**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**RFA AMENDMENT #1 AND**

**RFA SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

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| **RFA NUMBER AND TITLE:** | 202311223 Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative |
| **RFA ISSUED BY:** | Department of Education |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:** | December 15, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. local time |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:** | December 27, 2023 |
| **PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** | January 12, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. local time |
| **PROPOSALS DUE TO:** | [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov) |

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| **Unless specifically addressed below, all other provisions and clauses of the RFA remain unchanged.** |
| **DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES IN RFA:**  Clarification on awards. |
| **REVISED LANGUAGE IN RFA:**  Additional language added to Application Details and Instructions Section F Awards, pg. 7:    Applications will be evaluated within the funding category they fall under, as defined in the table on page 7. The actual funding amount requested in the application will have no impact on the success of the application. However:   * an application’s total budget may not exceed $999,999 and * only applications with total budgets of at least $25,000 will be considered for award. Applications with budgets of less than $25,000 will not be considered. |

**Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department’s answer.**

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| **1** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section D, pg. 5 | Can there be applications from two organizations within the same Town? For example, we are a member of the MRPA and were thinking of applying.  I’m reaching out to our school department to see if they had thoughts as well.  Could we both apply or could only 1 apply? |
| **Answer** | |
| Both entities could apply if the programs are not identical, and the reimbursement requests are not for the same expenses. Please refer to questions #15 and 27 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **2** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 and Application, pg. 17 | I am planning on applying for the Outdoor Learning Grant for the program I run, and I was curious about the line, "Assures that background checks have been completed for all personnel who are in contact with students, a written policy is in place regarding required background checks, and copies of all pertinent records are kept on file." Sometimes students go on field trips to Appalachian Mountain Club, work with Maine Audubon or others during the program, or come for a class visit for a short period of time always in groups and always with a teacher present. Are those professionals we meet with, and visit expected to be background checked in order to qualify for the grant? Or does contact mean prolonged content? |
| **Answer** | |
| It is the applicant’s/subrecipient’s responsibility to ensure that all programmatic staff have passed background checks and are verified to work with students. This responsibility and assurance does not extend to the occasional vendor or personnel who does not have prolonged involvement in the student’s activities. The programmatic staff who have passed background checks should always be present with the occasional vendor or personnel. | |

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| **3** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Our organization does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a cognizant federal agency. We regularly use the de minimis rate of 10% where allowed. Does this mean that we cannot include any indirect cost in our budget for this MDOE grant program, even at a restricted rate of 2-5%? |
| **Answer** | |
| The Maine DOE cannot reimburse for a de minimis rate or an indirect cost rate unless there is an existing agreement between an organization and its’ federal cognizant agency. However, *overhead expenses* are potentially reimbursable. All costs must be approved, applicable and aligned to the objectives of the RFA. Please refer to questions #43, 67, 68 and 71 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **4** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Can we only include funding requests for programs that are entirely free for all participants? For example, could we request funds to cover all costs of a program when some participants are paying and some receive scholarships? |
| **Answer** | |
| If your program includes paying and scholarship students, the Maine DOE will reimburse for the cost of the scholarship students. The submitted application needs to reflect the scholarship students only. A program does not need to be exclusively for scholarship students. A blend of paying and scholarship students may be appropriate. Please refer to question #21 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **5** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | This year (there will be a local) ice skating rink which is free to the public.  They do not offer skate rentals. We would like to purchase around 50 pairs of skates so our students can get outside and enjoy the rink. Would something like this be considered for the Maine Outdoor Initiative? |
| **Answer** | |
| Supplies critical to the success of a program addressing the lost instructional time are appropriate. Following the grant period these personal supplies (i.e., skates) remain the responsibility and property of the organization to be used for the same purpose they were purchased. Appendix A of the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Please refer to questions #10, 11, 12, 13, 25, and 35 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **6** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | In reviewing your RFA, I cannot seem to find details regarding when your awards will be announced. Is there any information you can share with me, even an approximate date range, regarding award announcements? |
| **Answer** | |
| In mid-February, an email is expected to be sent to all individual(s) listed on the Application Cover Page (pg. 11 of the RFA document). Successful, approved applicants will receive a Notice of Conditional Award Letter attached to this email. It is important that applicants read this letter and understand approval is strictly *conditional* until a SubAward Agreement (contract) is signed by both parties and then accepted by the State’s Procurement Department. The full Selection Package will be publicly available mid/late-February on the Division of Procurement Services website, <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants>. Please refer to questions #8, 33, 38, 41, 54 and 70 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **7** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Appendix A, pg. 20 | Our middle school received a RREV grant from the Maine DOE for an outdoor classroom, outdoor pizza oven and greenhouse/aquaponics system for our students to engage in hands-on real world practical outdoor experiences. Our RREV grant is ending in June. We were wondering if this Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative Grant might be something we could apply for to further extend our initial project to allow for the expansion of the use of the Applied Outdoor Learning Lab to all of our middle school students in grades 5-8. Basically, we would be looking for funds to pay stipends to teachers to continue the development of the project and enhance/extend the opportunities, pay for supplies for the engaging hands-on projects we would like to do with all of our middle school students, and pay for purchased services to partner with local agencies such as Maine Outdoor School, the Audubon Society, Fields Pond, Great Pond Mountain, etc. |
| **Answer** | |
| A condition of the SubAward Agreement will state that “the Subrecipient shall not submit any services or assistance for reimbursement, which the awardee has already received federal funding reimbursement for.” If the reimbursement requests (invoices) for MOLI have not been paid with any other federal grants than the MOLI grant could be used to enhance/extend the programs started under another grant. | |

