

2010 WCGP RFP - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

September 23, 2010 version (check back for the next version)

These FAQ's either clarify or provide supplemental information to the RFP.

CLARIFICATION NOTICE 1:

It has come to our attention that the language in the 2010 RFP is unclear regarding eligibility and watershed categories. The RFP language implies that if your watershed previously received funding through the Department of Conservation (DOC) Watershed Coordinator Program in the past or had a direct opportunity to apply for funding in the past, that watershed would now be placed into Category 3. This is not correct. The current three categories are solely based on geographic locations (See Appendix A1 – Watershed Map, in the RFP). Therefore, organizations working in watersheds in the CALFED Bay-Delta Solution Area that have participated in previous watershed coordinator solicitations are eligible to receive support with this new round. Here are the correct category definitions:

Category 1 – Watersheds outside the CALFED Solution Area and previously ineligible for Program support.

Category 2 – Watersheds in the Bay-Delta Program Solution Area that have had a direct opportunity to participate in the previous two watershed coordinator solicitations with restrictions (in the two previous grant cycles, the main focus had to be on water use efficiency).

Hydrologic regions with Category 1 and Category 2 watersheds: North Coast, North Lahontan, South Lahontan, Colorado River, Ocean-facing watersheds in the San Francisco region, Tulare Lake, Central Coast and South Coast

Category 3 – Watersheds in the Bay-Delta Program Solution Area that have had a direct opportunity to participate in the previous two watershed coordinator solicitations with no restrictions.

Hydrologic regions with Category 3 watersheds: Sacramento River, San Joaquin River, and San Francisco Bay

CLARIFICATION NOTICE 2:

Under Section X Evaluation Criteria on pages 11 - 14 of the RFP, the information required should be included in the responses to the FFAST application, including the narrative attachments. The Review Committee will be informed to rate the proposals based on the cumulative proposal.

CLARIFICATION NOTICE 3:

Clarification regarding letters of commitment from Partners: Commitment letters must outline the dollar amount of the match and must be attached to the FFAST application. Although the letters should be addressed to the DOC, we have switched to the electronic FFAST application process. Therefore, please remind your partners not to mail in any hard copies of letters under separate cover.

ELIGIBILITY and WORKPLAN QUESTIONS:

Q 1. Are current watershed grantees eligible to apply?

A. Yes.

Q 2. Will areas not previously eligible for CALFED grants be ranked differently or given preferential consideration?

A. Proposals from regions defined as Category 1 and 2 will be pooled together for application review and scoring, while proposals from Category 3 regions will be reviewed and scored separately. Proposals from Category 1 and 2 regions will compete for approximately 80% of the available funds, while proposals in Category 3 regions will compete for approximately 20% of the available funds. The evaluation criteria and how it is applied will be the same for all applicants.

Q 3. We received funds under a DOC grant back in 2004-2007. Are we still eligible?

A. Yes. A previous grant award does not affect your organizations eligibility to apply for a Watershed Coordinator grant through the current RFP.

Q 4. Since this RFP does not deal with CALFED goals, can we determine the goals ourselves, based on what our local area's needs are?

A. Yes.

Q 5. Can an organization whose 501(c)(3) is pending eligible to apply for a grant?

A. No. An applicant must have 501(c)(3) status at the time of proposal submission.

Q 6. Do the Articles of Incorporation for nonprofits need to be stamped by the Secretary of State?

A. As the Articles of Incorporation need to be filed with the Secretary of State's office, it should be stamped when it is officially verified and filed by that office.

Q 7. Is the RCD the preferred entity to apply for the grant?

A. No, any eligible entity as specified in the RFP can apply and will receive equal consideration through the review process.

Q 8. Will there be a preference if the watershed has been funded previously by the DOC Watershed Program?

A. No.

Q 9. Are you focusing on groups with existing watershed programs?

