**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**RFA SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RFP NUMBER AND TITLE:** | **RFA #202305100 Community Action Grant** |
| **RFP ISSUED BY:** | Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:** | June 9, 2023 no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:** | June 16, 2023 |
| **PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** | July 7, 2023 no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **PROPOSALS DUE TO:** | Proposals@maine.gov |

**The following includes questions received by email as well as questions asked and responses given verbally during the RFA informational webinar on June 1, 2023. Additionally, several relevant questions have been re-posted here from the Service Provider Grant webinar on June 1, 2023.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| RFA Section C, page 5 | You mentioned earlier in the presentation that regional planning organizations can apply on behalf of low population/high social vulnerability communities. Is this a change from previous grant rounds? I can't seem to find it in the RFA under the eligible entities section. *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| The RFA states “Service Providers may apply on behalf of groups of communities only for actions listed in the List of Community Actions. Letters of support must be provided from each community in the proposed group.” This has been the case in previous grant rounds as well. In cases where another entity is applying on behalf of communities, we encourage that it is on behalf of lower capacity or higher vulnerability communities. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| RFA Section C, page 5 | Earlier in the presentation, you said that municipal and tribal governments (or regional planning organizations on behalf of the governments) can apply for the Community Action Grant. In the past, other non-profit organizations could also apply on behalf of municipal/tribal governments, especially in the case of a collaborative application. Is that still allowed? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| The RFA states “Service Providers may apply on behalf of groups of communities only for actions listed in the List of Community Actions. Letters of support must be provided from each community in the proposed group.” In cases where another entity, such as a nonprofit, is applying on behalf of communities, we encourage that it is on behalf of lower capacity or higher vulnerability communities. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| RFA Section C, page 5 | During the informational webinar, one of our team members thought they heard you say that Service Providers or regional planning organizations could apply on behalf of one community if it was a low-SVI community. The RFA states “groups of communities” and there’s no mention of SVI. Which is correct? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| While we encourage service providers to target their assistance to smaller and more vulnerable communities, the RFA makes no such official distinction. If a service provider applies to be a Community Action Grant awardee and receive the grant funds, it must be on behalf of a group of communities as described in the RFA. A service provider may apply to the Community Action Grant on behalf of (or more accurately, submit an application for) a single town if the town is to be the awardee and recipient of the funds.  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **4** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| RFA Section C, page 5 | We are interested in collaborating with other municipalities who have not yet applied to the Community Resilience Partnership. Can part of our grant proposal include communicating with these other municipalities to create a partnership and encourage them to enroll in the CRP in the anticipation of the next round of funding? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| We would certainly encourage you to communicate and partner with neighboring communities. However, we are unlikely to fund part of a scope of work that encourages other communities to join enroll in the Partnership as that activity is more in line with a Service Provider Grant. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **5** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section D, page 6 | To get the $125,000 for a joint Community Action Grant shared by two towns, do all elements of the application have to be joint or can it be a mix of joint projects and single-town projects? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| The spirit of the joint proposal option is that the involved communities will collaborate on specific shared priorities. The core elements of a joint application will be collaborative in nature. Any secondary individual-community elements should support the shared priorities. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **6** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section D, page 6 | If two towns work together to apply for a joint $125k grant proposal, but the project only totals $100k, can the remaining $25k be split equally between the towns for other projects? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| The spirit of the joint proposal option is that the involved communities will collaborate on specific shared priorities. The core elements of a joint application will be collaborative in nature. Any secondary individual-community elements should support the shared priorities. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **7** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section D, page 6 | Will grants be awarded first come, first served or will the award decisions be made after all applications are submitted after the deadline? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| All applications are reviewed after the application deadline has passed. New for this round, GOPIF intends to prioritize awards to those applicants who have not previously received funding under this grant program. Awards will be made starting with first-time applicants that score highest and awards being made to subsequent applicants in order of the scores received. In order to be considered for prioritization, the first-time application must receive a minimum score of 75 total points (this minimum is not a guarantee of an award). If funds remain available after awarding first-time application awards, the Department will issue awards to applicants who have previously received funding from Community Action Grants, starting with the highest scores awarded.  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **8** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section E, page 6 | Our vendor cannot start the project until spring 2024. What is the timeframe that a grant must be used? If the project spans longer than the next budget cycle, would that be held against you if you haven’t been able to enact the first portion? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| The performance period for the Community Action Grant is either 12 or 24 months, as requested in the application. The applicant might consider breaking the scope of work into two or more phases for subsequent grant applications if there is a concern the project may be disrupted by vendor availability or local budget timelines. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **9** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section F, page 6 | What is the timing on the Grants for 2023 and 2024? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| Pending availability of funding, the Department anticipates future grant rounds to occur at approximately 8-10 month intervals. A potential schedule of future rounds would be:Round 4: Winter-Spring 2024Round 5: Fall-Winter 2024Applicants may apply only once per grant round but may apply to subsequent grant rounds as desired. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **10** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | Are there available funds that could possibly be used to help finance a deeded public park? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| Within the List of Community Actions, most of the activities related to public open space are under Strategy E and focus on local planning- or policy-related actions. Action E5 is the only action that leaves the door open for grant funds to be used for land acquisition and conservation, albeit in the specific case of riparian areas with a stated focus on restoring floodplain function. In such a proposal, we would be extremely keen on seeing other local and state funds (such as Land for Maine’s Future) applied first to the project, and even more keen to see Partnership funds supporting non-acquisition project tasks. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **11** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | Will Community Action grants cover purchase of tools and staff support for a municipal library of electric landscaping tools? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| There are two types of Community Action Grants: 1) No-match grants to support implementation of one or more activities in the List of Community Actions that are aligned with the state’s climate action plan, Maine Won’t Wait; and 2) Grants to support other community-defined climate and energy implementation priorities. A cost-share (match) will apply. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **12** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | Can municipalities apply for multiple projects within one grant application: e.g., $10K for library of electric tools within total grant request of $50K? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| Applicants may combine multiple activities under one proposal.  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **13** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | For action item B1 "Adopt and execute a plan for energy efficiency and building envelope weatherization improvements for municipal/tribal buildings.”, will the Community Action Grant cover weatherization equipment and materials (e.g., window inserts, spray foam insulation, etc.) for residences that are owned by a tribe (i.e., tribal housing authority) since they are not private residences? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| Expanding the answer to address public housing more generally, if the housing is owned by an entity of municipal or tribal government, then grant funds may be used to improve energy efficiency and weatherization, this being an example of leading by example and benefiting vulnerable populations. (Residences that are operated as public housing but are not owned by an entity of municipal or tribal government are not eligible at this time.) The application budget must include any applicable Efficiency Maine incentives and Maine Housing Authority funding in the project budget, and the applicant is strongly encouraged to partner with and provide letters of collaboration from Efficiency Maine and Maine Housing. Additionally, since a $50,000 grant may not go very far across multiple public residences, we encourage the applicant to consider starting with a community planning process for energy efficiency investments in public housing that includes community engagement; collaboration with Efficiency Maine, Maine Housing, and community groups; and integration with other sources of energy efficiency funding such as LIHEAP. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **14** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | Since certain activities in the List of Community Actions require planning, is planning a fundable activity within this grant? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| Yes, many of the activities in the List of Community Actions are related to planning, particularly if that planning leads to policy changes or to permitting, design, or engineering that enables a project to seek additional funding support. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **15** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | Efficiency Maine provides incentives for VRF heat pump retrofits to all heating systems with the sole exception of natural gas heating. Would this policy thus exclude such retrofits for CRP grants per the new changes mentioned earlier in webinar? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| An energy efficiency heating and cooling system, such as the heat pump or VRF, must be eligible for Efficiency Maine’s incentives in order to be eligible for a Community Action Grant. Furthermore, oil or natural gas hybrid-electric heat pump systems are not eligible for a Community Action Grant, even if they are eligible for Efficiency Maine incentives. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **16** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | Can a town’s climate resilience committee receive funding to help property owners understand and implement ways of increasing energy efficiency and lowering greenhouse gas emissions by improving weatherization and/or installing heat pumps in their homes? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| First, a clarification about who is eligible to receive grants funds: a municipality or tribal government or an unorganized territory is eligible to receive the funds. Therefore, one of these units of local government could receive the funds and designate the committee to manage the grant project. Second, refer to the List of Community Actions to answer the question about the eligibility of certain activities. This sounds like it relates to community outreach, so perhaps look to the actions under Strategy H. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **17** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | When listing tasks in the application, how detailed should we be? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| More detail is better than less but please do what conveys the details of your proposed work as best as possible. We want to know the work that is going to be done, who is going to do it, on what timeline, what cost, what the outcomes of each of those tasks will be, and how it contributes to the project as a whole. