



**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

RFP NUMBER AND TITLE:	PFNDM2024001: Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1
RFP ISSUED BY:	DACF PFAS Fund
SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:	11/20/2024
QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:	11/25/2024, UPDATED 12/17/2024
PROPOSAL DUE DATE:	1/31/2025
PROPOSALS DUE TO:	PFASfund.DACF@maine.gov

Provided below are questions submitted via Attachment G of Request for Proposal (RFP) PFNDM2024001 and the Department’s answer. Some questions have been edited for clarity. When multiple applicants submitted similar questions, the questions were combined to streamline the answering process. **NOTE: This file was updated on December 17, 2024**, after a set of questions submitted on time via email were discovered to have been blocked by DACF’s email system. The answers to these questions have been added as Questions 23–25 below. All Primary PIs listed in the pre-proposal applications submitted for this RFA were notified of this update via email on or before December 18, 2024.

1	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	What is the indirect cost rate for University of Maine research projects?
	Answer	
The indirect rate for projects led by the University of Maine is 23.85%, based on the University of Maine’s agreement with the State of Maine Government.		

2	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	Should applicant’s proposals “link” or quote the exact PFAS fund research priority words as to err on the side of being overly clear which priorities each goal is hitting?
	Answer	
Applicants should clearly state how their proposed research aligns with the PFAS Fund’s research priorities. It is not necessary to quote the research priorities but referencing them and explaining how each research goal addresses the listed priorities can strengthen your proposal. This approach helps reviewers clearly understand the alignment between proposed projects and the fund’s objectives.		

3	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	Section 11, p. 14	If an outside organization is willing to do an in-kind donation or large monetary discount instead of direct donation to a research account, would that count for "additional funding" since it would still be off-setting costs of purchasing required materials for the research?
	Answer	
In-kind donations or monetary discounts are considered direct donations. Proof of funding commitment must be included, see Section 6.1.3.		

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
4	Attachment B, p.224	Peer Review rubric, category 5C, under “Description for Reviewers” says that applicants may be planning on working with agricultural service providers or farmers . Should “or farmers” be included in the 25%, 50%, 75%, 100% point categories on the Peer Review Rubric, category 5c, or are only agricultural service providers considered?
	Answer	
	The term “or farmers” should be included in the 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% point categories.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
5	Attachment D, Part 1 Form	The Legal Name, Type of Organization, and Primary Position/Title fields all appear to be linked. Filling in one automatically duplicates the information into the other fields. We are having the same issue with the Organization email and research organization address 1 fields.
	Answer	
	The form has been fixed and re-uploaded to the site.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
6	Section 6.12, page 12	Indirect costs are capped at 10%--does this apply to all partners listed on the application?
	Answer	
	Only one indirect rate is to be utilized per project. Indirect rates used for budgeting are determined based on the Primary PI’s associated organization. Indirect rates are capped at 10% unless the applicant has a NICRA or State of Maine negotiated rate for indirect.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
7	Section 8, page 21	If selected for funding, are funds sent separately to the partners?
	Answer	
	DACF will contract with only the Primary PI’s institution. Accordingly, funds will be reimbursed only to the Primary PI’s organization.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
8	N/A	Can the budget in the full proposal be increased from the estimate in pre-proposal budget?
	Answer	
	Yes, the budget in the full proposal can exceed the budget of the pre-proposal as long as it does not exceed the program cap of \$500,000 (including indirect costs).	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
9	N/A	Is it possible to switch the roles of the Co-PI and Lead PI?
	Answer	
	If the co-PI taking on the primary PI position was listed in the pre-proposal as a Co-PI and meets eligibility requirements as the primary PI, then the Co-PI and Lead PI can switch roles.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
10	Section 6.1.3 #14 (page 15)	Do bank statements, company balance sheets, or company tax returns qualify as comparable documents to determine financial standings of businesses?
	Answer	
	Yes, bank statements, company balance sheets, or company tax returns qualify as comparable documents to determine financial standings of businesses.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
11	Section 7.1 page 18	Can you explain more about the peer reviewing system. How do you recommend we choose peer reviewers?
	Answer	
	<p>DACF will select peer reviewers for full proposals. All peer reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest and required to sign a confidentiality statement.</p> <p>Applicants are not required to include potential peer reviewers in their full applications. Suggestions for peer reviewers were requested during the pre-proposal stage to help build a broader pool of reviewers for all applications.</p>	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
12	Section 1 page 5	Could you explain your ideal results for each of the four funding topics? Are any topics more favored than others?
	Answer	
	Research priorities were established as outlined in the RFA, and no additional examples beyond those listed will be provided. All categories hold equal importance. Projects will be evaluated using the provided assessment rubric, regardless of the category or categories they align with.	

