

Farmer to Farmer Q&A v7
UPDATED October 13, 2020

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NOTE TO APPLICANTS: 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. We are unable to respond to questions requesting input on a project idea, format of a project or proposal, nor other project specific questions that may compromise the competitive process.

In addition, if you have not successfully been awarded an EPA grant previously, you may want to review the recorded webinar and/or presentation found here: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-grants-award-process-webinars>

[New FAQ's](#)

Q. What does the statement “Projects with a plan to engage historically underserved farmers and ranchers may receive additional points under this section” mean? (Received 10/7/20)

A. This means the application must provide detailed information about how it will engage historically underserved farmers. Just mentioning that it will serve historically underserved farmers, without any information to support the statement, will not enable additional points.

Q. For the resumes, is there a required format or a page limit?

A. There is neither a required format nor a page limit.

Q. With regards to Applicant Capability and Past Performance, will the experience of the applicant and co-applicant be evaluated together or separately? (Received 10/6/20)

A. The applicant is considered the manager of the grant and as such is the organization that is evaluated under applicant capability. If the applicant has not managed any federal awards, they should list or identify anything that demonstrates overall capability to manage federal (or other comparable) awards.

Q. We have a question concerning submission of forms. Are all forms required by applicant and co-applicant separately or can a single package be submitted by applicant only? (Received 10/5/20)

A. Based on your question, I believe you are forming a coalition with another organization. This is welcome, but one entity must be the responsible entity for the grant. That entity would be the one completing the application package and all required forms. The other organization would be a subawardee. For more information about coalitions, please see the following from pg 9 of the RFA:

"Coalitions: Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application under this RFA; however, one entity must be responsible for the grant. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the grant and which eligible organization(s) will be subawardees of the recipient. Subawards and subgrants must be consistent with the definitions of those terms in 2 C.F.R. § 200.92. The recipient must administer the grant, will be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds and reporting, and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 2 C.F.R. § 200.331(d), subrecipients or subgrantees are accountable to the recipient or grantee for proper use of EPA funding. Coalitions may not include for-profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant. For-profit organizations are not eligible for subawards. For-profit organizations are eligible to receive contracts. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 2 C.F.R. § 200.319, as applicable. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. (Please see 2 C.F.R. § 1500.9, formerly at 40 C.F.R. § 30.27(b) or 31.36(j), as applicable.) For additional information, please review the following Federal Register: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-7867.pdf>."

Q. If awarded a grant, can a grantee sole source a subcontract to a for profit entity? (Received 10/2/20)

A. A for profit can be selected as a sole source subcontractor, but the burden of proof is on the applicant or recipient to demonstrate why this is the only entity able to complete the task.

Q. We plan to use EPA's suggested budget template to complete our budget. Should we put both subawardees and subcontractors in the "Contractual" section? (Received 10/2/20)

A. Subcontractors should be in the Contractual category, but subawardees should be listed in the "other" budget category.

Q. Please advise if the suggested Budget Table template should also be used by lower tier subawardees, then rolled up into our Budget Table template? (Received 9/29)

A. We recommend our budget table template for the applicant, but any subawardee information can be presented in the way that makes the most sense for your application.

Q. Is this funding opportunity available each year? Will it be available next fiscal year? (Received 9/29)

A. Funding for the Gulf of Mexico Program is dependent each year on allocations in the federal budget approved by Congress and the program priorities during that time.

Q. We would like to have a placeholder of \$XXX for a contractor to provide _____ for our project. We plan to go through a competitive process to hire a contractor, but it will not be able accomplished prior to the proposal deadline. Is it okay to include a placeholder amount and wait to ensure the project is funded prior to beginning the competitive process? (Received 9/28)

A. Yes.

Q. We want to apply for the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate and are wondering where to send our application. I've found an application through the Department of Justice; do we send it to them directly, or to the EPA? (Received 9/28)

A. You do not need to apply to use the 10% Federal de Minimis. Any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. For more information, please see: 2 CFR 200.414 (f) https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=se2.1.200_1414&rgn=div8.

