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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. Question:** Is there a matching requirement?

**Answer:** Yes, there is a matching requirement of 15% of the requested grant funds. You can find more information about the match on pages 5 and 23 of the RFA.

**2. Question:** Does the match have to be cash, or can it be in-kind (or a combination of both)?

**Answer:** Either cash or in-kind (or a combination of both) can be identified as match contribution.

**3. Question:** What is the project period of the grant?

**Answer:** The project period is two years, anticipated December 1, 2021 through November 30, 2023

**4. Question:** Does having an open estuary grant disqualify an organization from receiving a grant this round?

**Answer:** Grantees with open estuary grants are not excluded from eligible for this grant opportunity. However, points are available in the scoring for applicants who do not have a current/open grant with the Hudson River Estuary Program.

**5. Question:** Is there a partnership request list, or a list of municipalities looking for assistance or partners?

**Answer:** No, there is no such list available.

**6. Question:** Can you clarify the definition of “water quality monitoring”?

**Answer:** Water quality monitoring has been excluded from the Estuary Education Grant RFA but not from the Estuary Stewardship RFA. Applicants seeking to do water quality monitoring should apply through that RFA and comply with the related quality assurance provisions. Monitoring means taking samples or measurements to assess conditions and detect possible trends over time and can lead to stewardship actions or influence human behavior changes. In a situation where the NYSDEC will use and accept the data collected through monitoring, quality assurance is required. Application for such monitoring should be made through the Estuary Stewardship RFA and the related quality assurance policy must be applied.

**7. Question:** Can a project include taking water samples and testing for various parameters if it is being done for educational purposes? Demonstration purposes such as in a PD? Training purposes such as with High School students?

**Answer:** Water quality sampling can be done for educational purposes, and demonstration purposes such as in a PD. However, if there is an expectation that NYSDEC will use and accept the data or if the purpose is to train students for monitoring purposes, the quality assurance policy applies.

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**8. Question:** Does the answer change depending on what parameter is being tested? For example, is dipping a thermometer in the water viewed the same as doing a fecal indicator bacteria test? What about using a probe such as a YSI Exo?

**Answer:** Water quality sampling using a thermometer or YSI Exo probe can be allowed if used for educational purposes, for example for teaching scientific methods. However, it is not allowed if the purpose is to provide training monitoring purposes, where use of the data is expected to be relevant to assessment of environmental condition or to influence human behavior. Such training would be eligible under the Estuary Stewardship grant RFA, where quality assurance protocols are specified. Educational sampling should follow and teach proper quality assurance practices. NYSDEC has a quality assurance policy that should be followed. Sampling and monitoring of conditions affecting human health are particularly a concern, for example sampling for the presence of bacteria or chemicals known to affect health. Such sampling must follow quality assurance protocols and is only allowed in the Estuary Stewardship RFA, where those protocols are spelled out. It should be noted that bacterial analyses of environmental samples by entities not certified by the New York State Department of Health Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) is a violation of NYS Public Health Law 502. As such, the stewardship and the education RFA grants cannot include any testing performed by a non-ELAP laboratory, including but not limited to testing using IDEXX methods.

**9. Question:** Can projects include the development and maintenance of a HRECOS water quality monitoring station? Can projects include using real-time data from a HRECOS water quality monitoring station for curriculum or app development?

**Answer:** Development and maintenance of a HRECOS station would be considered monitoring and is only eligible pursuant to the Estuary Stewardship RFA, where quality assurance protocols are spelled out. Additionally, the proposed new station would need to be accepted by the HRECOS network. By contrast, use of HRECOS real-time data for curriculum or app development can be considered eligible for the Estuary Education RFA, because HRECOS data collection already complies with NYSDEC quality assurance protocols.

**10. Question:** Are there any set-asides or preferences for applicants to include collaborations with Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses?

**Answer:** There are no set-asides or preferences for applicants with regard to Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses.

**11. Question:** Is the funding just for development of the educational tools or can it be used for delivery as well?

**Answer:** Up to 60% of the grant request can be used for testing and improving educational tools/curriculum (project types 4 and 5). If you are securing equipment/boat or building a facility (project types 1, 2, and 3), up to 60% of the grant can be used for programming related to that purchase/facility.