13	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	Do you have a template recommended for the application?
	Answer	
There is not a template that DACF recommends for the application. The RFA lists all required elements.		

14	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	Do you have a template recommended for the letter of support?
	Answer	
There is not a template that DACF recommends for a letter of support.		

15	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	Do you have expectations/ predictions for time we can expect it will take to write and submit this proposal?
	Answer	
DACF does not have an expectation or prediction for the time this proposal is expected to take.		

16	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	If farmland owned by the State of Maine is included in the proposed research, what arrangements and paperwork needs to be completed upon submission of the proposal? (e.g., Researcher/Impacted Producer Connection Request Form, etc)
	Answer	
At this time, the State of Maine does not own any farmland, and it therefore should not be considered as an option for hosting research.		

17	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
	N/A	Do organizations listed as subaward recipients also need to provide financial review documents?
	Answer	
Organizations listed as subaward recipients do not need to provide financial review documents, although they can be included if the applicant believes they are relevant. It is the responsibility of the awarded organization to ensure that any subcontractors used are reputable.		

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
18	N/A	Will the de minimis rate (10%) be adjusted, given that the federal de minimis rate was increased to 15% effective Oct 1, 2025?
	Answer	
	Because the agreement between USDA and DACF which will fund selected projects was fully executed before October 1, 2024, the 10% de minimis rate applies.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
19	N/A	Should the Researcher/Impacted Producer Connection Form be submitted with the full proposal in January, or does it need to be completed separately?
	Answer	
	The Researcher/Impacted Producer Connection Form should be submitted as a separate request. Connecting researchers and farmers is a separate service provided by the PFAS Fund and is not related to this RFA. The timing of the submission is at the discretion of the applicant.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
20	Section 6.1.3, page 15	Are there any restrictions on who the Letters of Support are from? Can they come from people considered collaborators on the project?
	Answer	
	<p>There are no restrictions on who Letters of Support are from. Letters of support from collaborators acknowledging their role in and support of the proposed research would be beneficial.</p> <p>As a reminder, when submitting full proposals, we ask that applicants not consider State of Maine employees as collaborators if they are not actively engaged in the research, are not receiving funding, and are simply performing their jobs (e.g., sharing public data, making introductions).</p>	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
21	Section 1.2, page 6	What is the best way to protect the identity of participating farmers in our project? If we submit names of participating farms/farmers in the proposal and it is funded, will it be public record?
	Answer	
	Personally identifying information of private farmers, including location (address, X,Y coordinates, etc.), name, and business name, will not be shared publicly as part of this RFA and award process. Proposals will not be publicly posted. Peer reviewers are required to sign confidentiality agreements.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
22	Attachment D, page 26	Can the application have more than 2 Co-PIs? Attachment D, Section A only has room to enter two individuals.
	Answer	
	More than two Co-PIs are permitted. Applicants can list additional PIs and the corresponding information on a separate page and attach it to the Part I application.	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
23	Section 5, Page 10	If we secure a collaborative farmer and access to farmland before submitting the full proposal, would this improve the evaluation of our submission?
	Answer	
	<p>Per RFA Attachment B- Scoring Rubric: A collaborative approach is preferred. Applicants may be planning on working with agricultural service providers or farmers, and they should be listed accordingly, with the most points going to projects in which the agricultural service provider has already been identified. Each collaborator should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Collaboration can be as simple as using soil from an impacted farm. Additional points are not awarded based on a threshold of involvement.</p> <p>If desired, applicants may include a letter of support to indicate that a farmer or agricultural producer is committed to the project if grant funding is received.</p>	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
24	Section 6.1.3, page 14	If my project builds on previous work, does that count as leveraging other funding? What types of projects or funding would be considered appropriate for leverage?
	Answer	
	<p>DACF will consider an applicant to have leveraged funds when the applicant provides documentation that they have secured financial or in-kind support for their proposed research that is in addition to the budget being requested as part of their proposal (e.g., institutional match, private funds, or additional grant funding). One-time and in-kind direct donations are also permitted, see Question 3. See RFA Section 6.1.3 for more details.</p>	

	RFP Section & Page Number	Question
25	Section 2, page 8	Does Maine DACF have specific treatment goals? Is there a target for reducing regulated PFAS to below a certain threshold?
	Answer	
	<p>There are no specific quantitative treatment goals or thresholds targeted in this solicitation. Where appropriate, applicants should be familiar with federal and/or State standards for water, soil, and agricultural media.</p>	