

Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) Questions and Answers

Q: If a project receives funding under the fiscal year (FY) 2017 WIIN FOA, is that the only opportunity to receive funding for the project?

A: No, projects can continue to compete for and receive funding through future WIIN FOAs. Reclamation plans to post the WIIN FOA on an annual basis.

Q: How far back can projects costs go for reimbursement?

A: Pre-award costs can be included going back to the date that the results of the feasibility study review findings for the project are transmitted to Congress. For this first FOA, all feasibility study review findings were transmitted to Congress on **July 12, 2017**.

Q: What project work can be covered in this application?

A: Applicants can request up to 25% of the cost of work conducted **from July 12, 2017 to September 30, 2019**. The budget proposal and narrative included in your proposal should cover the work that has been, or will be, conducted during this time frame. Please note that although the budget proposal and narrative only include information for the work related to this year's funding request, responses to the evaluation criteria should address the entire project. For Evaluation Criterion 5, applicants should provide best available estimates if all project costs are not yet known.

Q: Does an EIS have to be completed for the project before applying for this grant?

A: No. In fact, funding may be requested under the FOA for the cost to complete NEPA compliance. However, no ground disturbing activities can take place until environmental and cultural compliance is complete.

Q: Should the Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance section of the proposal address the entire project or only the work that will be conducted before September 30, 2019?

A: The Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance section of the proposal should be focused on the work that will be conducted before September 30, 2019. However, a brief description of the plan for environmental and cultural resources compliance for all phases of the project or future construction (where the work to be completed by September 30, 2019 only includes planning and design) should also be included.

Q: Should the Required Permits or Approvals section of the proposal address the entire project or only the work that will be conducted before September 30, 2019?

A: The Required Permits or Approvals section of the proposal should describe the permits and approvals necessary for the work that will be conducted before September 30, 2019.

Q: Should environmental compliance documents be attached to the application as appendices?

A: It is not necessary to include environmental compliance documents with your proposal. If environmental compliance is complete, you may identify the document number in your proposal and/or provide a link to the published document.

Q: Do appendices count towards the page limit of the application? Letters of support do not count; does a detailed budget from a contractor count towards the page limit?

A: In general, appendices and items such as detailed construction cost estimates do not count towards the page limit. However, please limit appendices to only those items required by the FOA or necessary to properly support your responses to the criteria or your proposed budget.

Q: Do letters of support for the proposed project increase the score of the application?

A: No specific point value is assigned to letters of support. However, letters of support may provide support for responses to the evaluation criteria that could result in the proposal receiving a higher score under specific criteria. For example, environmental benefits of the project described under criterion 3 could be supported by letters of support from environmental interests, or collaboration described under criterion 7 could be supported by letters from the other entities that are involved in that collaboration.

Q: What if the project has changed since approval of the feasibility study (e.g., a different location has been chosen for a pump station, a pipeline alignment has changed, or new customers have been added)?

A: The work may still be eligible for funding as long as it is within the general scope of the project described in the feasibility study. If it is a substantial change in the scope of the project, then the feasibility study may need to be amended and re-reviewed by Reclamation. This determination will be made on a project-specific basis. Please contact your Title XVI coordinator if you have questions about this.

Q: If the project eligible for funding under WIIN is an expansion of existing water recycling infrastructure, should the benefits listed in the application focus on the expansion only, or on the entire project?

A: Discussion of the entire project can be given for context, but in addressing the evaluation criteria focus on the benefits of the expansion.

Q: In the budget narrative, should costs such as health care, taxes, and insurance be included in fringe benefits or wages?

A: The cost of fringe benefits in the form of employer contributions or expenses for social security; employee life, health, unemployment, and worker's compensation insurance (except as indicated in 2 CFR §200.447 Insurance and indemnification); pension plan costs; and other similar benefits are allowable, provided such benefits are granted under established written policies of your organization. See 2 CFR §200.431 for the regulations regarding fringe benefit costs.

Q: What should be included in the budget? Should all project costs be included?

A: The budget table and narrative should only include the work that will be conducted between July 12, 2017 and September 30, 2019 that is the basis of the funding request. This includes both the work that makes up the 25% federal cost share being requested and the 75% non-federal cost share. Please note that although the budget proposal and narrative only include information for the work related to this year's funding request, responses to the evaluation criteria should address the entire project. For Evaluation Criterion 5, applicants should provide best available estimates if all project costs are not yet known.

Q: How should contract costs be captured in the budget? Do costs for materials, labor, fringe, etc. included in the contract need to be identified, or is the lump sum contract cost sufficient?

A: Construction contract and contractual service costs should be identified individually and may be expressed as a lump sum or by billable rate and number of hours. Detailed breakouts of construction or contractual service estimates may be attached to the proposal.

Q: If a project sponsor is not including its own staff time in the non-federal cost share or federal funding request can these costs be omitted from the budget?

A: Project costs that are not going to be reimbursed with federal funds or applied as non-federal cost share do not need to be included in the budget proposal.

Q: If some costs are known, such as for design and probable cost for construction, but travel, fringe, and some others are unknown; how are unknown costs to be addressed?