**12. Question:** Is staff salary/fringe related to application preparation allowable as match?

**Answer:** Any costs related to application preparation are not eligible as match (or grant).

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**13. Question:** Under Project Type 2, does “transportation equipment” encompass vehicles?

**Answer:** Yes, transportation equipment would include vehicles.

**14. Question:** What rates should be used for volunteer hours?

**Answer:** If there is an established rate for the task which a volunteer is undertaking, particularly if it is a specialized task, you would use the established rate for the budget. You can refer to rates at [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_ny.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ny.htm). Otherwise, you can use the hourly rate published by Independent Sector <https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2020/>. Independent Sector publishes an average hourly rate for the US, and also for individual states, including New York State (NYS). As of the date of publishing this FAQ, the hourly rate for NYS was not yet available. The average rate for the US may be used, but typically the NYS rate is a little higher, so it may be beneficial to wait for the rate for NYS (expected in April 2021).

**UPDATE: The Independent Sector has published the NYS hourly volunteer rate as \$33.17 per hour.**

**15. Question:** Are salary and fringe benefits eligible?

**Answer:** Salary and fringe benefits eligible for grant and match. However, administrative costs outlined in the RFA are not eligible for grant reimbursement.

**16. Question:** Does a specific contractor need to be identified in the budget at the time of application? Do we need to complete the RFP process by time of application submission?

**Answer:** It isn't required to have specific contractors identified at the time of application submission. The RFP process can be included as a Task in the Work Plan. If a consultant is unknown at this time you would indicate “TBD” for the name of the contractor, and the budgeted amount.

**17. Question:** Is there a way to share the application with other individuals within our organization?

**Answer:** The only way to view the entire application (including uploaded attachments) is by logging into the Grants Gateway and navigating through the Forms Menu. The Grants Gateway has a user role that is “view only” and that would have to be assigned to other users so they can view the application online. The only other alternative is you can use the “Print Application” function to generate a summary of what has been completed, but you will not have access to click on or view attachments from that screen. So, you could use the Print Application function to print to a PDF file to share content that has been typed into fields of the application.

**18. Question:** Is it possible for subcontractors to the entity who has been awarded a grant to charge on a fee-for-service basis? Or would this have to be accomplished another way?

**Answer:** It is allowable for the subcontractor to charge on a fee-for-service basis.

**19. Question:** Can funding from the Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG) be used as match in the application?

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**Answer:** Project costs paid from other state and/or federal funding sources are not eligible. So, funding from the HRVG cannot be used for match in this application.

**20. Question:** The RFA shows a project period of December 1, 2021 through November 30, 2023 for the timeline, but the Grants Gateway shows May 1, 2021 through April 30, 2023. Which date range should we use for the timeline?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, there is an error in the Program Question description in the Grants Gateway that cannot be corrected. The RFA has the correct dates of December 1, 2021 through November 30, 2023, so please use those dates.

**21. Question:** Can you confirm the reporting dates for contracts will be July 30, October 30, January 30, and April 30?

**Answer:** Yes, those dates are the deadlines for grant reporting.

**22. Question:** Does a municipality have to pass a resolution prior to apply for the grant?

**Answer:** There is no requirement for a resolution to be passed.

**23. Question:** We are going to write a grant for work in both category #1 and Category #5 - can we combine the request into one application or should it be two?

**Answer:** You are able to decide if you want to combine categories or submit separate applications, depending on what makes more sense for the project proposed.

**24. Question:** Category #1 says signage is an eligible work product, but the "ineligible" expense list on page 23 says that interpretive signs are not covered?

**Answer:** The ineligible cost for interpretive signage relates to the second bullet of "New for this Grant Round" on page 6 of the RFA. Signage can be an element of a project, but it cannot be the primary objective of a project.

**25. Question:** The RFA says that 60% of the grant can be used for Program Costs, but this does not mean that project salaries needed to be limited to 60%, only that the end-user portion is set at that amount, correct?

**Answer:** You are correct regarding the 60% program costs and salaries. There is no cap on salaries in general.

**26. Question:** Please confirm that for the application, on the Match Worksheet we just have to identify the source for (cash) match. We do not have to have the cash in hand.

**Answer:** You are able to propose donations in the match worksheet without having those donations in hand at time of application.