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| **8** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | My understanding is that funds must be used before the start of the 24-25 school year. I just want to clarify that this is correct. Does this also mean that all programming must also happen in that time frame? I'm having a hard time finding programming for students that is available as many options are booked and that is a very quick time frame to make. Is it possible to use these grant funds for programming that would happen during the 24-25 school year? |
| **Answer** | |
| No programming in school year 2024-2025 can be supported with this grant. All programming must be completed by September 1st, 2024, due to federal funding requirements.  Please refer to questions #6, 33, 38, 41, 54 and 70 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **9** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Last summer we experienced that one barrier to enrolling participants in summer programming is that they would lose income from their summer job. Could we use MOLI funds to provide a stipend to offset that lost income to lower the barrier to participation? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. The budget for such costs may go in the “student stipend” category of the Program Budget. Details of these anticipated costs should be in the Budget Narrative. Please refer to questions #18, 35, 37 and 65 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **10** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Could MOLI funds be used to provide a stipend or reimbursement to support the purchase of personal gear so that participants have appropriate gear for their program and keep said gear after completing the program e.g., hiking boots, raincoat, thermal base layers, etc.? |
| **Answer** | |
| The actual cost of supplies, including personal gear, critical to the success of a program addressing the lost instructional time are appropriate for reimbursement, not a stipend. Following the grant period these personal supplies remain the responsibility and property of the organization to be used for the same purpose they were purchased. Appendix A for the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Please refer to question #5, 11, 12, 13, 25 and 35 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **11** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Could MOLI funds be used to purchase equipment such as a canoe or kayak with a lifetime that extends beyond the timeframe of the program? In this example, the canoe or kayak would be used for MOLI participants and would continue to be used for other programming going forward. |
| **Answer** | |
| Equipment critical to the success of a program addressing the lost instructional time is appropriate for reimbursement. Following the grant period these items remain the responsibility and property of the organization to be used for the same purpose they were purchased. Appendix A of the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Please refer to questions #5, 10, 12, 13, 25, and 35 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **12** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Could MOLI funds be used to purchase equipment such as PFDs, paddles and helmets with a lifetime that extends beyond the timeframe of the program? In this example, the PFDs, paddles and helmets would be used for MOLI participants and would continue to be used for other programming going forward. |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #5, 10, 11, 13, 25 and 35 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **13** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Could MOLI funds be used to purchase equipment such as sleeping bags, dry bags and backpacks with a lifetime that extends beyond the timeframe of the program? In this example, the sleeping bags, dry bags and backpacks would be used for MOLI participants and would continue to be used for other programming going forward. |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #5, 10, 11, 12, 25 and 35 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **14** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | What demographic information about the participants are you going to require us to report on? What if the families or participants refuse to share this information? What is our obligation to report on such information? |
| **Answer** | |
| These programs are designed to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on student subgroups. At a minimum, the demographic information (student groups) being collected for the U.S. Department of Education are each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English language learners, gender, migratory students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care. Detailed information would be provided and outlined as a part of the SubAward Agreement. Please refer to questions #20 and 50 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **15** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section D, pg. 5 | Can more than one organization team up to jointly submit a single application? If so, could a single organization submit its own application as well as a joint application with one or more organizational partners? |
| **Answer** | |
| If multiple organizations team up to submit one application, there must be one fiscal agent. If a single and joint application is submitted, they cannot be for identical programs and/or expenses. Please refer to question # 1 and 27 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **16** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Were the MOLI informational webinars recorded |
| **Answer** | |
| No, the MOLI informational webinars were not recorded. | |

