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## New FAQ's

- Questions will be added here on a weekly basis, with posting date, as new questions are received at GMP-RFP@epa.gov.

## Overview

Q. What are the Gulf of Mexico Program funding priorities?

A. Gulf of Mexico Funding priorities for this Request for Proposals are:

- water quality improvement (measured by obtaining a minimum of 5% improvement in at least one water quality parameter);
- protect, enhance, and/or restore habitat (measured in number of acres restored or protected);
- environmental education and outreach (measured by # of expected audience(s) and/or individuals served); and
- community resilience (measured by resulting # of communities with improved resiliency)

Q. How much funding is available this year?

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$5 million unless additional funding (e.g. FY 2019 funding) becomes available.

Q. Will there be more funding available in the future?

A. Funding for the Gulf of Mexico Program is dependent each year on allocations in the federal budget approved by Congress

Q: When will this grant opportunity be made available again?

A. The GMP allocation is part of EPA's annual budget. Thus, typically, the grant funds would be offered annually in an RFP. From page 7 of the RFP, "EPA does reserve to make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with Agency policy, if additional funding (e.g. FY 2019 funding) becomes available after the original selections. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than six

months from the date of the original selections." This provision has been used previously resulting in an RFP being released biannually instead of annually.

## Submitting a Proposal

### Q. Where do I start?

A. You should start by closely reading the funding announcement. Determine your eligibility by reviewing Section III, Eligibility Information. Carefully consider the Program Elements (Section I.B) and Evaluation Criteria (Section V.A) to develop your proposed activities to achieve specific outputs and outcomes in a manner that will address the evaluation criteria.

### Q. What kind of materials do I need to submit for the proposal?

A. To be considered for a GMP Cooperative Agreement, EPA requires that each submission contain a set of common elements that are described in Section IV.B (Content of Proposal Submission.) The materials that must be included in the proposal package include: Application for Federal Assistance Standard Form 424, Standard Form 424A, Standard Form 424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B), EPA Form 6600-06 Certification Regarding Lobbying Form, EPA Key Contacts Form 5700-54, EPA Form 4700-4 – Preaward Compliance Review Report, Letters of support from partners to support description of project involvement (if applicable), Map of the Project, Proposal Information Page (1 page limit), Proposal Narrative (8 pages or less), and Proposal Budget (3 pages or less).

### Q. What is the proposal submission deadline?

A. Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov as stated in Section IV of this announcement (except in the limited circumstances where another mode of submission is specifically allowed for as explained in Section IV.A) on or before the proposal submission deadline of 11:59 ET on July 31, 2018.

### Q. How will EPA review proposals?

A. 1. Proposals meeting the threshold criteria will be evaluated by an EPA Gulf of Mexico Review Panel. One Review Panel will be developed for each priority area. The Review Panel(s) will score and rank the eligible proposals by priority area (as identified by the applicant) using the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. Four ranking lists (one for each priority area) will be developed. Each proposal will be given a numerical score and will be rank-ordered according to the numerical score. Preliminary funding recommendations for each priority area will be provided to the Selection Official based on this ranking. 2. Final Selections and Awards. Final funding decisions will be made by the Selection Official based on the rankings and preliminary recommendations of the evaluation team. In making the final funding decisions, the Selection Official may also consider programmatic priorities, funding availability and geographic diversity of funds. Once final decisions have been made, a funding recommendation will be developed and forwarded to the EPA R4 Award Official.

Q. Are applicants required to follow the format detailed in section IV.C. of the RFP under Proposal Submission Content?

A. The format in section IV.C. of the RFP is provided as guidance intended to be a helpful organization tool to the applicant and is not a requirement for submission.

**Question:** Can someone be PI on one proposal and co-PI on another?

**Answer:** There is no limit to the number of proposals an individual can be involved in. We do, however, receive a high volume of proposals and are only able to fund a small percentage. Last cycle we received over 90 applications and only funded 9.

**Question:** Are multiple submissions from one organization, but different states generally encouraged or discouraged?

**Answer:** There is no limit to the number of proposals an organization can submit. We do, however, receive a high volume of proposals and are only able to fund a small percentage. Last cycle we received over 90 applications and only funded 9.

## Eligibility

Q. How can I tell if I am eligible to apply for a grant?

A. The following entities are eligible to apply for funding under this announcement; State and local governments, interstate agencies, Tribes, colleges and universities, and other public or non-profit organizations.

Non-profit organizations must have documentation of non-profit status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service or their state of incorporation. Additionally, non-profit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

Q. What is ineligible for funding?

A. III.C in the RFP identifies ineligible activities. EPA also conducts a threshold eligibility review of all proposals (Section III.D). Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

Q. Are preaward costs eligible?

A. In certain circumstances, costs incurred within 90 days prior to the grant award may be eligible for reimbursement. However, this does not include any costs associated with responding to this solicitation or in finalizing the application package. If costs are incurred before the award, they are incurred at the applicant's own risk.

Q. Is land acquisition eligible as a project type if it meets the RFP criteria?

A. Land acquisition is not explicitly prohibited, thus it is an eligible project activity. We would stress, however, that the land acquisition would have to be directly linked to or demonstrated to be a key factor in protecting, restoring or enhancing habitat and/or improving water quality conditions. Additionally, the acquisition must comport with the purpose of CWA §104(b)(3) grants, which is to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments,

training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction and elimination of pollution.

**Question:** Would a "plan" be considered under Priority Area IV: Strengthen Community Resilience?

**Answer:** A plan would be considered under Strengthen Community Resilience as long as it meets the output and the activities under Strengthen Community Resilience as defined on page 3 of the RFP.

