



### **Ag Clean Water Initiative Program (Ag-CWIP) FAQ**

#### **What is the indirect rate that is allowed on these proposals?**

There is no set cap on indirect costs, however the overall budget is weighted in the scoring by the grant reviewers and indirect costs would be compared across applicants.

#### **I do not see that matching funds are required, but are they encouraged and considered during proposal review?**

Matching funds are not required; however, they are strongly encouraged.

#### **On page 5 of the application template information, the Itemized Budget and Narrative says: (2 Pages). Yet on Pages 8, 10, 12 Itemized Budget and Narrative says: (1 page). Please confirm how many pages are allowed for the Itemized Budget and Narrative.**

The application can be a total of 6 pages. The language, "Itemized Budget and Narrative (20 points) (1 page)" was a typo. The language on page 5 is the correct language, "Itemized Budget and Narrative (2 pages)".

#### **For organizational development grants, may a farmers watershed group that is not yet a registered non-profit apply with a non-profit as its fiscal agent?**

Yes, a non-profit would be able to apply as the lead applicant for an organizational development grant.

#### **How many CWI grant rounds does the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets expect to offer in FY 2017-FY 2018, and approximately when will be the next round?**

The Agency will decide whether additional grant rounds will exist this fiscal year after we see how this round goes. If we get a great set of projects and expend the bulk of the funding, then we won't need another round this year. Note that grants can be up to 2 years long.

#### **Please explain why the short turn around without consideration for the farming season's demands in relationship to providing an unbiased opportunity for all applicants?**

The Agency respects the time demands of farmers, and encourages farmers to work with organizations that can support them in developing project proposals that help meet their water quality needs and objectives. Many organizations throughout the state have staff that can allocate time on project development that many farmers are not able to allocate owing to the multifaceted and comprehensive demands of farming.

The Agency has followed all applicable state rules regarding the issuance of an RFP, and the six-week turnaround time is very Standard for RFPs from the State of Vermont. The Agency will aim for a longer lead time for future Ag-CWIP RFPs.

The Agency would also like to share that there are several state and federal programs that are available to assist farmers in planning and implementation of practices to improve water quality and soil health, for example VAAFM's BMP and NRCS EQIP programs. Applications for those programs are rolling and can be applied for at any time.

**Is this a one-time grant offering or is this an annual or consistent offering?**

The Agency hopes to offer a second round of the Ag-CWIP in state FY 2018. This second, and any future rounds of the Ag-CWIP, is contingent on available funding from the Vermont Clean Water Fund.

**Can organizations participate as partners in multiple grants; participate as a lead in one, but partners in others, and/or apply for multiple projects? These questions are specific to the E/O grant.**

Yes, an organization can participate in multiple grant applications, as well as submit multiple grant applications to the three grant categories. It is important to note that all applications will be ranked within each grant category, so applicants that submit more than one application in a grant category will be competing with their additional proposal(s) in that category.

**For the innovative phosphorus reduction grants, can we apply for a suite of similar-scale small projects, or would you rather see them broken out into separate smaller grants? We have a couple of small clean water diversion projects that can't be funded through other sources for various reasons and that we wanted to pursue.**

The Innovative Phosphorus Reduction Grants are meant to strategize new or innovative ways to reduce P loading throughout Vermont. It would appear that smaller-scale capital implementation projects would be a more appropriate proposal under the Education, Outreach, and Implementation grant category. With a \$20,000 cap per proposal, depending on the cost of the project, these projects could be submitted as one proposal for multiple sites, or each individual project could be submitted as a separate proposal.

**Do you know if an organization can apply for funds from the new ag grant for farmers in a priority watershed who are looking to purchase equipment to help with cover crops and no-till methods?**

The purchase of a no-till grain drill to expand implementation of cover crops throughout a priority watershed (or other watersheds) would be an eligible application under two of the RFP categories in our Ag-CWI Grant Program:

Category 1: 'Education, Outreach and Implementation'—purchasing a piece of equipment to enable farmers in an organization's territory to education farmers about the water quality and other benefits of such equipment and to implement additional BMPs, including cover cropping with a no-till drill, would be an eligible application.

Category 3: 'Innovative Phosphorus Reduction Activities': The purchase of new equipment that is not widely available or that can increase the efficiency or implementation of practices that are currently used by not widely implemented would be an eligible proposal under this category. A proposal for Category 3 which demonstrates that the piece of equipment will lead to the adoption of new methods of establishment or additional innovate practices would lead to a higher ranking of the proposal.