Q. The Farmer to Farmer RFA states that the budget table should be submitted using the Budget Attachment form in grants.gov. In the grants.gov workspace for this grant, there is no Budget Attachment form showing up. Is this a grants.gov technical issue or should the budget table be attached to the Other Attachments Form? (Received 9/25)

A. Please use the other attachments form for the budget table.

Q. On page 15 of the RFA, under Place of Performance, it states Please identify...City(s)...and up to 5 zip codes of your project location. Does this refer to the location of our organization, where team members are located or where events/activities will occur (which we don't know yet)? (Received 9/22)

A. The place of performance should identify where the project activities will take place. If you do not know the exact location of where the project activities will take place, you have several options:

- 1) Best guess at the region, using a city (or town) and their zip code(s) in the region - preferred, if you have enough detail to narrow that down
- 2) Use locations of team members (only if you think you'll be doing work in areas where team members are located)
- 3) Use your organizations location and update place of performance if selected for award and when locations are known

Q. What population size makes it a city? (Received 9/22)

A. The term city is used loosely here and could include a town of any population size.

Q. What if there are more than 5 locations where we will be working? (Received 9/22)

A. The limit of locations you can list are 5, so just list the five where the largest amount of activities will be taking place.

Q. I am unable to find a narrative template. The RFP suggests that a template does exist, but I have been unable to find one online. Is that not the case, or is a copy of the template available in another location? (Received 9/17)

A. There is not a fillable template for the narrative portion, but in Section IV. C. pgs 15-18 of the RFA, there is a format that we highly recommend you follow. It has a suggested format for both the project information page and the project workplan (which are the two items that make up the project narrative). Prepare as described in the Application Information Page and Project Workplan instructions below. There is also a recommended budget template, which is fillable for you to use in development of your budget.

Q. More rows for contracts are needed for our project in the suggested budget template. Can you send me an unprotected sheet? (Received 9/16)

A. Tab 6 of the suggested budget template provides additional rows for contractual costs. If you need more than are available on Tab 6, please contact me and I will send you an unprotected version so you're able to add more rows.

Q. Does this opportunity allow funding to be used for staff position? Is there a cap on the personnel costs? I can't seem to find details of what costs (and how much) are eligible under this funding opportunity. (Received 9/16)

A. In Appendix A of the RFA, there is a link to [EPA budget development guidance](#). It does not discuss a cap on personnel costs, because there isn't one that is directed, but all costs should be reasonable based on the activities that will take place during the project period and should only cover the identified project period.

Q. What is the definition of Environmental Data? (Received 9/14/20)

A. EPA's Environmental Data Definition: Environmental information or data is defined as any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location, or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; or the performance of environmental technology.

Q. Most call for proposals specify the narrative font size, type, and page margins, i.e., Times Roman or Calibri 11 point with 1 inch margins. Are there any preferences or requirements in this regard? (Received 9/8/20)

A. Readability is very important. Readability would be defined as formatted for 8½" x 11" paper and should use no smaller than an 11-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins.

Q. May a logic model be used to summarize some of the proposal components? (Received 9/8/20)

A. A logic model can be used to address some of the project components.

Q. On pages 17-18 of the RFA, there is a section on Applicant Capability and Past Performance. My question is whether this section refers to the institution's capability ("Provide a list of up to three federally funded assistance agreements...that your organization performed") or the PI's capability

("Describe your history of meeting reporting requirements"). Does organization refer to the university or some project of my own? Does you refer to me as a PI or to our university? Would you please clarify?
(Received 9/3/20)

A. Typically applicants list awards that they have managed within their organization. If the PI has not managed any federal awards within their current organization, they can either list federal awards they've managed or that their organization has managed or a combination, whichever best demonstrates overall capability to manage federal awards.

Q. Is the budget narrative included within the 12-page narrative? (Received 9/3/20)

A. Yes, the budget narrative should be included within the 12-page limit of the application narrative. The suggested budget table template does not count towards that 12 page limit.

Q. In the Questions and Answers for this proposal, there is a statement on page 4: If the organization does not have an EPA approved Quality Management Plan, please note that this must also be developed and approved by EPA. Inquiry through pre-awards and grant management for our organization has not turned up such a plan. Our assumption is that this is a document not specifically related to the current grant proposal, but an institutional-type document. Would you please provide more information on this requirement, including directions for preparing such a plan? (received 9/1)

A: Thank you for your question about the development of the QMP. As you identified, the QMP is meant to be an institutional level document and not a project specific document. All recipients are required to submit both a QMP (if they don't already have one approved) and a QAPP. Instructions for development of both documents can be found at this [link](#). There is no expectation for either document to be developed prior to notification of funding.