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| **17** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Can MOLI funds be used to have students participate in the Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership summer program? |
| **Answer** | |
| A school may ask for student scholarships to attend an outdoor learning adventure organization. However, that organization cannot request a scholarship for the identical student or expenses. The budget for such costs may go in the “contracted services” category of the Program Budget. Details of these anticipated costs should be in the Budget Narrative. | |

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| **18** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Can MOLI funds be used to provide stipends to students who participate in a summer program? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. Please refer to questions #9, 18, 35, 37 and 65 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **19** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5, Federal Funding Requirements and Assurances, pg. 13, Application (Budget), pg. 19, Appendix A, pg. 20 and Appendix B, pg. 22 | Focusing on stewardship and students attaining career skills - could the funds be used to build a skate park? Designed and built by students along with a local carpenter, filling a definite need in the community. Students would attain design and carpentry skills as well as receive a stipend for their work. Certainly, this all happens outdoors and leads to outdoor action sports BUT is the focus of the MOLI grant more on nature-based education? |
| **Answer** | |
| Building a skate park could satisfy the funding requirement for programing that “incorporates meaningful educational experiences”. Major capital, defined as the acquisition of real property or the construction, major alteration, or major repair, is not an allowable expense for this grant. Equipment and supplies that are critical to the success of the program are eligible for reimbursement. Appendix A of the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Special attention should be paid the Agency Uniform Guidance § 200.318 General procurement standards (pg. 22 of the RFA) as well as the requirements for bids and prevailing wages. Please refer to questions #32, 55, 62, and 72 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **20** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C and D, pg. 5 | Please expand on what may be considered “disadvantaged populations.” What constitutes disadvantage and will documentation of their disadvantaged status be required? |
| **Answer** | |
| For the purposes of this grant, “students from disadvantaged circumstances” is as stated in the RFA – “students who have or have had infrequent opportunities to access outdoor educational experiences due to geographic, financial or other barriers”. Reporting on the student groups will be required. Please refer to questions #14 and 50 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **21** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 | How should we navigate if only a portion of the population in a program might be considered “disadvantaged?” For example, some school districts are considered “disadvantaged” as a whole, but some individual schools within the district would not be counted as such. |
| **Answer** | |
| For this grant, recruitment should be targeted to students from disadvantaged circumstances. If an existing program has a mix of students, we will reimburse for the cost of scholarships for the students from disadvantaged circumstances. Please refer to question #4 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **22** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | In order to improve our eligibility and ensure that we are aligned with the standards outlined in the RFA, we are considering working with a pass-through organization that works with federal and state grants. Is it permissible? |
| **Answer** | |
| The entity writing the application must be the entity receiving the funds. | |

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| **23** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application, pg. 17 | Program scholarship funds are eligible to be included within the parameters of this grant. Would you be looking for a specific number of awardees, or a specific amount of money? Both? |
| **Answer** | |
| Both, the number of students to be served and the amount of funds per awardee need to be reflected in the Application. There is no minimum requirement for the number of scholarship students. Only applications with budget requests of $25,000 or greater will be considered. Applications with budgets of less than $25,000 are not eligible. | |

