

Informational Webinar Questions and Answers

National Priorities: Research on PFAS Impacts in Rural Communities and Agricultural Operations

1. Can for-profit organizations contribute to the cost share and participate in the project?

Contributions from for-profit organizations can be used for the cost share. Also, for-profit organizations may serve as consultants to eligible applicants if the applicant follows proper competition procedures. Information on cost share can be found on pg. 16 of the RFA.

2. Since outcomes are oriented to helping states, why are states not allowed to be the leads on proposals?

Due to the structure of the Congressional appropriation, EPA cannot open eligibility to states. However, states and local governments can serve as sub awardees and collaborators.

3. Can a lead PI in a proposal with a focus on Research Area 1 be the co-PI in another proposal with a focus on the Research Area 2?

PIs can serve on multiple applications as long as each application is distinct from the other.

4. Are there cases where Federal funding can be used for the cost share?

In most cases, Federal funds cannot contribute to the cost share as described on pg. 16 of the RFA. In some specific cases, other Agency grant programs may have the statutory authority allowing them to be used as cost share on an EPA grant. Examples include USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program grants, AmeriCorps grants, and HUD block grants. In cases where applicants think that other Federal grant funds could be used as cost share, they should consult with the other grant funding Agency and get confirmation that the Agency's authority allows those funds to be used as cost share on an EPA grant.

5. Are there considerations for 1980 Land grant Institutions related to the cost share requirements?

EPA is not aware of specific cost share considerations for Land grant institutions. Please also see Question 4.

6. Are there any limits on the percentage or amount allocated to indirect costs in the budget?

There is not a maximum indirect cost (IDC) rate limit or requirement. IDC rates are negotiated for each recipient on behalf of all Federal agencies by a cognizant Federal agency, which is the agency that typically provides the most direct funding to the recipient. For more information, please see the [EPA Indirect Cost Policy](#).

7. How is the cost share amount calculated?

Applicants are required to contribute a minimum non-federal cost share of 25% of the requested Federal funding. For example, if applicants request the full amount (\$1,610,752), the minimum non-Federal cost share/match would be \$402,688. Please see pg. 16 of the RFA for information on cost share requirements.

8. Is the academic year salary (9-month salary) of university faculty members considered an acceptable part of non-federal match?

Faculty salary is an allowable cost-share cost.

9. Can department-funded tuition waivers for graduate students be used as a portion of matching fund?

Tuition waivers for graduate students are an allowable cost share cost.

10. Can non-EPA employees who are working with EPA as ORISE fellows apply?

The funding notice is not open to EPA ORISE fellows.

11. Can Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) apply?

The funding notice is not open to FFRDCs. However, FFRDCs may provide certain services as described on pg. 15 of the RFA.

12. Can EPA employees or other federal researchers be collaborators (not PIs) on the proposed research?

EPA employees are not allowed to participate in an application or provide any kind of letters of support or intent. Other federal agencies may provide limited support as described in the RFA. Where appropriate, based on consideration of the nature of the proposed project relative to the EPA's intramural research program and available resources, EPA may award cooperative agreements under this announcement after awards are made. Please see pg. 14-15 for more information on cooperative agreements.

13. What start date should be used on the application?

EPA expects awards to be made by September 2020; therefore, start dates of September – October, 2020 would be appropriate.

14. Is cost share 25% of modified total direct costs or total costs?

Cost share is 25% of total costs.

15. If a proposal for a smaller amount is awarded, is EPA able to fund more awards?

Proposals requesting less than the maximum allowed amount may allow for additional awards to be made. However, EPA does not rate applications based on cost alone and

encourages applicants to focus on completing the scope, including outputs/outcomes, with the funds they are requesting.

16. What is the minimum amount an applicant can request?

There is no required minimum amount.

17. Does EPA allow revised proposals to be submitted, or is there only one chance to submit?

Once the application period is closed, the Agency will not accept any revisions. If you find an error in your application and the application period is still open, you may submit a revised application. In that case, please let the eligibility contact (pg. 50 of RFA) know which version to keep and which to discard. Applications selected for funding will be required to modify their proposals based on peer reviewer comments.