**Would a watershed group be able to submit a proposal through the Clean Water Initiative Grant Program to run a series of "kitchen" meetings at which farmers would be able learn more about what they have to do regarding the new RAP's, the importance of the RAP's, how to adopt them and where they can get advice and help? Is this the kind of project that the "education and outreach" category covers?**

Kitchen table discussions with farmers to provide education on the RAPs would be an eligible activity under Category One: “Education, Outreach and Implementation”.

Both non-profit and individuals would be eligible to submit applications for this category.

**Before our organization submits an application, we first wanted to see if the agency was drafting material for outreach, and if another organizations was conducting this work.**

The following outreach documents will be revised as soon as the RAP Rule is finalized:

[http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water\\_quality/RAP/RAP-Proposed-Rule-Farm-Size-Factsheet-05162016.pdf](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water_quality/RAP/RAP-Proposed-Rule-Farm-Size-Factsheet-05162016.pdf)

[http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water\\_quality/RAP/RAP-Proposed-Rule-Highlighted-Summary-Factsheet-05162016.pdf](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water_quality/RAP/RAP-Proposed-Rule-Highlighted-Summary-Factsheet-05162016.pdf)

[http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water\\_quality/RAP/RAP-Effective-Dates-Discussion-05162016.pdf](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water_quality/RAP/RAP-Effective-Dates-Discussion-05162016.pdf)

The Agency will also be printing ‘handbooks’ à la the old AAP booklets to mail to all farmers along with a ‘Guidance Document’ or ‘FAQ Document’ to hopefully answer the most common questions.

The Agency also plans on producing a bumper sticker with buffer and manure spreading setbacks for surface water, ditches and wells.

If organizations want to propose additional outreach material that would be useful to communicate the RAP rules to farmers, we’re definitely interested in seeing these proposals.

**Any ideas if targeted outreach within a particular watershed has a particular need? Our organization would like to further our on-site non regulatory education to small farms in targeted impaired or stressed watersheds.**

There is definitely a need to provide outreach and education around the new RAPs to farmers regarding responsibilities as well as new and existing opportunities for technical and financial assistance.

Targeted outreach can, of course, have a greater impact relative to more widespread efforts.

Referring to Tactical Basin Plans from DEC can be a good step for an organization to gain more insight into an area within a particular watershed that may benefit from targeted outreach.

<http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/map/basin-planning>

**I am curious as to whether this money can be used to secure the purchase of land for the purposes of achieving long term secure land tenure in order to implement affordable and secure housing and regenerative agricultural practices (which we have very little of in VT and very little money and political effort going towards)?**

**Also, Does the Agency or other stakeholders consider the development of just transition plans for VTs farm land - ensuring it stays in Ag. and biological management, ensuring that VT farmers have first and affordable access to land being transitioned, ensuring that those practices build soil / water quality / sequester carbon, etc. - to be a part of this vision for water quality improvement; and are proposals that seek to establish secure land tenure with the aim of implementing regenerative practices eligible for this grant? If not, can you point me in the direction of people who are working on this and devoting funding to it.**

Under the Innovative Phosphorus Reduction Category, a proposal which seeks to enhance the farmland easement and access programs run between Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT)—or a through the development new program with additional private funding—to enhance water quality infrastructure and land management practices would be an eligible project.

Farmland preservation and access is a key priority for the State of Vermont. Legislation is in place which ensures and supports efforts to make farmland accessible. Over \$1.2 million has been committed in 2016 through Act 250 mitigation payments to support the purchase of farmland at agricultural value—these funds are administered by the Agency of Agriculture and distributed to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Please see the Vermont Land Trust website for more information on the Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value: <http://www.vlt.org/opav>

**How is the Agency of Ag and other stakeholders in this process of beginning to reward farmers who do more to protect water going to make sure that it is socially and economically equitable and accessible?**

The Agency has been working closely with water quality partners and farmers to develop the Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program (VESP) which is a voluntary program that encourages and supports local agricultural producers to achieve environmental and agricultural excellence. VESP's goal is to accelerate water-quality improvements through additional voluntary implementation efforts, and to honor farmers who have already embraced a high level of land stewardship. The Agency will be launching this pilot program by the close of 2016.