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| **24** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | If scholarships are given out to disadvantaged children who are integrated into a day camp program, does this camp group need to be exclusively disadvantaged youth? Can it be blended programming? |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to question #4 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **25** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Would you expand on equipment purchase and use for programming (such as tents or snowshoes)? Is the limit for equipment purchase $5,000 total or per item? Can the gear be gifted to participants as part of our programming? |
| **Answer** | |
| Equipment critical to the success of a program addressing the loss of instructional time is eligible for reimbursement. The $5,000 dollar amount is a threshold, not a limit, set by the Code of Federal Regulations to differentiate equipment from supplies. Following the grant period any supplies and equipment remain the responsibility and property of the organization to be used for the same purpose they were purchased. Appendix A of the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Please refer to questions #5, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 35 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **26** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Demographic Prioritization, Marketing and Outreach Plan), pg. 18 | You have listed the necessity of a marketing and promotion plan. Will this be necessary if we have already secured participants? |
| **Answer** | |
| Prioritizing students from disadvantaged circumstances is required as part of the 40 points in the Proposal section of the Application. If students have already been recruited, the Marketing and Outreach Plan of the Application should detail how the secured students were recruited and how the students meet the RFA requirements. | |

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| **27** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section F Awards, pg. 7 | Is it acceptable to apply for multiple initiatives under one application? We plan to apply grant funds to four separate initiatives, each aligning with the purpose of the grant. For example, we want to: work with immigrant youth in the spring; offer scholarships to disadvantaged youth at our summer day camp (not the immigrant youth because we are a day camp only); provide a 6th Grade Outdoor Safety day for a number of local school districts; add a Teen Adventure week to our summer camp specifically targeting disadvantaged youth. |
| **Answer** | |
| Only one application per applicant can be submitted; however, the application may include differentiated, discrete programs described and broken down therein. Please refer to questions #1 and 15 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **28** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application, pg. 17 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Funds are allowed for programming with 6-12 grader participants. One group we are working with is focused on recent immigrants and their families. Would it be acceptable to request funding for a family day culminating event with the 6-12 graders and their parents etc.? Additionally, could this be a circumstance in which food costs could be covered by the grant? |
| **Answer** | |
| The additional details provided in the complete Application will determine if this type of event and expenses could be approved. If a family day is clearly tied to the program goals and evaluation (learning outcomes), this may be appropriate. Meal costs may be reimbursed only if meals are critical to the student(s) participation and learning success; no additional costs should be incurred because parents are joining. | |

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| **29** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Please tell us more about professional development as part of the grant. For example - if part of our programming requires participants to become CPR certified, can we apply for funds to certify Camp Beech Cliff staff as CPR Instructors? |
| **Answer** | |
| Costs related to professional development of the staff serving the grant-funded students are eligible for reimbursement. The budget for such costs may go in the “contracted services” category of the Program Budget. Details of these anticipated costs should be in the Budget Narrative. Please refer to questions #30 and 36 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **30** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application pg. 17 | Can we apply for funds to train the staff of a group we are working with as Youth Mental Health First Aiders? We are Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructors, and we want their staff to be prepared to support their youth that we are working with. |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #29 and 36 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **31** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 | Are these grants only for grades 6-12? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. Please refer to questions #57 and 58 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **32** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Appendix B, pg. 22 | Do we have to go to bid on our projects for building a facility or is there a waiver due to the tight timeline of September 2024? |
| **Answer** | |
| Major capital, defined as the acquisition of real property or the construction, major alteration, or major repair, is not an allowable expense for this grant. Please refer to questions #19, 55, 62, and 72 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **33** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | Does all the awarded money need to be spent by September 2024? |
| **Answer** | |
| All programming must be completed by September 1st, 2024, and all reimbursement requests must be sent by September 13, 2024, due to federal funding requirements. Please refer to questions #6, 8, 33, 38, 41, 54 and 70 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **34** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application pg. 17 | Our question is in regard to making the program available at no cost to students and families. Our current program is offered with a sliding scale tuition including and at no cost. We have roughly a third of families at no cost, a third in the middle of the spectrum and the final third paying the full amount. The program is heavily grant funded and the tuition is a small amount of our total program budget.   * 1. Is this acceptable within the requirements of the grant in targeting underserved communities?   2. If not, would we be able to use funds to support the two-thirds of our participants who do not pay full tuition?   3. Would we still be able to use funds towards reducing program costs such as acquiring a van and reducing transportation costs? |
| **Answer** | |
| Using the funds to support the tuition (scholarships) for the two-thirds of participants is likely acceptable. The cost of a student scholarship is expected to cover all applicable program costs. Transportation should be included in the cost of the scholarship. It’s rare for a budget request to include both scholarships andadditional program costs. The additional details provided in the completed Application will determine if the proposed budget is applicable, reasonable, and necessary. Please refer to questions #4 and 21 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **35** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | May funds from this grant be used for extracurricular activities: stipends, equipment and field trips? |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #9, 18, 37 and 65 of this QA Summary for an answer regarding stipends. Please refer to questions #5, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 25 of this QA Summary for an answer regarding equipment. In-state field trips are an allowable expense just as long as they are approved, reasonable and necessary. | |