A. No, watersheds and communities at any stage of local watershed program development are acceptable.

Q 10. We are planning to facilitate existing groups to build local watershed management for unincorporated areas that are "dead zones" or "white spots." These are unincorporated areas not in any water districts. These are large farming groups not working with anyone and have no representation. Can we apply for this grant?

A. You can submit a proposal. This is an early phase program and the term "building capacity" is often used for such activities.

Q 11. In the application attachments section of the Watershed Coordinator Grant Program, it states local government should attach a resolution authorizing the proposal. Do we need a resolution from our City Council to submit an application for the proposal?

A. Yes, local governments must attach a resolution authorizing the submission of the proposal. If the proposal is being submitted by a city, then the resolution should come from the City Council.

Q 12. Can development of a website be a part of the work plan?

A. Yes, if it relates to watershed coordination, outreach and education. Development of a general organization's website would not be reimbursable under the grant.

Q 13. Is a meeting for education allowable in the work plan?

A. Yes, as long as the outcome is measurable, i.e. a survey of attendees at the end of the meeting. Simply a count of people attending is not acceptable as an outcome.

Q 14. Can we ask for two coordinators, each working half-time on different coordination efforts (i.e. Outreach and Technical)?

A. Yes.

Q 15. Does coordination of a citizen's monitoring effort, which includes water quality education, outreach, and sampling events, qualify as a task in the Watershed Coordinators Grant? I want to be sure I understand where the line is regarding programmatic work versus coordination work.

A. Similar tasks have been part of Coordinator work plans in current and previous grant rounds, so yes, these tasks are appropriate to include in a work plan as a part of a Coordinator grant proposal.

BUDGET and MATCH QUESTIONS:

Q 16. Is State pass-through of Federal funds eligible as match? (i.e. Can a Caltrans grant funded by federal sources be used as match?)

A. Yes.

Q 17. Fish and Game is giving NOAA grants (SB 271). Can that be used as match?

A. These funds are considered federal funds 'passed through' the Department of Fish and Game. They can therefore be used as match, as long as the planned expenditure of these funds meets all other eligible match requirements.

Q 18. Can part of the matching funds be from federal (e.g. Bureau funding) and state funding: Governor's Initiative and the Valley Congressional Mandate. Part of the funding was through the San Joaquin Valley Partnership. Does this meet the standard for Pass through Federal monies?

A. The "Bureau funding" mentioned is an example of federal funding 'passed through' to a local partnership, and can be used as match as long as the planned expenditure of these funds meets all other eligible match requirements. State funding through the "Governor's Initiative" cannot be used as match for the purposes of this RFP.

Q 19. If applying through the University of California, a 501(3)(c) non-profit, are indirect costs allowed? For example, UCSB charges 17.5% for off campus projects.

A. Indirect Costs will be covered under the 15% maximum administrative cost allowance. Any amount over 15% of DOC grant award is not reimbursable and also cannot be used as match.

Q 20. The Weed Management Area funds are grant funds from CDFA. We have been using a portion of these funds to pay for staff time to develop partnerships with local ranchers and agricultural producers to address noxious weeds in Solano County. Can this be used as match to our DOC grant? It is state money, but not bond-funded.

A. Past expenditures of funds from CDFA cannot be used as match. Future expenditures from this source, if used to directly offset the grant amount requested from DOC, can be used as match

Q 21. Regarding allowable costs in the budget, can billable rates be used or does it have to be broken down?

A. Billable rates need to be broken down.

Q 22. Do project volunteers count as match?

A. No, but technical experts (i.e. GIS, grant writers) assisting with coordination goals can be used as in-kind match.

Q 23. Is there a registration cost for the mandatory DOC workshops for grantees?

A. There are no registration fees, as these workshops are for DOC to provide assistance to the grantees; however any travel costs associated with these workshops should be included in your budget.

Q 24. Is postage for newsletters allowable or is that considered a project cost?

