

Questions and Answers

1. What are the funding and payment provisions for this grant?

Answer: Grant monies are from the Environmental Protection Agency's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund's Local Assistance Set-Aside. Payment is contingent upon available funding. These grants are performance-based and payments are not issued until receipt and approval of deliverables as outlined in an agreement between the State and the selected entity. Each task will be assigned a fixed payment based on a budget submitted with the grant proposal and requests for reimbursement will be submitted to the State after the task is complete.

Under performance-based agreements, invoices and back-up documentation will not need to accompany reimbursement requests when submitted to the State. The grantee only need to submit Form 430 – Request for Reimbursement, a Match Documentation form that will be provided with the grant agreement following award, and the required Deliverable associated with the reimbursement request. The invoices and back-up documentation are required to be kept with the grant file, however, and retained by the Grantee for a period of three years following the end of the grant term.

2. Please clarify what the “20% in-kind” means.

Answer: The in-kind match is a local contribution to the total project cost to ‘match’ the grant from the State. The following types of in-kind match are eligible for this grant:

- Volunteer assistance from local elected official (Selectboard member, Board member, Water Commissioner, etc.) at an hourly rate specified in the grant guidance
- Volunteer assistance from volunteer operator at an hourly rate specified in the grant guidance
- In-house assistance from operator on staff at hourly rate
- Professional assistance from operator on contract at hourly rate

Applicants must include at least a 20% in-kind match of the total project cost in their grant proposal (e.g., a \$20,000 grant requires an in-kind match of at least a \$5,000, with total project costs of at least \$25,000).

The in-kind match is designed to help insure that everyone from the system - selected officials, managers, operators, engineers, and administrative staff - helps develop and implement the Asset Management Program. That way the organization will be more likely to use, and benefit from, Asset Management tools and practices now and into the future.

3. Can grant funding be used to purchase software and/or equipment to help systems map their distribution appurtenances (i.e., hydrants, valves, curb stops, etc.)?

Answer: No, grant funding can't be used to purchase software or equipment. It can be used, however, to pay staff and/or consultants to locate and map assets. We encourage systems that want to use funding for mapping to also create an inventory for the assets. See page 20 of the Drinking Water Asset Management Plan and Request for Applications document for information about asset inventories.

4. How would the in-house operator expense be applied to the grant? Would we escrow the funds and deduct as the labor is expensed? Would these expenses be directly applicable to the grant's objective or would it be any labor expense for the system?

Answer: In order to be eligible as match for this grant, the in-house operator expenses would need to be directly applicable to the grant's objective. Note: staff other than operators are also eligible for match (e.g. engineers, technicians, etc.). The Grantee would pay the in-house staff through normal payroll procedures, but would need to have a system in place or develop a system that will enable the staff to track time associated with the award separately from other labor for the system.

When a reimbursement request is submitted to VT DEC for the grant, the Grantee will also need to complete a Match Documentation form in which the Grantee will indicate the amount and type of match (salary, etc.) expended during the performance period.

5. Is an awardee required to use a contractor off the list if they planned to use contractor services under the grant and do all of the businesses on the list would have the expertise to complete work under the grant?

Answer: There is no requirement to use a vendor off this list, but a grant awardee would be signing an agreement affirming they will put in a good faith effort to encourage Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) to participate in the procurement process for any subcontracts. One means of achieving this could be forwarding any bid package via email to the vendors on the list provided to make DBEs aware of the opportunity. An applicant/awardee could also review the list and select a subset they feel may be most applicable to their project to contact.

Contractor selection should be based on the grant awardee's own procurement policies and there may be any number of valid reasons to not select the DBE bid (not low bidder, unavailable during project timeline, etc.).

The vendors in Attachment E have not been screened for specific expertise for inclusion on this list, but indicated engineering, water resources or project management within their business descriptions in the VTrans Certified DBE Directory.

A revised Attachment E has been posted with the RFP on the Vermont Business Registry that includes email addresses or contact links for these vendors for ease in this process.

6. Is there any flexibility on the \$10,000 minimum award for the grant?

Answer: Only proposals that request grant awards of at least \$10,000 will be considered for the current round of this grant program. The State encourages systems that have a project idea not

meeting the minimum dollar value to proceed with the required consultation with the Drinking Water Capacity Program and to consider adding additional eligible activities to strengthen their proposal.