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| **36** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Are the following professional development scenarios covered by the MOLI grant?   * Further development of an existing annual professional development teacher workshop facilitated by our education team held in summer * Initial development of a professional development teacher workshop facilitated by our education team held in spring * Facilitator salaries, overhead, binders, printed materials, teacher stipends, teacher lodging, for professional development workshop facilitated by our education team held in summer for classes that participating teachers will oversee in the fall * Kit of classroom materials and field equipment for teachers attending the aforementioned summer professional development workshop |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #29 and 30 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **37** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Can a rising freshman (student who graduated from 8th grade and is going into 9th grade) receive a stipend? Are the stipends for high school students only? |
| **Answer** | |
| Student stipends are not limited to high school students. Please refer to questions #9, 18, 35 and 65 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **38** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application pg. 17 | What mid-winter start date should we use for our program? Would February 1 work? |
| **Answer** | |
| The program description or scope of work should determine the start date. Please refer to questions #6, 8, 33, 38, 41, 54 and 70 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **39** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Can we copy and paste additional “Other (specify)” lines in the Program Budget section if we have more than 1 additional line item to include? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, additional lines can be added as necessary remembering to be specify with the description. The titles of the existing 7 budget categories should not be changed. | |

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| **40** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application pg. 17 | Should we share information about matching funds in the budget narrative or is there another location that would be preferred? |
| **Answer** | |
| Brief information about matching funds should be included in the Program Description and/or Budget Narrative. This grant program cannot be used as matching funds for other grant program(s). | |

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| **41** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | Some of the information indicates the program must be completed by September 1, 2024. Does this mean that our outdoor education program we would like to use the grant money for can only go until Sept 1? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. Please refer to questions #6, 8, 33, 38, 54 and 70 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **42** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | I understand that the money needs to be spent by September 1st but when will the itemized report be due? |
| **Answer** | |
| Final itemized invoices will be due by September 13th, 2024. Maine DOE will circulate a website link to collect program evaluation reports, including the student subgroup data. This report will be due in late September/early October 2024. | |

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| **43** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Can indirect costs include financial administration (accounting and coding) of funds? Can they include grant reporting (data tracking and analysis, writing)? |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #3, 67, 68, and 71 of this QA Summary and Appendix A of the RFA for more information about an indirect cost rate vs overhead expense. All costs submitted for reimbursement must be approved, applicable, and aligned to the objectives of the RFA. | |

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| **44** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Appendix A, pg. 20 | Will mileage costs be reimbursed at the federal or state rate? |
| **Answer** | |
| Mileage costs will be reimbursed at the state rate, [Mileage & Other Info | Office of the State Controller (maine.gov)](https://www.maine.gov/osc/travel/mileage-other-info). Please refer to question #45 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **45** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Appendix A, pg. 20 | If vendors who are being paid for transportation use the federal rate as justification for their invoiced amount, can they be paid at the full amount, or would it be prorated for the state reimbursement amount? |
| **Answer** | |
| Prorated for the state reimbursement amount. Please refer to question #44 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **46** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | Can we hire a consultant to assist with program evaluation? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, if the cost is reasonable, necessary, and critical to the program outcomes. All costs submitted for reimbursement must be approved, applicable and aligned to the objectives of the RFA. | |

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| **47** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Can we contract a photographer for marketing purposes? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, if the cost is reasonable, necessary, and critical to the program outcomes. All costs submitted for reimbursement must be approved, applicable and aligned to the objectives of the RFA. | |

