Q&A for the EPA Gulf of Mexico RESTORE Estuary Program RFP (EPA-GM-2017-RESTORE-Estuary-Program)

(Version 3 Updated July 24, 2017)

Question: Is there a limit to the number of applications you will accept from a single institution? In other words, should we coordinate an internal selection process to ensure that only one application goes forward? *(Received 5/10 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: The EPA did not set a limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by one applicant. However, as stated in Item B in Section II Award Information (page 6), the EPA anticipates awarding only one cooperative agreement under this announcement.

In addition, the EPA expects the applicant's proposal to demonstrate a high amount of coordination and planning with local stakeholders. This expectation is stated explicitly in the RFP in the following areas regarding what the narrative should include:

- As stated on page 13 in section 2.a) i., the EPA expects an applicant's narrative to "describe how you have engaged or plan to engage the appropriate organizations (e.g. local elected officials, scientists, citizens, business leaders, commercial fishing, universities, federal and state agency directors, and representatives from agricultural and industry (e.g. timber, ports, etc)".
- As stated On page 14 in section c) the EPA expects the narrative to demonstrate "any narrative or financial (and other) commitments made by organizations involved with your project that supports this long-term funding plan."

Question: Is there a limit to the number of bays or a maximum distance between the bays to be incorporated into one application? To clarify, can one applicant submit a proposal that encompasses five of the bays in Florida's northwest panhandle region: Perdido Bay, Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, Choctawhatchee Bay, and St. Andrew's Bay? *(Received 5/16 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: Based on the funding provided, we anticipated there being funding for the planning of only one estuary program. If, however, an organization is able to leverage funding to stand up and plan an estuary program that encompasses multiple bays, the proposal would be evaluated on the criteria provided in the RFP.

Question: Can one applicant submit multiple proposals? *(Received 5/16 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: Yes, although only one proposal will be funded.

Question: Can the same agency be named as a partner in multiple proposals? To clarify, if the local government or university submits a proposal for one bay system, can one organization be named a partner in that proposal as well as submit a separate proposal (or be named as a partner) for another bay system? *(Received 5/16 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: Yes, although again, only one proposal will be funded.

Question: Applicant Past Performance section on page 14: If an organization is the applicant, can we site experience/history from the individual members of the interlocal agreement? *(Received 5/25 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: You should cite experience/history of members of the organization if it was work they did on behalf of (or as part of) the organization. If it was work they did separately, then it shouldn't be included. Basically it needs to be the history/experience of the organization as an entity, not the individual groups. So if the organization managed a project, then that can be used, but if a grant was to one of the individual groups/organizations that make up members then that shouldn't count.

Question: Can an organization set up by interlocal agreement be listed as the applicant using the one of the member's DUNS and SAM registration or does the organization need to have its own DUNS number and SAM registration? *(Received 5/25 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: The applicant listed on the application MUST match the DUNS/SAM also listed on the application. This is on page 10 of the RFP:

Applicants need to ensure that the AOR who submits the application through Grants.gov and whose DUNS number is listed on the application is an AOR for the applicant listed on the application. Additionally, the DUNS number listed on the application must be registered to the applicant organization's SAM account. If not, the application may be deemed ineligible.

The authorized organization rep (AOR) has to be registered as an AOR for the applicant listed on the applicant AND the DUNS must match that applicant. So in this situation, the applicant needs their own DUNS and a SAM registration, and then they need to register in Grants.gov as an organization. They need to do this ASAP as it can take a long time!

Question: Page 17, A. Evaluation Criteria, 4. Past Performance: this section references "Section IV.D" on two occasions. However, there appears to be two IV.D sections: one is "D. Content of Proposal Submission" on page 12, and the other is "D. Submission Dates and Times" on page 15. Could you please confirm which IV.D. is being referenced? *(Received 5/25 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: The RFP has been updated on the GMP website and will be updated on grants.gov soon.

Question: We would like to tailor our proposal to the evaluation criteria, and noticed that there are two number 4's on page 17. One is 4. Past Performance and the other is 4. Budget. Could this please be updated? *(Received 5/25 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: The RFP has been updated on the GMP website and will be updated on grants.gov soon.

Question: Will video and/or audio files be allowed as part of the application submittal? *(Received 6/15 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: Unfortunately, we are unable to accept an audio or video file as a part of your submission.

Question: If several counties are forming a coalition through an interlocal agreement to apply for the grant. I know we need to register for a DUNS number, register in Sam.gov and grants.gov. Does the coalition also have to open a bank account under their new FEIN or could they use an existing account under the FEIN of one of the counties? *(Received 6/15 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: The new FEIN should match the applicant's name and registration, but there is no tie to banking info so the coalition may use any bank account of their choosing. On a management level,

however, if your application is chosen for funding, you may find it easier to track the funding if it is in a separate account, but that would be up to the coalition.

