

**National Priorities: Innovative Sampling Designs for Public Health Surveillance of Coronaviruses and Other Pathogens in Wastewater Request for Applications (RFA)**

Informational Webinar Questions and Answers

November 9, 2021

- 1. Even though for-profits cannot apply, can we have a for-profit as a subrecipient? You mentioned they are ok as consultants under us, but what about as sub awardees (but not as Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI)?**

**Answer:** For-profits cannot be considered subawardees but must be consultants. Please follow the competitive procurement procedures as specified in Section IV.C.7.b.(6) of the RFA.

- 2. Can a research scientist of an academic institution be a Principal Investigator (PI)?**

**Answer:** Yes. Any individual affiliated with an institution can be a PI or co-PI.

- 3. Can you please expand on what is considered a cost-share?**

**Answer:** Please see Section III.B. of the funding notice. Excerpt:

Each applicant must contribute a minimum non-federal cost share/match of 25 percent of the federal funds awarded. This is equivalent at a minimum to 20 percent of the total project costs. Cost share may include in-kind contributions. To be eligible for funding consideration, applicants must demonstrate in their applications how they will meet the required minimum 25 percent cost share/match in accordance with 2 CFR §200.306.

The cost share/match may be provided in cash or can come from in-kind contributions, such as the use of volunteers and/or donated time, equipment, etc., subject to the regulations governing matching fund requirements at 2 CFR §200.306. Cost share/matching funds are considered grant funds and are included in the total award amount.

Cost share in general may not come from other Federal Agency grant funds (for more information about this, please see the response to question 7 below). Please specify how you are accounting for cost share in each section of the Budget Justification as defined in Section IV.C.7.b. of the RFA.

- 4. Is there a limit on the percentage of budget that can be designated for consultant(s)?**

**Answer:** There is not a specific percentage, however applicants are responsible for managing the scope of work and profit-making firms are not eligible to apply. The procurement regulations in 2 CFR 200 shall be followed when procuring products and services, including consultant contracts.

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. Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the procurement provisions of the regulations at [2 CFR Part 200](#). Applicants are not required to identify subrecipients and/or contractors (including consultants)

in their application. However, if they do, the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific subrecipient, contractor, or consultant in the application EPA selects for funding does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward and/or competitive procurement requirements as appropriate. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the application solely based on the firm's role in preparing the application. For additional guidance applicants should review [EPA's Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements](#). Also please note that applicants may not use subagreements to transfer or delegate their responsibility for successful completion of their EPA assistance agreement. Please refer to <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses> if your organization intends to identify specific contractors, including consultants, or subrecipients in your application.

For more information, please see links in Sections IV and VI.C in the RFA.

5. **On page 8 of the RFA, it is stated that "...In further developing a wastewater-based public health network, agencies across the federal government are partnering to support a coordinated federal effort to assist state, tribal, local, and territorial communities to implement wastewater-based COVID-19 disease surveillance. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have funded several projects in this research area and applicants are strongly encouraged to leverage existing research resources whenever possible, including existing datasets from coronavirus research and results from national wastewater surveys for COVID-19..." Are data sets from these activities available?**

**Answer:** Applicants are strongly encouraged to leverage existing data and existing research resources whenever possible, including datasets from these and other activities, and will need to investigate what datasets are available to support the proposed project.

6. **Are the three-page Quality Assurance Statement (QAS), four-page EPA Human Subjects Research Statement (HSRS), two-page management plan, and Scientific Data Management Plan (SDMP) to be included and counted toward the 15-page research plan limit or are these supplemental docs separate from the 15-page plan?**

**Answer:** The page limits for QAS, HSRS, Management Plan and SDMP are in addition to that of the research plan, so these do not count toward the 15-page research plan limit.

7. **Can funding for existing sewer surveillance projects, funded by the state but with monies ultimately coming from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) be used as cost share? In other words, once the state receives the CDC funding is it now considered state funding or federal funding?**

**Answer:** Funds from one Agency, if they are provided in the form of a grant, are generally not eligible to satisfy the cost share on another federal grant. The Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR 200.306) states that cost share can be accepted if the funds are "not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied

to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs.” There is an exception where a statute authorizes federal funds to be used to satisfy the cost share, but EPA has no such statutory authority. The use of funds provided by the CDC would only be eligible to satisfy the cost share if the CDC statutory authority allows it, so please check with the CDC on this question.

**8. How does EPA intend to use outcomes from the awarded proposal and coordinate with CDC and other U.S. agencies?**

**Answer:** The RFA is intended to fund research for the benefit of the public and the broader scientific community and not designed to directly benefit the Agency. Outputs and outcomes from the awarded proposal could potentially be used by EPA in coordination with other federal agencies to respond to the current or future pandemics.

**9. Does the 25 percent consist of cost sharing per institution, when there are several institutions involved?**

**Answer:** The cost share is total for the application. The Agency does not specify how applicant institutions may allocate that cost share among subawardees. Please specify this information in the “Budget Justification” as defined in Section IV.C.7.b. of the funding notice.

**10. Do activities involving human subjects need to have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before submission? Also, does EPA require IRB approval for doing wastewater monitoring at treatment plants and/or communities? Most of those monitoring wastewaters have not gone through an IRB since it is community-level/environmental monitoring.**

**Answer:** IRB approval is not required before submission. The application must include a Human Subjects Research Statement (HSRS). Approvals from the IRB(s) and EPA’s Human Subjects Research Review Officer would be needed before any research activities involving human subjects can be initiated.

**11. In the RFA it states, "The proposed research should be national in scope and should also focus on water quality (by looking at the impact pathogen contamination in wastewater has on identifying areas of concern); and water availability (measuring the extent to which wastewater is contaminated with bio pathogens can improve drinking water availability to the public)." May you clarify what is meant by water quality and availability, and specifically the connection to drinking water here?**

**Answer:** If there is pathogen contamination in local water supplies, water quality would be diminished and depending on how extensive the contamination is, access to drinking water might be limited or prohibited.

**12. Is a proposal that is focused on designing novel samplers/sampling techniques for monitoring pathogens considered acceptable for this RFA?**

**Answer:** Since the intent of the RFA is to develop and demonstrate effective wastewater sampling network designs, EPA does not expect applications to be focused on designing samplers or sampling techniques for monitoring pathogens. However, including sampling techniques could be a component of the overall study design, especially if it is deemed

necessary to perform significant field work for this project. Generally, significant field work for this project might not be needed since applicants are encouraged to utilize existing datasets wherever possible. It is up to the applicant to determine the activities necessary to accomplish the research goals.

**13. Are novel computational/information science applications for smart/targeted sample location to maximize utility of the resultant data appropriate to include in the application? This seems to be a major need, while I do not see it specifically stated.**

**Answer:** EPA is looking for innovative solutions that may not be explicitly detailed in the RFA and applicants are not required to limit the research scope to the research questions listed in the RFA but note that proposed research should contribute to the overall goals, outputs and outcomes stated in the RFA. EPA cannot comment on specific proposal ideas. Applicants are encouraged to utilize existing data whenever possible.

For further questions about the RFA and processes, please contact:

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