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| **48** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | When reporting participant numbers, can repeat instances of the same individual count as a participant each time orwill we need to report on the number of unique individuals over the entire grant period? |
| **Answer** | |
| Unique headcounts will be required per program. For example, if a student participates in three different library programs, that student would be counted three times. If a student participates in a 3-week summer program, that student would be counted once. An individual student may be represented in multiple student subgroups (i.e., a student may be both an Alaska native and in foster care). Please refer to questions #14, 20 and 50 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **49** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | Can we/should we count numbers from events or programs at educational “fairs” where we have only a short time with each student? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, those unique individuals should be counted if the opportunity is supported by the MOLI grant (i.e., a fair, library event, etc.). | |

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| **50** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | Can you clarify demographic reporting requirements? What would you like us to do when our interactions are brief or that data isn’t available? |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #14, 20 and 50 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **51** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application pg. 17 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Can we offer the programs on a sliding scale (with $0 also being an option) to cover the cost of food on programs? |
| **Answer** | |
| The Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative (MOLI) funding should provide opportunities for grades 6-12 students at no cost to students and families. Organizations and schools are asked to seek alternative funding for meals/food whenever possible. Meal costs may be reimbursed under the Subaward Agreement only if meals are critical for the student(s) participation and learning success. The meal reimbursement budget may be entered under “non-instructional materials and supplies” section of the RFA budget. The additional details provided in a complete Application will determine if the proposed expense is approvable, reasonable, and necessary. | |

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| **52** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | How specific do we need to be when requesting funding for gear? Exact number of items and price or can it be more general? |
| **Answer** | |
| The budget requests in the Application should be based on actual costs and recent quotes. The budget narrative should reflect the exact number of items and prices. | |

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| **53** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application, pg. 17 | Should the application include a marketing plan, and if so, how much detail is required? |
| **Answer** | |
| Successful, thorough application will include a Marketing and Outreach Plan, as detailed in the RFA. | |

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| **54** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6 | I am wondering if we are buying equipment, passes, etc. to be used during the fall of 2024, will that be acceptable as long as we have submitted invoices prior to Sept 1? |
| **Answer** | |
| All *programming* must be completed by September 1st, 2024. Final invoices will be due by September 13th, 2024. Please refer to questions #6, 8, 33, 38, 41, and 70 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **55** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19, Appendix A, pg. 20, and Appendix B, pg. 22 | We have nature trails that span acreage behind Turner Elementary School, Tripp Middle School, and Leavitt Area High School campuses.  These trails are used to support cross-country running teams in grades 7-12, cross country skiing teams 7-12, phys ed classes 7-12, 10th grade biology class, and Forestry class at high school (elective available to grades 11-12). Additionally, the trails surround a maple stand, and the high school offers the Exploring River Valley class to grades 9-12, which includes a unit on Maple sugaring and caring for a maple stand.  We are intending to submit an application that will seek financial support to address drainage and tree thinning issues in this acreage. The bulk of this would be in the form of purchased services, however, we may need to bring in non-instructional materials/supplies in the form of gravel or wood chips. We are aware this grant will not pay for equipment and need more guidance on allowable non-instructional materials/supplies. |
| **Answer** | |
| The programming must “incorporate meaningful educational experiences”. Major capital, defined as the acquisition of real property or the construction, major alteration, or major repair, is not an allowable expense for this grant. All costs submitted for reimbursement must be approved, applicable and aligned to the objectives of the RFA. Equipment and supplies that are critical to the success of the program are eligible for reimbursement. Appendix A of the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Special attention should be paid the Agency Uniform Guidance § 200.318 General procurement standards (pg. 22 of the RFA) as well as the requirements for bids and prevailing wages. Please refer to questions #19, 32, 62, and 72 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **56** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | We intend to submit an application for will support the summer offering of Exploring River Valley which is a weeklong class that focuses on addressing environmental issues in our area.  This is a program that is established in our district, and this year we intend for the high school students to create an educational experience for 6-8 graders during their weeklong experience.  The application will look to support stipends for students (interns), transportation costs and consumable supplies for the 6-8th grader experience.  We are wondering if it would it be better to plan larger and not be able to fully spend the award amount as it is hard to estimate how many kids in the 6-8 age group would want to participate. |
| **Answer** | |
| The budget requests in the Application should be based on student interest level and the known targeted population. In this circumstance, a 10% leeway may be appropriate. For example, if 50 students are certain to participate, budgeting in the Application for 55 students would make sense. However, reimbursement is limited to the supplies used and actual expenses incurred. | |

