



June 15, 2017

## Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

### Request for Proposals: 2018 Ecosystem Restoration Grants Responses to Questions

#### Questions and Answers

1. **The excel budget sheet provided in Appendix 4 does not include a column for match. How should match be included?**

**ANSWER:** The budget sheet has been amended to include a column for match. However, if an applicant has already completed the budget sheet, match information can be attached to the grant application as a separate pdf.

2. **If the work under the grant is to be completed by a contractor, how should the individual costs be added to the budget (e.g. do you want all materials such as stone, bedding, gravel, pavement, with quantities for each and every part of the contractor's estimate)?**

**ANSWER:** If a contractor has already quantified the supplies and materials needed for a project, this can be added to the grant as an attachment rather than putting each individual item into the budget sheet. The required budget sheet can list the total, if the individual items are clearly explained in a separate document that is attached. An incomplete budget will result in the proposal not being reviewed.

3. **What are you looking for with the indirect rate?**

**ANSWER:** An indirect rate is the percent of a project expenses that are indirectly related to the project. Indirect costs may include expenses such as office rent, telephone, bookkeeping, or other expenses that are not directly attributed to the project itself (such as personnel directly completing the project, or the supplies needed for the project). The indirect rate is determined by the applicant and applied to the overall project budget.

**4. Do we have to have a 35' buffer on lakeshore property?**

**ANSWER:** Any riverine or wetland buffer must meet a minimum of 35' width. Lakeshore buffers should meet a minimum of 15' width where possible, or to the extent practical to achieve maximum ecosystem benefits.

**5. Can we request Ecosystem Grant funds to evaluate/conduct outreach to landowners about potential river corridor easements and other floodplain protection restoration projects?**

**ANSWER:** Capital funds may not be used for outreach. The State has some limited Clean Water Funds that are not as restricted, however they are very limited and any project must be identified as a high priority for water quality improvement.

**6. If we have three projects that are identical except in different locations (e.g. working with three landowners on three potential projects), can we submit one application?**

**ANSWER:** Only one project per application. We allowed combined application projects last year, but have been advised that this creates challenges in fairly and equitably ranking projects between multiple applications.

**7. The application indicates that the project must start within 3 months. Construction on our project will not occur this year, but we want to apply now to recruit the contractor.**

**ANSWER:** Page 10 of the manual indicates that projects should commence within three months of the signing of the grant (not three months from notification of the grant award). DEC understands there may be limitations to the project due to time of year. We encourage you to start some aspect of the project within three months, stage the project to complete those tasks that can be addressed early on, or, if necessary, postpone the project to the next grant round.

**8. The State has indicated a need to get projects on the ground quickly. Why do you continue to require a 50% match for MS4s? If we had less required match, we could get projects done sooner.**

**ANSWER:** Ecosystem Restoration Grants have required a 50% of match from MS4 communities for several years. We expect that MS4s would have more access to match, and we list the types of eligible match on page 6 of the manual. The current funding structure aligns with DEC's commitment to support municipalities and other partners across the state to target and implement clean water improvement projects that protect, maintain, enhance, and restore Vermont's surface waters.

9. **The ERP Design Terminology and Guidance document on the DEC website describes different levels of complexity for projects. Under “Intermediate”, there are two options for funding – would DEC prefer to see Option 1 or Option 2? (Note: Option 1 is funding through 100% design first, and then later funding construction. Option 2 is funding through 30% design and then funding from 30% design through construction).**

**ANSWER:** DEC will prioritize projects that can move towards implementation quickly and with a thorough review of any potential natural resource conflicts (e.g. ensuring projects are not in wetlands or river corridors). The applicant should choose the option that best fits the project and addresses those priorities.

10. **We are submitting a project at a school, but the town is the applicant. Can the town also be responsible for the operations and maintenance agreement? Both the town and the school support this, but want to be sure it is allowable.**

**ANSWER:** The town can be responsible for the operations and maintenance agreement.

11. **The applicant is required to contact the basin planner prior to submitting a grant application. If the basin planner has received the batch import file, is this sufficient?**

**ANSWER:** The applicant must discuss the project with the basin planner and receive a Watershed Projects Database identification number that must be included in the application. If the project is already in the database, contact your basin planner to verify this number, as recommended on page 7 of the manual. Since the planners assist in project identification and prioritization within their basins, they are an asset in helping partners develop and submit applications for successful project funding. The batch import file is used to incorporate projects identified and prioritized in the tactical basin plan implementation tables. While this is a method for contacting the basin planners, DEC encourages a discussion with the planner prior to submitting applications to ensure they are familiar with and support the application.

12. **In the webinar, you emphasized the importance of addressing potential conflicts with natural resources. Is the map that is being submitted with the application enough to cover this concern?**

**ANSWER:** Appendix 1: Project Locator Map Instructions states that “All Ecosystem Restoration grant-funded projects avoid impacts to natural resources, including floodplains, river corridors, wetlands, lake shorelands, and buffer areas.” DEC requires the ANR atlas map with the Ecosystem Restoration Layer to assist in identifying potential conflicts with natural resources prior to grant submission and review. This is a screening tool, but should not be considered a thorough evaluation of potential conflicts. DEC strongly encourages applicants to discuss their project prior to submission with program staff (wetlands, lakes, rivers) if the applicant perceives any indication of potential conflicts.

**13. Our city is interested in bidding this project for construction this season. Can we do this?**

**ANSWER:** DEC cannot pay for any costs incurred prior to a grant award. If the city chooses to bid out a project without any guarantee of funds to implement, that is their option.

**14. We are submitting an application that is final design/implementation. Which project category should we choose?**

**ANSWER:** Page 9 of the application manual explains that if the project incorporates multiple engineering design and construction steps in the same application (e.g. 100% engineering final design and implementation), choose the project type for the most advanced project category (e.g. implementation or step closest to implementation).