18. Not-for-profit organizations can submit proposals and for-profit organizations can provide the cost share. Is that correct?

While for-profit organizations are not eligible to receive an assistance agreement, they can contribute to the cost share. Cost share is not restricted to for-profit entities. See pg. 16 of the RFA for information on cost share.

19. What is the proposal selection process timeline?

Total time to an actual award is six to nine months.

20. Are multi-institutional teams encouraged or even required?

Multi-institutional teams are not required but are allowable under this RFA. Applicants are required to develop a Collaboration and Engagement Plan (pg. 10 and 31 of RFA) which includes a description of strategies for obtaining collaboration and support from partners including states, tribes, academia, industry groups, non-for-profit organizations, associations, and local communities/community-based organizations. This may require multi-institutional teams and establishment of subawards, which are allowable and described on pg. 32 of the RFA. Additional information on funding subawards, partnerships, and contracts, can be found on the following link:

<https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-solicitation-clauses#contractssubawards>

21. The RFA says: "Applicants should address one of the Research Areas described below." What does this mean?

Applicants are expected to submit applications addressing either Research Area 1 OR Research Area 2. The Agency realizes that there may be some overlap between the two Research Areas such as if the fate of PFAS sources need to be characterized (Research Area 1) prior to research on treatment methods (Research Area 2). In general, EPA expects that most of the research falls under one of the two Research Areas.

22. Can both research areas (Research Area 1 Fate and Transport and Research Area 2 Treatment) be addressed in the same proposal? Because by knowing the specific PFAS species in rural and agricultural areas, more targeted treatment approaches can be developed.

Please see Question 21. Some research related to Research Area 1 on fate and transport may be relevant and could be included if the information is necessary to develop improved treatment methods (Research Area 2). However, the majority of the research should fall under Research Area 2 in this case.

23. For each research area, is it necessary to cover all listed research questions?

The proposed research should address as many of the research questions as possible.

24. Since collaboration is needed to be presented up-front in the Collaboration and Engagement Plan on pg. 10 of the RFA, is it anticipated that the team will work on a specific site (determined at the proposal stage) with known PFAS contamination?

The collaboration and engagement plan does not require that the team work at a specific site with known PFAS contamination.

25. Can the proposal include a "human biomonitoring" component (e.g. PFAS measurements in serum of rural residents)?

Yes, please review requirements for "human subjects research" and development of a "Human Subjects Research Statement" on pg. 27 of the RFA.

26. Would the RFA support development of monitoring technologies under Research Area 2?

Yes, while the Research Area 2 focuses on treatment, monitoring may be an important component in understanding fate and transport of PFAS in wastewater and solids treatment trains as well as understanding effectiveness of operational factors and management strategies.

27. There are two major sources of PFAS: industrial and firefighting sites. Landfills and wastewater systems are receivers of PFAS. Terminology is important.

Several sources in the literature list landfills and wastewater treatment plants as major sources of PFAS. For this RFA, the following document was cited: ITRC, Interstate Technology Regulatory Council. (2018). Environmental Fate and Transport for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances. Fact sheet. https://pfas-1.itrcweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/pfas_fact_sheet_fate_and_transport_3_16_18.pdf

28. Are the "example outputs" true examples, or are those specific, mandatory deliverables?

Yes, the examples listed as outputs are true examples. They are not mandatory deliverables. EPA is expecting that outputs will achieve the expected outcomes.

29. How does the RFA define "rural" and "small systems"?

The RFA defines both terms broadly. The term "rural" is not referred to a specific size of a rural community or an agricultural operation and "small water systems" are systems serving fewer than 10,000 or fewer customers. However, EPA recognizes that that there may be multiple sizes of water systems from private wells to publicly owned treatment works that may impact rural communities and agricultural operations.