Q. Is _____ part of the/in the "Gulf of Mexico watershed?" (received 9/1)

A. Please see Figure 1 on pg 5 of the RFA to identify whether your location is eligible.

Q. Is a multi-state project preferable to a single-state project? (received 8/27)

A. The project will be evaluated based on the criteria set forth in Section V.A.

Q. Can the project build on existing work of watershed specialists? (received 8/27)

A. A project can build on existing work if it meets the criteria identified in I.B.2, IV.C and V.A.

Q. In the Potential Project Activities, would all of the practices mentioned qualify as innovative?
(received 8/27)

A. Project Activities described on Section B.3. are not all innovative on their own but could be applied or utilized in an innovative way or demonstrated in an area where they had not been utilized previously. Any project workplan must comply with the Scope of work, including the allowable project types and the four project elements described in Section I.B.2.

Q. The RFP has conflicting info regarding the amount available, \$10 million vs \$7.5 million. The Q&A also says \$10 million. Could you clarify? (received 8/17)

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$10 million. Grants.gov and the RFA have been updated to ensure there is no longer conflicting information.

Q. Are aquaculture projects included in the definition of farming? (received 8/20)

A. Aquaculture is not eligible. Please see the following definition of farming found in the RFA on page 4 under B.2. Scope of Work. "For the purpose of this RFA the term "farmer" refers to those individuals that make management decisions concerning agriculture lands, including cropland, forestland, and grazing lands."

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Overview

Q. How much funding is available for this RFA?

A. The total estimated funding expected to be available is approximately \$10 million unless additional funding (e.g. FY 2021 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 and the program priorities during that time.

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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 Scope of Work (Section I.B.2) and the required environmental results (Section I.C.). Read Content of Application (Section IV.C) and Evaluation Criteria (Section V.A) to ensure your application includes all required information.

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

A. To be considered for a GMD Grant, EPA requires that each submission contain a set of common elements that are described in Section IV.C (Content of Proposal Submission.) Section IV.C goes into detail about every item that must be included in the proposal package.

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 October 16, 2020**.

Q. How will EPA review proposals?

A. Please see Section V.A - V.C of the RFA.

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

A. . It is highly recommended that you explain each aspect of your application clearly and address each topic by following the format provided in IV.C.2, include the headings as given, and do not reorder the paragraphs, or you risk the possibility of information being left out by you as the applicant, or overlooked or not fully comprehended by the reviewers when the project is scored.

Q. Can someone be PI on one proposal and co-PI on another? Are multiple submissions from one organization generally encouraged or discouraged?

A. There is no limit to the number of proposals an individual can be involved in nor 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.

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Eligibility/Project Eligibility

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

A. Please refer to Section III.A. of the RFA.

Q. What is ineligible for funding?

A. Section III.C in the RFA 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. A funding idea was submitted and GMP was asked for input and/or requested a phone call to discuss project. The following response was provided to all potential applicants who requested input on their specific project idea or design.

A. In order to ensure a fair competitive process, the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program does not provide specific input on project ideas to applicants.

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.

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Environmental Outputs and Outcomes

Q. What are "Outputs and Outcomes"?

A. Outputs and outcomes are explained in Section I.C. of the RFA. 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".

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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 GMD Office estimates two weeks for an individual QAPP's approval.

Q. We are currently working on our application for the RFA, and have run into a question about the Environmental Data Statement. Based on the information provided in the RFA and links, we have drafted the following statement:

"We acknowledge that if funded for this project, we will be required and are prepared to demonstrate competency to assess the quality of work to meet project requirements, and acknowledge that a Quality Management Plan (QMP) and/or Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required."

Is this what this section is requiring, or do we need to provide further demonstration of competency (ex. provide current accreditation or certification certificate with scope of accreditation and accrediting body plus contact information) attached to the proposal?

A. A statement, such as what is written, is all that is needed. It is a step designed to ensure that the applicant is fully aware that if data collection is planned and the award is over \$200k, that a QAPP will be required. In addition, please schedule time for QAPP development and approval. *If the organization*

does not have an EPA approved Quality Management Plan, please note that this must also be developed and approved by EPA.