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| **57** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 | Could you please clarify the target audience for this grant.  I believe it is 6 to 12th grade.  But many school districts that we serve have moved their 5th grade into their middle school cohort or due to size of the classes have blended 5th and 6th grade classes.  I ask this as we are looking to do some outdoor learning experiences with local schools in the spring that involve climate change issues and using trout raising and release in local streams late May into June.  So clarifying the definition of middle school kids would be great. |
| **Answer** | |
| Funding must be used for students in grades 6-12. Please refer to questions #31 and 58 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **58** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 | If a child has finished 5th grade and is entering 6th in the fall. Does that make them eligible for summer programming with us? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. Please refer to questions #31 and 57 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **59** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 | Regarding working with adult education students seeking their GED, there are potential populations of students who would normally be in 10th, 11th or 12th grade but for lots of reasons have decided to complete their HS education through a GED program offered by a local adult education system.  Could they count? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes. | |

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| **60** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 | There may be some other learners in a GED program that are striving to achieve their HS Equivalent degree.  They may be at a different typical age but are striving for that HS curriculum.  Would they qualify? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, if their age would be in the range of a traditional high schooler. | |

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| **61** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5 and Section E pg. 6 | Sometimes an unexpected expense or a change in pricing may result in budget lines not quite covering an anticipated cost. For example, a sudden driver shortage may result in a school needing to hire a private bus service for a field trip instead of using a district bus. What are the allowances in budget revisions after the approval of the grant? Would a certain percentage of each budget line be allowed to be reallocated or would the district need to incur the unexpected cost? |
| **Answer** | |
| Budget revisions between the submitted application and the mutually agreed upon Subaward Agreement are sometimes necessary. Per the RFA pg. 5, “funding may not be used for any expenses not mutually agreed upon within the written bidding contract” (SubAward Agreement). Per the RFA pg. 6, “any changes to the original funded proposal (including modifications to goals and/or objects) must receive prior approval by the Department.” After the SubAward is mutually agreed upon, deviations under ten percent between budget categories is allowable upon Department email approval. A formal, mutually agreed upon SubAward Agreement Amendment will be required to exceed a ten percent reallocation. | |

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| **62** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions Section C, pg. 5, and Federal Funding Requirements and Assurances, pg. 13, Appendix A, pg. 20, and Appendix B, pg. 22 | Is building or adding to an outdoor educational building to help facilitate the plan for outdoor programming allowed under this grant? |
| **Answer** | |
| The programming must “incorporate meaningful educational experiences”. Major capital, defined as the acquisition of real property or the construction, major alteration, or major repair, is not an allowable expense for this grant. All costs submitted for reimbursement must be approved, applicable and aligned to the objectives of the RFA. Equipment and supplies that are critical to the success of the program are eligible for reimbursement. Appendix A of the RFA has more information, including requirements for disposing or selling supplies and equipment. Special attention should be paid the Agency Uniform Guidance § 200.318 General procurement standards (pg. 22 of the RFA) as well as the requirements for bids and prevailing wages. Please refer to questions #19, 32, 55, and 72 of this QA Summary for additional information. <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30aff953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf> | |

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| **63** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section E, pg. 6, Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Personnel costs – will all necessary salary costs be covered or only a percentage?  RFA P. 20 “Reimbursement for supplementing the salaries of qualified personnel to provide and support family engagement, recruitment, educational programming, staff training, and partnership outreach for services performed before, during, and after programming.” |
| **Answer** | |
| All approved, reasonable, necessary costs will be covered. It may be appropriate to reimburse for a percentage or prorated amount if a program is a blend of scholarship and paying students. Please refer to question #4 and 21 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **64** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 | Will associated fringe benefits be covered? If so, at what rate of salaries and wages? No mention in RFA. |
| **Answer** | |
| Fringe benefits will be reimbursed at the same rate they are paid by the fiscal agent. | |

