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MASSDEP'S OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Water Quality Monitoring Grant (WQMG) Program REQUEST FOR GRANT PROPOSALS State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023

On October 3, 2022, 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) 2023. In accordance with RFGP Section 3, the Estimated Grant Procurement Calendar, MassDEP accepted questions via email pertaining to the WQMG Program from October 3, 2022, through the question submission deadline of 12:00 p.m. on October 17, 2022. Below are MassDEP's Official Answers to Questions received by the procurement calendar deadline.

To provide Official Answers that are relevant to all potential grant applicants, interested parties should note that MassDEP revised the questions submitted to present the inquiries in a more generalized format than the originally submitted questions. MassDEP also provided, in Appendix A, the text of all questions as originally submitted. Original questions in Appendix A also list the corresponding MassDEP Official Answer number(s) that is/are responsive to the relevant original submitted question.

Question 1. *Is partnering (i.e., forming a coalition) with a group (or groups) that an organization is already working with recommended as part of the proposal?*

Answer 1. MassDEP cannot provide advice on a Proposed Project's design (including the composition of coalition partners) to potential grantees during the WQMG application process period (from the RFGP posting date of October 3, 2022, through the Grant Application deadline of 5:00 p.m., November 14, 2022). Section 1.C. of the RFGP describes that coalitions are not required for this Grant Application, but collaborations that "leverage partnerships to create synergies" are given priority consideration for funding. Thus, MassDEP advises all Applicants to explicitly describe any potential synergies associated with collaborative work in their proposal as stated in the last sentence of Section 1.C.

This information is available in alternate format. Contact Glynis Bugg at 617-348-4040.

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Question 2. *Is sharing of knowledge a similar activity as sharing equipment during a collaboration?*

Answer 2. Sharing knowledge may be considered a collaborative activity that leads to a possible synergy (see Section 1.C. of the RFGP for other examples). As noted in Answer 1 above, MassDEP advises all Applicants to explicitly describe potential synergies associated with collaborative work in their proposal to ensure they are clearly recognized during proposal review.

Question 3. *Can work performed between January 1, 2023, to March 30, 2023, be funded by this work grant?*

Answer 3. Only activities that occur within the grant contract period (i.e., between the grant contract execution date and June 30, 2023) are eligible for cost reimbursement. Any activities occurring outside the grant contract period, i.e.: (1) from November 14, 2022, to the grant contract execution date and/or (2) from July 1, 2023, to October 15, 2023, can be used for the Applicant's voluntary match, but are not eligible for reimbursement. See RFGP Section 1.J. (Match Requirement) and Section 1.L (Total Anticipated Duration of Grants(s)).

Question 4. *Can a potential applicant for the WQMG SFY23 grant program include in their proposal any work (1) as potential match or (2) for direct reimbursement the same work that was included by the potential applicant in a successful WQMG SFY22 as match?*

Answer 4. Work performed by a successful Applicant for the SFY22 WQMG program for (1) match or (2) reimbursement during the SFY22 WQMG program does not have any overlap with the period for eligible work occurring for the SFY23 WQMG program. The SFY22 WQMG RFGP indicated that work after the grant contract period ended (June 30, 2022) considered as match would occur for the 2022 field season through "October 2022" (i.e., through October 31, 2022). Work considered for match in the SFY23 WQMG program can occur no earlier than November 14, 2022 (see also MassDEP's Answer 3 above). Note that if an Applicant's successful SFY22 WQMG proposal included work beyond October 31, 2022, said work was ignored during the proposal evaluation and was not considered part of the approved project in the SFY22 contract. Thus, no overlap in the proposed work among the SFY22 and SFY23 WQMG programs is possible. See also MassDEP's Answer 5 below.

Question 5. *Can a potential applicant propose work that is a continuation of work from a previously funded WQMG?*

Answer 5. Yes. Work proposed for the WQMG SFY23 program can be for work that is a continuation of work funded by a previous WQMG program (including work that continues developing and/or implementing regional and long-term monitoring plans) if the work proposed for the SFY23 program meets the project eligibility requirements for the SFY23 WQMG program described in RFGP Section 1.D. and the requirements for match described in RFGP Section 1.J. (see also MassDEP's Answer 4 above).