Question: Is there a limit to the number of attachments that we can submit with our proposal. I understand that resumes and letters of support are acceptable attachments; is there a limit to other types of content that can be attached? *(Received 6/15 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: There is no limit to the number of attachments, but I would suggest focusing on letters of support or commitment related to the long-term funding plan since they will be used in the evaluation under the project sustainability approach. Additional items, extraneous to what is required and described according to IV.D will not and cannot be considered in the evaluation.

Question: How will the indirect cost rate charged by my organization affect my evaluation? (Received 6/28 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)

Answer: While a reviewer is not able to look at the indirect cost rate alone, the reviewer does look at the efficiency of the use of funds and may rank the project lower if an organization charges a high indirect cost rate because the reviewer believes it would be more effective to use more of the money requested for the project proposed.

Question: Could our application include one organization as an applicant but identify a different organization as a "host" and therefore utilize their financial information and FEIN? (Received 6/28 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)

Answer: We are unable to provide advice with regards to how you structure your organization. Keep in mind, however, that the applicant must also be the financial agent and will also be the one we will enter into an agreement with so you would not be able to use one organization on the SF-424 and identify another organization as the applicant. Please also see a somewhat related question in the Q&A posted on the website.

Question: I still have some confusion regarding the term "host organization" as used in the RFP; does "host" mean "applicant"? (Received 6/28 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)

Answer: The host organization is the organization that handles the financials of the program. In the RFP, several references are made to host organization, because it assumes that the host organization will be the organization to assist in the standing up of the estuary program. If this is not the case for you, the roles of the organizations involved will just need to be identified and defined in your application.

NEW Question: Section IV.D.2 d) Applicant Past Performance requests a list of three federally funded agreements similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project. Within the last three years FSU has received awards that are either similar in scope/relevance and not in financial size or similar in financial size, but not in scope/relevance. Does one of these factors outweigh the others in choosing which past performance to identify? *(Received 7/13 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: Neither of these factors outweigh the others. Agreements identified will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section V.A.4.

NEW Question: Could you please provide clarification on whether the budget table is required as part of the narrative's 15-page limit? Section IV. D. 3. that a description of the budget and itemized cost

breakout are required. Is the example table in the attachment of the RFP considered the "break out" as described in the evaluation criteria; or, is the table considered a "supporting materiel" that will be considered during the evaluation but not count towards the 15-page limit? We currently have a description of the budget in the 15-page narrative, but would like to include the table as an attachment. We just wanted to make sure that the table would be considered, but not count against the page count. *(Received 7/18 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: If you want the table to be considered in the evaluation, it must be a part of the 15 pages. The budget sample does include a table, but it is not a requirement under IV.D.3 or the Evaluation Criteria.

NEW Question: In section I.B.1. of the RFP, it states the TLOU will be made up of top officials from key local, federal, and state or decision-making organizations. But then states at a minimum, the members of a management conference should include:

•   EPA GMP
•   State of Florida
•   International/Interstate agencies
•   Federal agencies
•   Local Governments

Does the TLOU have to include top officials from these agencies immediately or can they be added over time, as needed, or included in a policy board or other component of the management conference that provides direction and policy-making to the TLOU? *(Received 7/20 at GMP-RFP@epa.gov)*

Answer: Your question refers to the Scope of Work section of the RFP describing the establishment of the Management Conference and a Top-Level Organizational Unit (TLOU) within the Management Conference as the decision-making body for the estuary program (Section I.B.1.). Other Estuary Program Management Conferences typically name the TLOU the Executive Committee or the Policy Committee. EPA encourages the applicant to designate the suggested naming of their TLOU in the proposal. That same section of the RFP then goes on to describe that the TLOU is comprised of top officials from key local, federal, and state resource or decision-making organizations for the estuary. Finally, that same section then states that the membership of the Management Conference shall include, at a minimum, representatives from:

• EPA Gulf of Mexico Program
• State of Florida
• International, interstate, or regional agencies or entities having jurisdiction over all or a significant part of the estuary
• Each interested Federal agency
• Local governments having jurisdiction over any land or water within the estuarine zone
• Interested businesses, industries, agriculture, public, and private educational institutions, and the general public

Section IV.D of the RFP describes what the proposal package must include. ***In particular, under Section IV.D.2.a) of the RFP entitled Project Description/Approach, the applicant is expected to describe the management conference development process you (applicant) intend to undertake.***