposal can address multiple activities within one priority area (but only one priority area of course as per RFP)

Answer: The project can address multiple activities. As stated in the RFP, **"the project must include one or more of the activities"**

Question: Can an organization submit one application for multiple priority areas?

Answer: Although a project may incorporate several priority areas, the applicant must choose ONE priority area it should be evaluated under.

Question: Can an organization submit more than one application, each with a different priority area?

Answer: An organization is welcome to submit one application for each priority area if so desired.

Question: For priority area two; activity one how are **non-traditional students** defined?

Answer: Non-traditional student-refers to students whose education or learning is not in the form of a formal educational setting (elementary, middle, or high school).

Question: Are for-profit organizations eligible to be used as subcontractors and/or included on teams?

Answer: Yes a for-profit may be included as a subcontractor or teammate provided the applicant complies with all applicable procurement standards in 2 CFR Sections 200.317 through 200.326. Please see the procurement standards at the following link: <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=2:1.1.2.2.1.4.31&rgn=div7>

Question: In a partnering situation, where the lead is a non-profit and the partner is not, is there a percentage requirement which the lead / prime must maintain in order to remain eligible. I was thinking along the lines of business teaming with one of the States in the Gulf of Mexico or one of the universities in the Gulf. It might be a contract / subcontract arrangement with the state or university having the lead. I was wondering in such an arrangement on the GMP, if the State or the university needed to maintain say 51% for example.

Answer: The applicant must be eligible to receive the award. There is no percentage to maintain when a grantee obtains services via contract or subaward, however, the grantee must comply with applicable OMB and EPA regulations. Yes a for-profit may be included as a subcontractor or teammate provided the applicant complies with all applicable procurement standards in 2 CFR Sections 200.317 through 200.326. Please see the procurement standards at the following link: <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=2:1.1.2.2.1.4.31&rgn=div7>

Question: Are MS4s eligible to apply for the Gulf of Mexico Program Cooperative Agreements 2015 RFP?

Answer: Yes, if the MS4 fits under the following definition of Local government. "**LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** A county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority (including any public and Indian housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937), school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law), any other regional or interstate government entity, or **any agency or instrumentality of a local government.** (OMB Circular A 87 & 40 CFR Part 31)"

Question: Can an entity with an open grant with the EPA GMP apply for funding?

Answer: Yes

Question: Please confirm that Orleans parish is an eligible coastal geographic area to focus our proposal.

Answer: Orleans parish is definitely eligible

Question: We would like to consider several options to collaborate with our community partner including offering them a co-pi role. Is that allowed?

Answer: Tangible and active collaboration with community partners is encouraged in proposals submitted under this funding opportunity. It is up to your organization to decide how that collaboration is structured in your proposal. However, if your proposal is selected to be funded, you need to be aware that the funding agreement will be between EPA and the submitting entity.

Question: Do you know if this call (for proposals) will be announced again in future years? If so, do you know the frequency?

Answer: The EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program anticipates putting out a Request for Proposals every two years. This of course is funding dependent.

\*Question: Applicant submitted idea with the following questions: Does this idea fit within this RFP? Would this idea qualify for Priority Area II -- Protect, Enhance or Restore Habitat? If this does not fit the needs of RFP, please be frank and let me know, as this will save lots of my time. I really appreciate your time and help.

\* Answer: The applicant must determine which category his/her project would fit under for evaluation. There are very specific outputs that must be met for each priority area and if your project would not meet any of those outputs, it may not be a good candidate. This, however, would be a decision that you will have to make.

\*Question: Does the 10 page limit for the Project Narrative include the budget and budget justification?

\* Answer: The ten page limit includes the budget and detailed budget narrative. It does not include the SF 424a.

\*Question: We are submitting to the above mentioned funding opportunity and as the narrative work plan part of the submission has a page limit and is fairly prescriptive we wondering if we could attach an optional attachment that is not Biographical Sketches or a letter explaining the alternative submission method?

\* Answer: Anything other than the biographical sketch or a letter explaining the alternative submission method would be considered over the ten page limit. Anything over the ten page limit, as described in the RFP, cannot be considered in the evaluation.

\*Question: In answering the section on Applicant Capability and Past Performance we do have an award that focuses on very similar scope fitting nicely with priorities and strategic goals of your organization... It also spans the gulf regions as well. By "similar in size" do you mean funds??? This award I was thinking of using in this section was a larger financial award than the budget limit on this grant project.... Additionally it is a five year award instead of three, can we still use it under this section as the scope is so relevant.

\* Answer: Yes, you can use this award.