A. If one of the tasks of the coordinator is to produce a newsletter for watershed outreach or education, it is allowable.

Q 25. What does "project literature" mean in non-allowable expenses?

A. Literature produced regarding specific on-the-ground projects that is not directly related to the coordinator's work plan is a non-allowable expense.

WATERSHED COORDINATOR QUESTIONS:

Q 26. If an organization submits two proposals in two different watersheds, can there be two fulltime coordinators funded?

A. Yes

Q 27. Can you give a clarification on the two coordinator limit per proposal?

A. Each proposal can request funding to support the equivalent of one full time coordinator position. The position can be filled by no more than two people each working on a part time basis. This limit is in place to prevent grant recipients from distributing coordination responsibilities to numerous existing staff. The idea behind these grants is to have one or two staff as the designated coordinators for the watershed.

Q 28. Can a coordinator position be requested $\frac{3}{4}$ time for reimbursement and $\frac{1}{4}$ for match?

A: Yes.

Q 29. Can we split the coordinator position as 80/20 with 20% for an Administrative Assistant?

A. No. The only position the grant can reimburse for is the coordinator. Administrative staff time must be covered under the 15% admin allowance.

Q 30. Can we split the coordinator position by counties?

A. Resource boundaries are not political or based on agencies. Use a watershed context.

Q 31. We have two watershed conservation programs. Is it acceptable to have one coordinator to work on two watersheds or would you recommend that we submit two proposals for two coordinators, one for each watershed? What would be more competitive?

A. Regarding your strategy for one or two applications, given the apparent demand for these grants, the chances of an organization receiving two grants are less than the chances of receiving one grant.

Q 32. If we have one Grantee of Record, can the coordinator position be split between two people within two organizations? (As an example, the Mattole Restoration Council would be the Grantee of Record, and the full time position would be split between a part-time coordinator for the Mattole Restoration Council and a part-time subcontractor coordinator for the Mattole Salmon Group). There are well thought out, specific reasons for doing this that would be outlined in the Work Plan.

A. Yes, the proposed arrangement would work if there is a single fiscal agent who will have an employee, and a sub contractor with another organization to carry out the coordination work.

Q 33. Are the wage rates for the coordinator position the same for all regions?

A. No. Applicants must set their own rates; however keep in mind that the rates need to be competitive as they will be used to rate the proposals. Proposals which provide more “bang for the buck” will receive more points.

Q 34. What is an estimated salary range for a coordinator?

A. It depends upon region, experience and whether an employee or contractor is used. Wage rates have ranged from about \$17/hr for an employee to \$40/hr for a consultant in previous grant cycles.

Q 35. All things being equal, if you have a proposal from an application with one salary being \$60,000 and one is \$30,000, would there be a preference for the proposal with the smaller salary?

A. Yes. Cost effectiveness is a factor considered in the application review and scoring process.

Q 36. Can we give our coordinators raises?

A. Yes, but grant funds can only be used for this purpose if this cost is factored into your original proposed budget. If you decide to pay your coordinator more than the rates in the approved budget you must pay the difference.

Q 37. What is allowable for billing as a match?

A. Generally, any expense allowable as a reimbursement is allowable as a match. The exception is technical assistance, which is not reimbursable but is allowable as a match.

Q 38. Can we use funds for a bookkeeper?

A. Bookkeeping falls under administrative costs. The grants allow for 15% of funds to be budgeted for administrative costs.

Q 39. Can the budget be changed after the grant award?

A. It can be if the change is deemed reasonable, but it must be requested in writing by the director of your organization and approved by the DOC. In general, funds can be shifted to other categories if fully justified; however, the overall grant amount cannot be increased.

PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONS:

Q 40. Will we be able to register for the Cooperation Database after Sept 9 so others can find us as potential cooperators?

A. Yes, but if you are an applicant you will not receive the 5 points for Cooperation.

Q 41. Will you award extra points for registering in the Cooperation Database?