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| **65** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | What percentage of student intern stipends will MOLI cover?  RFA P. 20 – “Funds may be used to… supplement the pay to students.” |
| **Answer** | |
| All approved, reasonable, necessary costs will be covered. There is no minimum or maximum percentage for student stipends. It may be appropriate to reimburse for a percentage or prorated amount if a program is a blend of scholarship and paying students. Please refer to questions #9, 18, 35 and 37 of this QA Summary for additional information about stipends and questions #4 and 21 for additional information about blended programming. | |

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| **66** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | What is the definition of “Existing activities”? Does this mean 2023 budget shortfall, or anticipating 2024 budget shortfall? Is it a project budget shortfall or organization budget shortfall?  *RFA p. 21 “In addition to enhancing and increasing programming, awardees may use ARP ESSER funds to bridge budget shortfall for existing activities and programming.”* |
| **Answer** | |
| An existing activity is an activity that is currently funded and operating but could be enhanced or elevated (i.e., Increase participation, multiple offerings) with additional funding. These grant funds could bridge the budget of the existing program to the enhanced or elevated program during the period of performance, which is 02/01/2024 – 09/01/2024. | |

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| **67** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | Why is it a ‘Restricted Indirect Cost Rate?” How will DOE determine what % rate to use?  RFA p.21 “The Department offers no guarantee of a specific indirect cost rate for potential bidders.” |
| **Answer** | |
| Parameters are established by funding agencies (U.S. Department of Education) and monitored by the pass-through agency (Maine DOE). Please refer to questions #3, 43, 68 and 71 of this QA Summary and Appendix A of the RFA for additional information. | |

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| **68** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | If our organization typically uses a ‘de minimis’ indirect cost rate of 10%, do we need to show documentation from a ‘cognizant agency?” If so, what does that document look like, and who qualifies as a ‘cognizant agency?’  RFA P. 21 “If awarded, DOE will require copies of appropriate supporting documentation from the applicant’s cognizant agency.” |
| **Answer** | |
| Please refer to questions #3, 43 67 and 71 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **69** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Details and Instructions, Section F Awards, pg. 7 | Can you clarify the maximum amount an organization is able to apply for? |
| **Answer** | |
| The maximum amount allowed is $999,999; however, each item and budget line must be reasonable and necessary to obtain the program goals. | |

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| **70** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | I understand that grant decisions will be made in mid-February. At what date are grantees eligible to start incurring expenses that will be eligible for reimbursement? We are hoping to run a Portland Youth Corps session in the spring, as we did this year, and would like to apply MOLI grants funds towards these expenses. |
| **Answer** | |
| The period of performance for the SubAward Agreements (contracts) will be 02/01/2024 – 09/01/2024. Pre-award costs are only applicable for reimbursement if they are contractually approved expenses. It is important that applicants understand the Notice of Conditional Award Letter is strictly *conditional* until a SubAward Agreement is signed by both parties and then accepted by the State’s Procurement Department. There is a level of risk to the awardee that costs may not be reimbursed. Please refer to questions #6, 8, 33, 38, 41, and 54 of this QA Summary for additional information. | |

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| **71** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application (Budget), pg. 19 and Appendix A, pg. 20 | I'm confused about what indirect costs are allowable. You refer to a grantee's "cognizant agency" (pg. 21) in the RFA. Can you clarify what this is and how PPC can get approved for an Indirect Cost Rate? |
| **Answer** | |
| A cognizant agency is a federal agency responsible for reviewing, negotiating, and approving cost plans for funding that PPC may receive. Please refer to question #3, 43, 67 and 68 of this QA Summary and Appendix A of the RFA for more information about an indirect cost rate vs overhead expenses. | |

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| **72** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Federal Funding Requirements and Assurances, pg. 13, Appendix A, pg. 20, and Appendix B, pg. 22 | Our plan for next year is to set up a hoophouse and then hopefully, with the help of the grant, we can move on to building a geodesic dome. Is this project eligible for the MOLI grant? Also, we would like to pay teachers to manage the interdisciplinary activities in the greenhouses. Would the grant cover stipend positions for this purpose?  If not are there some suggestions about how the grant can support our goals of growing food year-round for garden-to-table experiences for our k-12 rural school? |
| **Answer** | |
| Yes, as described, these expenses and stipends would be appropriate for the MOLI grant. Please refer to questions #19, 32, 55, and 62 of this QA Summary for additional information about building. Please refer to question #63 of this QA Summary for additional information about personal costs. | |