Question 6. *If work is proposed for site prioritization that includes DNA-based methods for microbial source tracking (MST), does the work require a QAPP that addresses all aspects of the study design including the DNA-based procedures and analyses?*

Answer 6. Yes. MST is an activity that requires a QAPP, and the QAPP should address all aspects of the work required to complete the Project including all information relevant for any DNA-based sampling and laboratory analyses. Section 1.B. of the RFGP describes how a completed and approved QAPP is required prior to all data collection for this grant.

Question 7. *Is staff time used for preparing for a training workshop an eligible expenditure?*

Answer 7. Yes. Staff time to develop a training workshop that supports water quality monitoring activities is an eligible expense. Eligible expenses are described in RFGP Section 1.D.

Question 8. *Are costs for a training workshop an eligible expense?*

Answer 8. Section 1.D. of the RFGP describes eligible expenses, and any expenses to support a workshop not listed in the RFGP section 1.D. are ineligible for reimbursement but can be listed as match (see RFGP Section 1.J.). Examples of ineligible expenses for conducting a workshop include, but are not limited to, catering, facility rentals, audio-visual rental, etc. Equipment and supplies used for demonstration purposes during the workshop must be used for monitoring as part of the overall Project. Consumable supplies such as reagents, standards, etc. can be purchased under this grant program for use in training activities.

Question 9. *Are grant contracts estimated to start February 2023 and run through June 2023?*

Answer 9. Section 3.0. of the RFGP describes the Estimated Grant Procurement Calendar, which states that the estimated contract start date is February 6, 2023, and the contract end date is June 30, 2023. The contract end date is fixed, but potential Applicants are advised that the February 6, 2023, date is an estimated date that may change due to numerous potential factors including, but not limited to, number of grant proposals to review, time needed for grantee completion of contract documentation, and full execution of required contract documents.

Appendix A

Below are the original questions received by MassDEP by email during the open question period (October 3, 2022, through 12:00 p.m. on October 17, 2022). MassDEP received four separate emails that contained one or more questions each. The corresponding official MassDEP Answers are identified in ***bold italics*** after each question. Text in brackets was added by MassDEP to replace text in the original question to (1) preserve the anonymity of the person or group that asked the question or (2) remove references to specific organizations that could be interpreted as (a) an endorsement or (b) specific evaluation of an organization by MassDEP through the official answer.

Question From Email 1

Would partnering with [a specific monitoring organization] suffice, or should we partner with another association? I have actually had training from a [a specific monitoring organization] individual so that [our organization] could become a roving candidate for *E.coli* samples. However, I was wondering if sharing our knowledge could be part of the process as well, as you suggested, as sharing equipment? ***See MassDEP Answers 1 and 2.***

Question From Email 2

The period of the grant is listed as Feb. 6 to Jun. 30. Through the previous year's grant, a coalition of partners launched a study of conductivity and chloride which was partly funded in 2022 but includes a large portion of unfunded work that will take place between Jan. 1 and Mar. 30, 2023. Could this full period starting Jan 1 be funded with the 2023 grant, even though it starts before Feb. 6? ***See MassDEP Answers 3, 4, and 5.***

Questions From Email 3

1) Can the proposal build on work started under the previous WQMG for our coalition related to continuous conductivity monitoring (e.g. the purchase of additional equipment, extension of monitoring period through winter 2023, workshops for data analysis)? ***See MassDEP Answer 5.***

2) If this grant were used to cover site prioritization work (such as DNA source tracking for *E. coli*), would the DNA analysis itself require a QAPP? The source tracking would not be submitted to DEP, but would inform our organizations about source elimination potential and where to place monitoring sites (with data submitted to DEP under existing QAPPs). ***See MassDEP Answer 6.***

3) The RFP mentions funding training for data analysis (Sect. D.2c) as well as training related to long-term/regional monitoring programs (Sect. D.3b). Does this also include compensation for staff time in preparing materials for a coalition training workshop in addition to the workshop itself? ***See MassDEP Answers 7 and 8.***

Appendix A

Questions From Email 4

I want to confirm that grant contracts are estimated to start February 2023 and run through June 2023. That is a 4 month window for grant completion? *See MassDEP Answer 9.*