A. No, but you will lose 5 points for the Cooperation criterion if you did not register by the deadline of September 9, 2010.

Q 42. We are considering applying for coordinator funds but haven't yet sorted out which of the groups in our alliance would be best to sponsor the position. Can we complete the Cooperation Database notice then switch information later?

A. The Cooperation Database is only a resource tool for potential applicants to identify potential partner organizations. Registration does not imply any commitment to apply for a grant or to work with any particular organization. However, if it is decided that one of the other entities in the alliance would be better as the fiscal agent for the grant application and that entity did not register on the database, then it is important to notify us of the change so that points are not lost for that proposal.

Q 43. Can you clarify the difference between Cooperators and Partners?

A. Refer to pages 10 and 13 of the RFP.

Q 44. Can a Cooperator also be a Partner, and vice versa?

A. If a Cooperator provides cash or in-kind match, by definition they become a Partner. Conversely, if a Partner withdraws their match contribution, but continues to support and cooperate with the applicant, then by definition they become a Cooperator.

Q 45. Do you want letters of commitment from Cooperators?

A. No, we only want letters of commitment from Partners. These letters must be addressed to the Dept. of Conservation but provided by the Partner to the applicant organization so that the applicant can attach it to the FFAST application.

LOCATION QUESTIONS:

Q 46. Can an organization submit two proposals for two full time coordinators to work in different areas?

A. Yes, more than one proposal can be submitted by an organization as long as it is for different areas.

Q 47. Were the categories determined based upon HUC or watershed?

A. Categories 1-3 were defined using hydrologic regions. Refer to Map p.39 in the RFP.

Q 48. Are there any watersheds too large or too small?

A. The largest watershed would be a basin scale, the smallest would be a 10-digit HUC.

Q 49. Will an application working in an 8 digit HUC area be given preference over an application for a 10 digit HUC area?

A. The Program has stated a preference for supporting coordination at the 8 digit or multiple 8 digit HU scale. However, the program recognizes that it may be appropriate to coordinate activities at a scale larger than or smaller than the 8 digit HU as well. With respect to individual applications, the proposed scale of the work area will be a secondary consideration, while primary consideration will be given to strongly competitive proposals that rate high using the RFP evaluation criteria.

Q 50. How many watersheds can one coordinator position cover?

A. It depends on factors only the applicant can determine, driven by the coordination needs, resource issues and the level of management taking place in the selected watershed(s)

Q 51. Can an application cover several watersheds that are not within the same river basin?

A. We would consider the application. If an applicant is proposing to work in a watershed(s) where others are also proposing to work, there should be an obvious and distinct reason for doing so.

Q 52. Can the coordinator work across more than one HUC unit? We are doing regional conservation planning and would like to include more than one unit.

A. Yes.

Q 53. What do we do if a HUC crosses boundaries with another RCD?

A. The RCD should develop a partnership or an agreement with the neighboring RCD.

Q 54. Could you please review again the distribution of grants through WATERSHEDS rather than category?

A. The Program intends to support coordinators within all of the 10 hydrologic regions of the state.

Q 55. What is an ocean-facing watershed of San Francisco Bay versus a San Francisco Bay watershed?

A. The San Francisco Hydrologic Region contains numerous watersheds that drain to San Francisco Bay. Other small watersheds, primarily in western Marin and western San Mateo County, flow directly to coastal bays or the Pacific Ocean. Watersheds within the SF hydrologic region that drain directly to the Bay have always been a part of the CALFED

solution area and therefore have been eligible to participate in previous coordinator grant rounds. Those watersheds within the SF hydrologic region that discharge directly to coastal bays or the Pacific Ocean have always been considered outside the Bay Delta solution area, and have been ineligible to apply for past coordinator grants. Therefore these ocean-facing or ocean discharging watersheds have been included in Category 1 for the purposes of this RFP.