## Environmental Outputs and Outcomes

Q. What are "Outputs and Outcomes"?

A. Outputs and outcomes are explained in Section I.C.2 of the RFP. The terms outputs and outcomes are derived from the EPA's increased focus on environmental results (EPA Policy Order 5700.7 Environmental Results). Therefore, EPA's priority is to support projects that are likely to achieve quantifiable outputs and outcomes. Applicants must include specific statements describing the environmental results of the proposed project in terms of well-defined "outputs" and "outcomes".

## Project Monitoring

Q: Does a detailed QAPP need to be submitted as part of the proposal?

A. No, if selected for funding, a detailed QAPP will be requested to be submitted to EPA for approval. Your proposal should include the expected tasks of preparing the QAPP in your workplan, budget and timeline. Only awards expected to exceed \$200,000 in federal funding AND involve the generation or use of environmental data will need to submit a QAPP if selected for funding.

Q: How long does EPA approval of a QAPP usually take?

A. EPA's GMP Office estimates two weeks for an individual QAPP's approval.

## Watershed and Habitat Plans

Q. Why is EPA emphasizing that projects be based on watershed plans, CCMPs and other quantitative water quality assessments and plans and baseline monitoring?

A. EPA's national experience has led us to conclude that significant environmental results are more likely where assessments and plans provide detailed information to identify priority activities to achieve water quality and habitat improvement objectives within a specific time frame. For this reason, proposed activities in response to this announcement are encouraged to be based on data, analysis and information contained in already existing watershed plans and data.

Q: What are examples of "existing plans" that the RFP encourages projects to draw from?

A. There are many types of plans that projects can be built on, e.g. NEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), a local watershed restoration plan, a local green infrastructure plan...

## Match Requirement

Q. Is there a match requirement?

A. No.

## Contracts and Subawards

Q. Can grant funding be used by the applicant to make subawards, acquire contract services, or fund partnerships?

A. Yes, funds can be used for contracts and subawards in accordance with the Contracts and Subawards/Subgrants requirements in Section IV.F of the announcement. EPA awards funds to one eligible applicant as the "recipient" even if other eligible applicants are named as "partners" or "co-applicants" or members of a "coalition" or "consortium." The recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds and reporting requirements.

Q. How will an applicant's proposed subawardees/subgrantees and contractors be considered during the evaluation process described in Section V of the announcement?

A. Section V of the announcement describes the evaluation criteria and evaluation process that will be used by EPA to make selections under this announcement. During this evaluation, except for those criteria that relate to the applicant's own qualifications, past performance, and reporting history, the review panel will consider, as appropriate and relevant, the qualifications, expertise, and experience of named subawardees/subgrantees and/or named contractors during the proposal evaluation process as long as the applicant complies with the requirements in Section IV.F.

Q. May EPA grant recipients enter into agreements with federal agencies to carry out tasks/activities under the grant work plan?

A. Reimbursable Agreement- Grant recipients may enter into reimbursable agreements with federal agencies as long as those federal agencies are authorized under applicable federal laws to enter into such agreements with federal grant recipients. This is the mechanism by which a grant recipient can work with a federal agency as a partner. Reimbursable agreements do not have to be competed, but grant recipients must provide a brief explanation as to why they are selecting a federal agency to carry out the work.

Grant recipients MAY NOT enter into subgrants with federal agencies as part of their project activities. The only way to partner with a federal agency is through the reimbursable agreements described above, which is a type of contract.

## Standard Form (SF) 424 and SF 424 A

Q. Please provide examples of expenses that would be included under the "construction" line of the SF 424 A if construction goes on the "contractual" line.

A. The "construction" line of the SF 424 A should remain blank. If you are doing the construction in-house, i.e. with your own staff, then that should be reflected under "personnel." Otherwise, construction should be listed under contractual.

Q. What information should go in questions 5a & b of the SF 424 A budget summary?

A. These questions should be left blank.

Q. How do we answer question 19 in the SF 424?

A. Please follow this link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SPOC-Feb.-2018.pdf>. If your state is listed on this link, your project will need to be submitted to your state for review and select a or b as applicable. If your state is not listed, please select C.

Q: If the grant request is a small part of a larger project, how should that be reflected in the budget?

A. Budget Form 424A should only reflect the cooperative agreement request. If other funding is contributing to the successful completion of your project, please provide that information narratively in your project description. It may also be information added to the detailed budget table and narrative, but should be kept in separate column from activities identified as being funded by the grant or match.

## Budget

Q. What are indirect or overhead costs?

A. Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs (source: Indirect Cost Overview, Dept. of Education). In order to charge indirect costs to the grant, the applicant must have an up-to-date approved indirect cost rate agreement with its cognizant agency (the federal agency the applicant receives the most funding from). EPA does recognize indirect cost agreements negotiated with other federal agencies.

**Question:** How do I ensure I'm putting the costs in the correct budget categories?

**Answer:** There are several guidelines used for federal budgets. Page 8-11 of [this EPA presentation](#) provides an overview of budget categories and links to the cost principles EPA utilizes. If you want to hear audio of the presentation, please go [here](#). Budget discussion can be found at the 30 minute mark. If you have a question about an item in particular, please feel free to email the question to [gmp-rfp@epa.gov](mailto:gmp-rfp@epa.gov).

**Question:** Can these projects fund international travel?

**Answer:** It depends on the relevance of the travel to the project. In any case where international travel is requested, however, the award will need to go through an additional layer of review and approval which may cause delays in the project.

## Other Questions

Q. How do I submit an additional question that has not been addressed in this document?

A. We are able to respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission, of the proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement. You may submit your questions via email to [gmp-rfp@epa.gov](mailto:gmp-rfp@epa.gov). This document will be updated weekly to include additional Q&As.