\*Question: Our research group is considering responding to the Gulf of Mexico Program Cooperative Agreements 2015 RFP and I just had one question on projects that have been previously funded under this RFP in prior years. I see on your web page there is a map showing Gulf of Mexico Program funded projects. Are there any other places where previously funded projects are listed with abstracts, particularly those funded through the cooperative agreement program?

\* Answer: The map and project descriptions on the map show all our active cooperative agreements and interagency agreements. Older cooperative agreements can be found here:

<http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/active-cooperation.htm>

### **Priority area/Activity based questions**

**Question:** I am thinking about submitting a proposal on marsh hydrological restoration work, specifically removing barriers to tidal flow? Which habitat activity would this project fit under?

**Answer:** The applicant must decide which activity and priority area the project should be evaluated under. Hydrological restoration may fit better under one of the water quality activities or one of the habitat activities depending on the project details.

#### **Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area I: Water Quality Improvement*

*Activity One: GMP is looking for projects to improve water quality in a watershed(s). Please identify the eight or twelve digit HUC watershed. For more information on HUC identification see: <http://cfpub1.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm> (eight digit) or <https://www.azdeq.gov/envirom/water/watershed/download/easysteps.pdf> (twelve digit) These projects can use agricultural BMPs; urban stormwater BMPs; green practices at schools/colleges; improved and innovative community wastewater deficiency solutions; and, locally driven practices within small communities. Partnerships are encouraged to increase efficiency of practices to improve water quality. Partnerships are encouraged between local, state, and federal agencies, business and industry, nongovernmental organizations, and private land owners to identify critical areas in the region where on-the-ground efforts will produce visible results.*

**\*Question:** Are projects that are not in an underserved community eligible?

**\*Answer:** Yes

**\*Question:** Do funds pay for restoration costs (plants, soil, oyster reefs, construction equip rentals and labor) as well as outreach, planning & design?

**\*Answer:** Yes, although a "construction" project in the traditional term of building construction cannot be funded with this RFP, equipment rental for restoration projects is allowable.

**\*Question:** Will projects with a larger geographic scale or multijurisdictional projects be preferred?

**\*Answer:** Part of project evaluation is strength of outputs/outcomes. If a larger geographic scale means that the project will improve the water quality of more watersheds, then it would rank high for that evaluation criteria, but a larger geographic scale in and of itself is not a part of the evaluation criteria and as such will not be considered.

#### **Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area I: Water Quality Improvement*

*Activity Two: GMP is looking for projects to implement green practices in a Gulf of Mexico coastal urban setting to restore previously commercially used areas into greenway habitat for a city. Ideally, this would include the restoration of a previously built-on/blighted/abandoned area that could be turned into a green space for urban dwellers to use and maintain as a natural habitat.*

**Question:** I understand the posted EPA-GM-2015-1 RFP calls for implementation projects that utilize BMPs and green practices that improve water quality. Would modeling projects be considered if the scope of work provided projections and baseline information necessary for *future* implementation?

**Answer:** Modeling could be a component of a larger project that directly meets one of our measures as indicated in the RFP. Say, a model validation project that showed with field data that water quality was indeed improved as predicted by a model when innovative best practices were implemented.

**Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area II: Protect, Enhance or Restore Habitat*

*Activity One:* GMP seeks to fund habitat restoration projects using grassroots and community based organizations, especially citizen driven on the ground restoration projects, as well as working with underserved community landowners. New and innovative techniques are encouraged as well as tried and true techniques to increase efficiency of cost per habitat acre impacted. These projects could include but are not limited to: wildlife corridors; partner easements; controlled burning; community habitat planting; riparian zone improvement; and, other innovative ideas.

**\*Question:** Are projects that are not in an underserved community eligible?

**\*Answer:** Yes

**\*Question:** Do funds pay for restoration costs (plants, soil, oyster reefs, construction equip rentals and labor) as well as outreach, planning & design?

**\*Answer:** Yes, although a "construction" project in the traditional term of building construction cannot be funded with this RFP, equipment rental for restoration projects is allowable.

**\*Question:** Will projects with a larger geographic scale or multijurisdictional projects be preferred?

**\*Answer:** Part of project evaluation is strength of outputs/outcomes. If a larger geographic scale means that the project will restore a greater amount of acres, then it would rank high for that evaluation criteria, but a larger geographic scale in and of itself is not a part of the evaluation criteria and as such will not be considered.

**Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area II: Protect, Enhance or Restore Habitat*

*Activity Two:* GMP is looking for projects that restore, protect, and enhance the remnant Gulf of Mexico coastal prairies. Develop new technologies or adapt established practices and promote successful projects and their associated practices. Partner with local, state, and federal agencies, business and industry, non-governmental organizations, and private land owners to identify critical areas in the region where on-the-ground efforts will produce visible results.

*Activity Three:* Design and implement a project to restore, enhance, and protect Gulf of Mexico coastal pollinator habitat and/or use BMPs to improve and protect pollinator habitat. Develop new practices or adapt established practices and promote successful projects and their associated practices throughout the region. Use communication based practices to promote safe activities around pollinators and habitats, use new approved pesticides to protect pollinator's habitat, and use BMPs to protect habitats of pollinators. Partner with local, state, and federal agencies, business and industry, non-governmental organizations, and private land owners to identify critical areas in the region where on-the-ground efforts will produce visible results.

Question: Under Priority Area II, Activity Two, there is reference to ‘Gulf of Mexico coastal prairies’. Is this *sensu stricto*, referring only to the coastal prairie region along the coast of Texas and western Louisiana, or can it also refer to ‘prairie-like’ habitats along the entirety of the Gulf Coast (e.g., wet-prairies, savannas, bogs, etc.)?

Answer: Under Priority Area 2, Activity two, the language is specific to the remnant Gulf of Mexico coastal prairies. Activity three, however, can include restoration of ANY type of pollinator habitat, not just the remnant coastal prairies.

**Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area III: Environmental Education and Outreach*

*Activity One: Develop an environmental education project that targets non-traditional students (i.e. Job Corp). The project must center on improving water quality, restoring habitats, or increasing smart growth practices that enhance communities’ resilience to natural disasters.*

Question: How are **smart growth practices** defined?

Answer: Smart growth practices help communities develop in such a way that creates jobs and better schools, for example, without causing or exacerbating environmental problems.

Question: Are job corps and **workforce development** programs similar?

Answer: Workforce development programs provide opportunities for persons to gain skills that will equip them for jobs. In terms of activity two, relative to Priority Area II, proposals should center on providing training opportunities for individuals impacted by a disaster, for example, the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spoil or impacted by environmental injustices. The training should ultimately help individuals re-enter the workforce.

Question: For priority area two; activity one how are **non-traditional students** defined? **Non-traditional student**-refers to students whose education or learning is not in the form of a formal educational setting (elementary, middle, or high school). Question: If we develop a community learning program with classes that could be taken by anyone in the community, they would be considered nontraditional students?

Answer: Yes, this is correct.

**Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area III: Environmental Education and Outreach*

*Activity Two:*

*Develop a workforce development program in a community plagued by an environmental injustice or impacted by a disaster that will equip the community with essential skills.*

Question: Are community health workers (CHW) considered an appropriate/ relevant/ allowable target audience?

Answer: Yes, if the recipient is providing training to individuals that will then become community health workers and if community health workers are needed in an environmental justice community or in a community impacted by a disaster then it makes sense.

**Questions with regards to the following text from the RFIP**

*Priority Area III: Environmental Education and Outreach*

*Activity Three:*

*Develop an environmental education program that increases literacy as it relates to improving water quality, restoring habitats, or promoting smart growth practices. The program must target schools (elementary, middle, or high school students) with a majority enrollment of underserved and underrepresented students from the Gulf coastal area of Texas and Louisiana specifically, however could span the remaining Gulf States-MS, AL, and FL.*

Question: Must the program target students from both Texas and Louisiana or is it acceptable for the program to target students only from Texas?

Answer: Texas and Louisiana or span Gulf-wide.

Question: Must the program partner only with schools as a means of targeting elementary, middle or high school students or would it be acceptable to partner with Houston Parks and Recreation Department to engage this population through after school and other community center based programs that are conducted at city owned community centers that serve underserved and underrepresented students in their own communities?

Answer: The program must target schools with a majority enrollment of underserved and underrepresented. The approach for reaching these schools is up to the applicant.

Question: In addition to students, are science teachers considered an appropriate/ relevant/ allowable target audience?

Answer: The project needs to focus on increasing literacy of students. The target audience is students. If a recipient decides to include a teacher component to its project, that's fine...to reiterate, the target should be the students.

Question: In activity three, how strict are the **geographic limitations** for priority area two? Our program will be concentrated in coastal Alabama.

Answer: The proposal must target schools with a majority enrollment of underserved and underrepresented students from the Gulf coastal area of Texas and Louisiana specifically, however could span the remaining the Gulf States. Along with TX and LA, AL may be added to the geographic coverage. TX and LA are required target locations.