Q 56. The Santa Ana Watershed Association is considering trying to establish a coordinator position. However, from the language in the RFP it appears that our watershed would not be considered, or would not be a priority for this round of grants, because we are not listed in any of the three categories.

A. The Santa Ana watershed is in Category 2, which includes watersheds that were previously eligible for the program but were required to focus on water conservation.

Q 57. If we are in a Category 3 area and have had no funding in the past, are we still considered Category 3?

A. Yes. The priorities are based on geographic areas, not on prior funding.

Q 58. If I am in Category 1, what is the minimum score to receive funding?

A. That has yet to be determined. Also, funds are limited and therefore achieving a minimum score may not be adequate to compete effectively for the funds available.

Q 59. If there is money left over from Category 1 proposals will those funds then be awarded to Categories 2 and 3?

A. No more than 80% of available funds will be distributed in Category 1 and Category 2 watersheds. No less than 20% of the funds will be distributed in Category 3 watersheds.

Q 60. Can an agency assist unrepresented areas located within 8 digit and 10 digit HUCs that do not have organized watershed management plans by conducting needs assessment and providing the technical support to assist in the launching of the Watershed Management activities for future use?

A. Yes. The Program will support coordination work in all stages of development.

Q 61. The Sacramento River Watershed Program will be submitting an application for a coordinator in the Sacramento River Watershed. The Sacramento River Watershed includes the entire Sacramento River Basin. What HUC(s) should be included?

A. Use 1802XXXX - Sacramento River Basin.

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS:

Q 62. Is ground water a resource?

A. Yes.

Q 63. The link provided to obtain Median Household Income (MHI) to determining whether or not a community is a disadvantaged community is not accurate.

A. The website listed in our RFP was provided as a resource for you to obtain MHI information but the information on this website is not a Dept. of Conservation database. You may find it necessary to expand your search based upon the watershed areas in which you plan to work. If there is no reliable Census data available, you can explain your community's situation and we will discern whether you qualify and how much the match reduction will be.

Q 64. Regarding the current RFP for coordinator grants, we are concerned about the Economically Disadvantaged Communities portion. If we apply for a match reduction based on our justification that our watershed falls under an Economically Disadvantaged Community, we will not know if we qualify until after we turn in our proposal. If the review board disagrees, we will not have a chance to go back and try to get the required match. It would be helpful if we could know in advance whether or not we qualify.

A. We are not prequalifying applications, watersheds or communities. To be considered for a full or partial waiver of the match requirement the applicant will need to provide us information in response to questions on the FAAST application. The basic qualification standard is whether or not the primary area of work has a median household income of 80% or less of the State median.

The decision to provide a partial or complete waiver will be a program decision, made at the time applications are screened. The amount of a waiver will be in part a subjective determination (based on the response provided in the application) and part objective (how far the work area and associated community fall below the median income threshold).

Q 65. Can Tribes apply for the 2010 WCGP?

A. No, Tribes are sovereign nations and do not fall under one of the eligible categories of a nonprofit, special district, or local agency within the State of California. However, they can partner with another organization and should enter their info into the Cooperation Database and check it regularly to find a partner.

Q 66. What is the grant period?

A. Three years

Q 67. What is time frame for the grant period, i.e. when will coordinators be allowed to start work?

A. We hope to make grant award decisions by the end of the calendar year (2010) Plan on approximately 2 months to get grants signed, completed and awarded. Work cannot be started until awards are made.

Q 68. Are Special Districts required to have a special resolution?

A. Yes

Q 69. Is there a sample resolution available?

A. Yes, a sample can be made available upon request. However, only a simple resolution, which authorizes the submittal of the application, is required. Approval via a resolution is only required for Local Governments and Special Districts.

Q 70. If I submit a grant, will I get feedback after it is submitted?

A. No. However, feedback can be requested after the grants are awarded.

Q 71. Is there someone within DOC that can critique proposals pre-submission?

