SFY 2022 Water Quality Monitoring Grant (WQMG) Program
MassDEP’s Official Answers to Questions
December 9, 2021

On November 18, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) posted the Water Quality Monitoring Grant (WQMG) Program, Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP) for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022. In accordance with RFGP Section 3, the Estimated Procurement Calendar, MassDEP accepted questions via email pertaining to the WQMG Program from November 18, 2021 through the question submission deadline of 12:00 p.m. on December 2, 2021. Below are MassDEP’s Official Answers to Questions received by the procurement calendar deadline. Interested parties should note that MassDEP has slightly revised the questions submitted to present the inquiries in a more generalized format, in order to provide Official Answers that are relevant to all potential grant applicants, in addition to the person(s) who originally submitted the question. In Appendix A, MassDEP has also provided the text of all questions as originally submitted, together with the corresponding MassDEP Official Answer number(s) that is/are responsive to the relevant question.

Question 1. Is staff time used for Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) writing and development allowed under the SFY22 grant program, and is it a reimbursable expenditure?

Answer 1: Yes. In Section 1.D.1.c., with respect to Eligible Projects/Plans, the RFGP states that “Salary for field staff performing monitoring activities specific to this project during the grant contract period” is an eligible activity for the WQMG Program, and therefore staffs’ salary for eligible projects is an eligible and reimbursable expense. A “monitoring activity” in Section 1.D.1.c. includes QAPP writing and development, since a QAPP is required for generating data for use in assessments by MassDEP.

Question 2. For successful grant applications, are recipients of the WQMG expected to submit and/or report data collected outside the grant period in the Project Data Submission summary (due on November 15, 2022)?

Answer 2. Project Data Submission summaries are not required for reimbursement through this grant program. However, Project Data Submission is a requirement to support evaluations of the grantee’s good standing metric for future WQMG program submissions. The Project Data Submission summary can document actual data submissions or the status of future data submissions. This summary can include explanations for why data submissions may be delayed (e.g., due to ongoing data collection) or...
will not occur (e.g., censored data due to poor quality). If the good standing metric is retained as an evaluation criterion for future WQMG programs, previous Project Data Submission summaries would inform the use of this metric during future proposal evaluations.

**Question 3.** Do the stated data priorities of continuous conductivity (and related chloride) monitoring and direct assessments of chloride concentrations (Section 1.F. of the RFGP) include: (1) collecting discrete laboratory results; (2) building watershed/water body specific regressions for chloride/specific conductance; (3) using validated linear regressions for Massachusetts freshwaters (listed in the 2018 Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM)); or (4) other measures and approaches?

**Answer 3.** The priority data needs related to chloride are not specific to any approaches or measures (see Section 1.F. of the RFGP). This priority does not differentiate among methods for generating chloride data, but applicants should note that the data collection method chosen is evaluated for its effectiveness for meeting project goals (refer to Section 2.B.2.c. of the RFGP for additional information on proposal evaluation criteria pertaining to the “effectiveness of sampling design” and Section 2.B.3.b. pertaining to the amount of data collected on priority analytes).

**Question 4.** Are QAPP production activities occurring outside the grant period eligible for reimbursement? If not, are QAPP production activities occurring outside the grant period allowed as possible voluntary match?

**Answer 4.** Only activities that occur within the grant contract period (i.e., between the grant contract execution date and June 30, 2022) are eligible for cost reimbursement. Any activities occurring outside the grant contract period (including, but not limited to, QAPP development activities) can be used for voluntary match purposes but are not eligible for reimbursement. See RFGP Section 1.J. (Match Requirement). See also MassDEP’s Answer 6 below.

**Question 5.** What is an appropriate project timeline that seeks to include QAPP development and the resulting data collection activities within the grant period?

**Answer 5.** MassDEP cannot provide advice on a proposed project’s design (including project timelines) to potential grantees during the WQMG application process period (November 18, 2021 through the proposal deadline of December 27, 2021). A MassDEP-approved QAPP is required prior to sampling when the intention is to submit data to MassDEP for use in assessments. See RFGP Section 1.B. (“Data used for assessments must be based on a MassDEP-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), which is developed prior to data collection...”).

**Question 6.** Can the expectation about eligible activities in [RFGP] Section 1.D.1.a., all of Section 1.D.2., and Section 1.D.3.b. under the timeline of this grant be clarified?

**Answer 6.** MassDEP cannot provide advice on a proposed project’s design (including project timelines) to potential grantees during the WQMG application process period (November 18, 2021 through the proposal deadline of December 27, 2021). Project activities included in the proposal can occur at any time following the proposal submission date of December 27, 2021, but only costs for activities that occur within the grant contract period are eligible for reimbursement. Activities directly related to the project occurring outside the grant contract period (but occurring after the proposal deadline of December 27, 2021) may: (1) qualify as a voluntary match; and/or (2) be used to describe the overall
approach of the proposed activities (e.g., plans for future data submissions, long-term monitoring plans, etc.). See also MassDEP’s Answer 4 above.

**Question 7.** Are in-kind activities occurring during the period between the award date and start date expected as part of the project and/or are these activities eligible to be considered for match?

**Answer 7.** See MassDEP’s Answers 4 and 6 above. Matching funds listed in the proposal can be secured or anticipated at the time of the proposal submission deadline (December 27, 2021). Similarly, a voluntary match through in-kind services and activities described in the proposal can occur as early as the proposal submission date of December 27, 2021 and would be eligible as match.
Appendix A

Below are the original questions received by MassDEP by email during the open question period (November 18, 2021 through 12:00 p.m. on December 2, 2021). MassDEP received two separate emails with multiple questions. Each set of questions from the emails are separated by lines. After each question, the corresponding official MassDEP Answer(s) is identified in bold italics.

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Questions From Email 1

1. Can staff time for QAPP writing be included in the grant? See MassDEP Answer 1.

2. Is the content of the data submitted by November 2022 an important criteria for successful grant applications? This time period is appropriate for parameters that are problematic in the summer (like DO) but will not incorporate the winter period for parameters problematic in the winter (like chloride). See MassDEP Answer 2.

3. Should applicants looking to collect chloride/specific conductance data prioritize funding to collect discrete laboratory results for chloride to build watershed/water body specific regressions for chloride/specific conductance? Or is using the validated linear regression for Massachusetts freshwaters (listed in the 2018 CALM) sufficient for assessment decisions? See MassDEP Answer 3.

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Questions From Email 2

According to the guidelines, QAPP production is allowed, but submission and approval must take place outside of the grant or in other words, before the start date, which immediately coincides with the start of data collection at the end of March, which is important for monitoring things like chloride and conductivity. The problem is that QAPP development, training and coordination will be needed, but it sounds like there is no time to include these activities under the grant so it happens prior to the start date of both the grant and monitoring. See MassDEP Answers 4 and 5. Could you provide clarification regarding what the expectation is for eligible activities in section D1(a) all of section D2 and D3(b) under the timeline of this grant? See MassDEP Answer 6. Is there an expectation that match be contributed for planning between the award date and start date? See MassDEP Answer 7. If not, can activities during this period still be described in the narrative and cited as match in the proposed budget? See MassDEP Answer 7.