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Match Requirement

Q. Is there a match requirement?

A. Neither matching nor cost share funds are required under this competition. Cost sharing will not be evaluated as a part of this competition.

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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 additional provisions instructions which can be found on [the EPA Solicitation Clauses](#) page. 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. 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.

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Standard Form (SF) 424 and SF 424 A

Q. I am filling out the online budget form for this grant application. We are applying for 2 years of funding. As I understand the directions, I am to include costs for Year 1 in Section A. Does the same apply to Sections B or C, or should I include amounts for the full 2 years? In Section A, is the Grant Program Function the same as the name of the program for which we are requesting funding?

A. Include the total amount for 2 years in Section A. This should be the cumulative amount for both years. Do not separate the years. In Section A, for the Grant Program Function or Activity, use the title of the RFA: " Gulf of Mexico Division Farmer to Farmer Request for Applications - 2020 ".

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

A. Please follow this link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SPOC-February-2019.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.

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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.

Q. What if we don't have an indirect cost rate agreement?

A. Any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely.

Q. How do I ensure I'm putting the costs in the correct budget categories?

A. There are several guidelines used for federal budgets. The recorded webinar and presentation found here <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-grants-award-process-webinars> provides an overview of the grant application process, including what should be included in the budget categories and the cost principles EPA utilizes. In addition, Appendix A of the RFA provides a link to EPA's Interim Budget Guidance as well as helpful hints and sample language. If you have a question about a particular item, please feel free to email the question to gmp-rfp@epa.gov.

Q. Can these projects fund international travel?

A. 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 to the project.

Q. Is tuition for a graduate student assistant an allowable cost under either "personnel" or "other"?

A. Tuition is an allowable cost if it meets the guidelines set here:

§ 200.466 Scholarships and student aid costs. (a) Costs of scholarships, fellowships, and other programs of student aid at Institutes of Higher Education are allowable only when the purpose of the Federal award is to provide training to selected participants and the charge is approved by the Federal awarding agency. However, tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid as, or in lieu of, wages to students performing necessary work are allowable provided that: (1) The individual is conducting activities necessary to the Federal award; (2) Tuition remission and other support are provided in accordance with established policy of the IHE and consistently provided in a like manner to students in return for similar activities conducted under Federal awards as well as other activities; and (3) During the academic period, the student is enrolled in an advanced degree program at a non-Federal entity or affiliated institution and the activities of the student in relation to the Federal award are related to the degree program; (4) The tuition or other payments are reasonable compensation for the work performed and are conditioned explicitly upon the performance of necessary work; and (5) It is the IHE's practice to similarly compensate students under Federal awards as well as other activities. (b) Charges for tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid to students as, or in lieu of, salaries and wages must be subject to the reporting requirements in §200.430 Compensation—personal services, and must be treated as direct or indirect cost in accordance with the actual work being performed. Tuition remission may be charged on an average rate basis. See also §200.431 Compensation—fringe benefits.

The cost would be identified under Other.

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Other Questions

Q. The application has this statement about partial funding:

"In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund proposals by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicant or affect the basis upon which the proposal was evaluated and selected for award and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process."

Does this mean that a grant application can be submitted for a project if it is for the engineering and studies needed to design a project (what we refer to as Phases 1 and 2) which has the ultimate goal of meeting one of the priorities stated in the project after construction (Phase 3)? Or is this grant only for projects which can go straight into construction?

A. The partial funding clause (referred to above) enables EPA to fund a portion of an applicant's proposal, but is not intended to enable a phased funding approach for a project. A "construction" project in the traditional term of building construction cannot be funded with this RFA. In addition, in

order for a proposal to meet the threshold criteria for evaluation it must result in meeting the outputs identified in I.B.2. of the RFA).

Q. Are letters of support encouraged or required?

A. Letters of support from partners are required to support description of partner involvement. Letters of support are not included in the page limit.

Q. Can references cited be added as supporting material or must literature cited fit into the page limit?

A. A references cited page may be added as supporting material and would not be included in the page limit.

Q. Is it a disadvantage for the lead organization to be one that has a current GMP award?

A. It is neither an advantage or disadvantage. All proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria identified in the RFP.

Q. Where should the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement be uploaded into the Grants.gov package?

A. The Indirect Cost Rate Agreement can go in the "Optional Attachments Form" section.

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.

*This document will be updated weekly to include additional Q&As.

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