A. No.

Q 72. Out of the 48 projects previously funded under the 2004 grant cycle, how many are now self-supporting?

A. Many of the former coordinators are now funded through project-related grants, and therefore can only perform work directly related to specific projects.

Q 73. Do you have some example re: contributions from the WC program that you might share?

A. Refer to our website for the links to our 2002-2007 reports.

Q 74. What is an example of a project that could be funded for a small, singular watershed

A. Refer to our website for the links to our 2002-2007 reports.

Q 75. Will you award grants even if there is a bond freeze?

A. That decision will be made if and when a bond freeze occurs.

Q 76. Do you anticipate that there will be ongoing freezes due to slow bond sales? Will this result in extensions?

A. Anything is possible in this economic climate in California. However we do not anticipate ongoing bond fund expenditure freezes due to slow bond sales. If a freeze(s) does occur the program will consider grant extensions for time only.

Reviews and Awards Questions:

Q 77. What is the review process? How will it be set up, i.e. how will panels be selected and how will objectivity be maintained?

A. In general, review panels will be established for each region, if the number of applications from that region is large enough to justify a separate panel. If the number of submittals from a region(s) is small a panel may be formed that will review applications from multiple regions.

Q 78. Who is on the review committee?

A. The Department of Conservation will be responsible for reaching decisions on grant awards. Reviewers are currently being recruited to assist the department in the decision-making process. Reviewers must be knowledgeable about natural resource management, the specific issues associated with watersheds within a given region, and have the ability to evaluate individual proposals without bias or preference towards individual organizations or proposals.

Q 79. Who was on previous review committees?

A. Previous review panel members included representatives from Natural Resources Conservation Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Dept. of Food and Agriculture, State Water Resources Control Board, CALFED and a University of California professor.

Q 80. Is continuity of efforts no longer a priority, i.e. if a grantee wants to continue with a project funded in the past, is that not a consideration in this round of grants?

A. Continuity of effort may be a factor considered during proposal reviews, particularly if organizations have made progress in sustaining the coordination effort by decreasing their dependence on outside grant funds.

Q 81. Will it help current grantees score more points within the review process if new partners are added, including Tribes?

A. If you are decreasing dependence on outside grant funds by expanding local partnerships that should make the proposal more competitive.

Q 82. How will you decide whether or not an incomplete proposal will be disqualified?

A. Applicants should anticipate that incomplete proposals will be screened out and disqualified.

Q 83. Why do you have the point criteria but the actual responses are not in the same format, and don't ask for the same detailed information?

A. Reviewers will be asked to consider the entirety of the application when reviewing and scoring the proposal.

Q 84. Will the selection process be determined by the scoring process in the RFP?

A. The score given to an individual proposal will be a primary factor in selecting proposals for award.

Q 85. How long is the appeal period after final selection drafts are determined?

A. One week after preliminary awards are announced.

Q 86. Please explain reporting if awarded a grant.

A. Invoicing and reports are required on a quarterly basis. Report forms have been developed to assist the grantee in meeting this quarterly reporting requirement.

Q 87. Is there any retention of reimbursement funds?

A. No.

Q 88. I have heard that it can take the State Controller's Office a long time to send checks.

A. The SCO generally pays promptly if funds are available in the fund accounts being charged. The SCO will generally process payments within 14 days, if funds are available.

Q 89. Why can't the funds be paid in advance?

A. Bond money cannot be advanced. The rule for bond funding is that payments can only be made in arrears as a reimbursable, and it takes at least 45 days for payments to be processed after a complete, error free invoice has been received by DOC.

Q 90. Can we bill monthly?

A. No, invoicing is only permitted on a quarterly basis, so your organization would have to fund the coordinator for 3 months, plus the 45 days for payment processing after the invoice has been received by DOC, before being reimbursed.

Q 91. Do you expect funding to increase in the future?

A. Probably not. The current level of funding is appropriate for watershed coordination work.