A: The proposed budget is an estimate of project costs, and costs are based on assumptions. It is important to identify any assumptions in your budget narrative. For travel, identify the purpose of the trips, the assumptions made to develop the estimate (such as location and duration), and what costs are included. For recurring costs such as fringe benefits, current costs can be the basis for estimating future costs.

Q: Can costs for proposal preparation and grant administration be included in the funding request or non-federal cost share?

A: Proposal costs, including costs associated with the negotiation and execution of the financial assistance agreement, are not considered direct project costs, therefore they cannot be included in the budget proposal. Post-award grant administration costs are eligible costs and can be included in the project budget.

Q: What are some examples of what would be considered “Equipment” and “Materials and Supplies”?

A: Examples of “equipment” are cranes, excavators, and other construction equipment owned or rented by the applicant for completion of project activities. Equipment use costs should be expressed using an hourly rate and estimated number of hours. Equipment may also include system control and data acquisition components, pumps, and other items over \$5,000 in value with a life-span over 1 year that will be purchased and installed by the applicant. Materials and supplies are items such as lumber, piping, and smaller components and other items with a value less than \$5,000 that will be purchased by the applicant and used to complete the project. If the equipment or materials/supplies will be furnished and installed by a contractor, the costs should be included in the contract cost estimate, do not itemize them in the budget proposal.

Q: If an invoice for the project covers time before and after July 12, 2017, how should work done on or after July 12, 2017 be included in the budget?

A: For questions related to specific project costs and invoices, please contact the Grants Management Specialist identified in the FOA.

Q: When determining the cost of water per acre-foot, is the entire project cost considered even where the entire cost of the project may not be known?

A: Yes, the cost per acre-foot will be determined based on the cost of the entire project. Where future costs are not known they may be estimated. Be sure to be consistent with how the project is defined throughout the proposal. For example, if your proposal discusses the environmental benefits of Phases 1 and 2 of your project under criterion 2, then be sure to include the costs for both Phases 1 and 2 under criterion 5.

Q: What if a project is only selected to receive a portion of the funding requested?

A: The project sponsor may include that funding in their request in subsequent fiscal years. The work that will be completed with that funding may continue, or be put on hold if federal funding is needed to complete the work.

Q: In the summary of non-federal funding sources where are State Revolving Fund loans included?

A: These are counted as part of the non-federal funding as long as there is no principal forgiveness. If there is principal forgiveness, the amount forgiven cannot be counted as part of the non-federal share.

Q: If the project sponsor received Reclamation funding for the development of the project's feasibility study, does that funding count towards the federal cost share for the project?

A: No, for WIIN projects Reclamation funding received for development of a feasibility study does not count toward the federal cost share. This funding also should not be included in the overall project cost.

Q: Can projects apply for just planning and/or design and not construction funds in this FOA?

A: Yes. Applicants can request funding for just planning, design, or construction alone, or any combination of the three.

Q: Why is only \$10M available out of the \$50M identified by Congress?

A: The language in section 4009(c) of WIIN is an authorization for Congress to appropriate up to \$50 million for projects made eligible by the WIIN amendments. It is not an actual appropriation of federal funds. The FY 2017 budget includes \$10 million in appropriations for projects made eligible by section 4009(c) of WIIN. This is the amount available to be allocated through the FY 2017 FOA.

Q: When will the next Title XVI WIIN FOA be released?

A: Reclamation anticipates that the FY 2018 FOA will be released between November, 2017 and January, 2018. This is an estimate and is subject to change.

Q: Are there items to look out for in this application that are very different from the Authorized Projects FOAs?

A: The evaluation criteria have been revised to ensure compliance with WIIN legislation. Also, budget information is required to be submitted with WIIN proposals, whereas under the Title XVI Authorized Project FOAs this information is developed as part of the award process after projects are identified for funding. This is due to timing constraints in this first year of WIIN implementation and may change in subsequent years.

Q: What if the project has a Reclamation approved feasibility study, but is solely an ocean or brackish water desalination project?

A: Projects that are solely ocean or brackish water desalination are not eligible for funding under the FY 2017 Title XVI WIIN FOA. Reclamation is working to develop a new WIIN Desalination Program. An FOA for these projects is expected in the fall or winter of 2018.

General Tips:

- Contact Reclamation if you have questions that aren't answered above. Contact information for both programmatic and financial assistance questions is identified in the FOA.
- Consider contacting your local Reclamation office to discuss the necessary environmental and cultural resource compliance required for your project under NEPA, especially when developing your budget and schedule.
- Copy the evaluation criterion verbatim into the proposal. Address all evaluation criterion. Don't forget to address all parts of multi-part questions. Provide detailed support for your statements wherever possible.
- Start necessary registrations early – processes take time:
 - DUNS (Data Universal Number System) Number – used to establish a business credit file and required to register in SAM.gov
 - SAM.gov (System for Award Management) – required to receive a federal grant or cooperative agreement
 - ASAP.gov (Automated Standard Application for Payments) – required to access awarded federal funds
- Don't wait for the last minute to submit through grants.gov. If things are not going well through grants.gov, overnight a hard copy of your application to ensure it is received by the application deadline.