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **18** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | Are there recommended word limits for sections of the application? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| There are no word limits. More detail is better than less but please do what conveys the details of your proposed work as best as possible. A typical application ranges somewhere from 4 to 10 pages or so. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **19** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section G, page 7 | During the webinar there was a question about funding multiple projects in a single proposal, and it sounded like you were not discouraging communities from doing so. Can you clarify if communities should focus on one project per application/round? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| Communities are permitted to bundle disparate activities into a single proposal. It is possible that any proposal may be partially funded. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **20** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | Can application be for a mix or projects, some of which are on the List of Community Actions (with no matching requirement) and some of which are not on the list (requiring a 10% match)? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| If an application mixes match and non-match activities, the scope of work, budget narrative, and budget worksheet should clearly distinguish between the match and non-match components. See the RFA document for additional information on the match and non-match options. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **21** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | Is it possible within one application to mix projects that qualify for the no-match funding and those that do not? For example, perhaps a portion of my application requests $30,000 for projects that are listed within the List of 72 Actions and another portion requests $20,000 for other resilience related projects that are not specifically prioritized within the List of 72 Actions. The $20,000 portion of the requested funds would require a local match, however, the $30,000 would not. Do these different match and no-match grant types require a separate application? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| If an application mixes match and non-match activities, the scope of work, budget narrative, and budget worksheet should clearly distinguish between the match and non-match components. See the RFA document for additional information on the match and non-match options. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **22** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | If we apply for a project for which match is not required, should other funds or in-kind support still be included in the application, and if so will it make the application a better candidate for funding? We are hypothetically looking at a project which would have approximately 100% in-kind match for our public works department to do the installation. *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| We are interested in knowing what, if any, other sources of funding and effort an applicant is bringing to the project, even if match is not required. Whether this information helps an application is dependent upon the specific details of the individual application. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **23** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | For a project that would reduce vehicle miles traveled, how do we quantify total emission reduction on the application? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| Estimating the reduction in miles traveled and in fuel usage would be sufficient for the purposes of this application. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **24** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | How do we specifically demonstrate lower capacity or higher vulnerability in our community? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| For vulnerability, the RFA document and CRP website provide links to the Maine Social Vulnerability Index, which lists communities as high, medium or low social vulnerability. The Partnership does not currently define low capacity, so communities can determine how to make that demonstration on their own based on availability of staff or volunteers. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **25** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section H, page 8 | One of our enrollees asked if they needed to include the value of federal solar tax credits for a municipal solar project in the application budget. I don’t see that anywhere in the RFA. *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| Applicants are not required to enter solar tax credit information into the project budget at this time. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **26** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section L, page 11 | How do we attach pages outside the application itself? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| One option is when you convert your application into a PDF with Adobe Acrobat or a similar software, it allows you to combine pages from separate files. You can also attach multiple files to the single email that you will send when you submit your application. The email address that it goes to is a dedicated address for proposals for the RFA process. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **27** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section L, page 11 | If photos or charts are useful, should they be attachments or can they be inserted in the text? *(Asked during June 1 informational webinar)* |
| **Answer** |
| Attachments are welcome to be either included in an appendix or attached to the email that contains your application. Do not send them in a separate email. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **28** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Section N, page 14 | Can (partial) grants reflect approval of some elements of an application but not others? *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| The review committee may at its discretion award funding to some elements of an application and not others. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **29** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Service Provider RFA** **#202305099** Section C, page 5 | Can a county enroll in the Community Resilience Partnership? If so, can a county work with a service provider to assist with the enrollment process and a community action grant application? Some of the strategies in the 'Maine Won't Wait' Climate Action Plan may be beneficial to implement at a countywide level. *(Submitted via email)* |
| **Answer** |
| Counties are not eligible to enroll in the Community Resilience Partnership and are not eligible to apply for a Community Action Grant. However, counties are eligible to apply, or be a partner on an application, for a Service Provider Grant to assist 2-5 communities with enrolling in the Partnership and assist communities with applying for a Community Action Grant. |