Office of Climate Resilience
Resilient NJ Program
Notice of Funds Availability – Program Support

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Final Update: May 10, 2019

CORRECTION: It was stated during the in-person and webinar Q&A sessions that no more than 49-percent of funds awarded as part of an award may be passed through to subcontractors. This answer was provided in error; this policy does not apply to proposals selected through this competitive process.

Action Plans

What is an action plan and what are activities? How do I fit into that?
When the regional teams go through their planning process, the steps include vulnerability and risk assessments and scenario development on how the communities want to respond to that risk and vulnerability. Scenarios, in this case, mean a suite of actions, whether they be planning, projects, or policies that would go in an action plan. That Action Plan is the deliverable for Phase 1; activities that come out of that action plan are what gets implemented in Phase 2. Detailed information on the regional teams and the process that leads to the Action Plans can be found on the website under https://www.nj.gov/dep/oclup/resilientnj/.

Allowable Costs

I am considering an application for grant funding for Resilient NJ program support and would like to involve a doctoral student in the work. First, does this grant allow for student tuition to be charged? It would not be a large share of the total ... roughly 20% of the budget. However, a student cannot work during the year on something that isn't also paying their tuition.
Tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid as, or in lieu of, wages to students performing necessary work are allowable provided that:
(1) The individual is conducting activities necessary to the Federal award;
(2) Tuition remission and other support are provided in accordance with established policy of the IHE and consistently provided in a like manner to students in return for similar activities conducted under Federal awards as well as other activities; and
(3) During the academic period, the student is enrolled in an advanced degree program at a non-Federal entity or affiliated institution and the activities of the student in relation to the Federal award are related to the degree program;
(4) The tuition or other payments are reasonable compensation for the work performed and are conditioned explicitly upon the performance of necessary work; and
(5) It is the IHE's practice to similarly compensate students under Federal awards as well as other activities.
(b) Charges for tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid to students as, or in lieu of, salaries and wages must be subject to the reporting requirements in § 200.430 Compensation - personal services and must be treated as direct or indirect cost in accordance with the actual work **being** performed. Tuition remission may be charged on an average rate basis. See also § 200.431 Compensation - fringe benefits.

Will field monitoring be funded if it will inform planning?
Monitoring is a form of data gathering, which is an allowable activity.

If we have a project that's underway, can we use the funds to supplement a part of that project such as the monitoring aspect of a larger project?
Resilient NJ Program Support grant funding may be used to support an existing project. However, funds must be used to support unfunded discrete and identifiable tasks for the project, and there must be a deliverable that is specifically attributable to the Resilient NJ program. Resilient NJ funds may not be mixed with funds from another source on any specific task.

I understand equipment purchase will not be funded through this program. What is considered "equipment"? Can funding be used to pay for supplies for community members involved in monitoring projects to create their own monitoring equipment? For example, the cost of PVC pipes? Is there a dollar threshold for supplies vs equipment?
Any item with a cost over $5,000 is considered equipment. In addition, any non-disposable commodity with a cost over $250 as well as all computing devices, should be considered equipment. Software can be considered as a supply provided if it costs less than $5,000.

Application/ Project Proposals

Is there a page limit on the application? Is there a length limit on the proposal narrative?
There is no page limit nor length limit on the required proposal narrative.

Must applications focus on one focus area or should there be separate applications per focus area?
If you have multiple projects that fit into different project categories, you should submit a separate application for each project. If you have one project that fits multiple categories, you should only submit one application. The project category which you identify in your application will have no impact on the scoring of your project.

Is it possible to consult with the teams in the four municipal regions in the process of developing our proposal? It seems we could produce a much more worthwhile proposal if we could talk to them about what we could offer and about what they would most highly value before submitting a proposal.
The Department is not putting a restriction on who you discuss your application with. However, your application/proposal is not required to be specifically connected to any of the four regional team projects but must be applicable to resiliency planning in the nine MID counties.

Are we excluded from proposing projects that are specific to the teams?
Your application/proposal may, but is not required to, be specifically connected to any of the four regional team projects.

Can we propose a project that is a subset of one or more of the four regions? For example, a couple of the teams are more urban. Can we propose a project that is more urban-oriented?
Yes. A project may be specific to a certain type of ecosystem, or geography, so long as it is applicable within the 9 MID counties.

Is there a page limit on the proposals? Do we get extra points for how short it is?
There is no page limit. The submissions should be concise, but proposals will not be scored for brevity.

The name of the program is coastal resiliency. Is the program strictly for coastal projects or can it include stormwater management?
The Resilient NJ program is generally considered "coastal" because the nine MID counties are coastal counties, not because the projects are only focused on coastal flooding. Projects that address other types of flooding, or other facets of resilience, are eligible. Please note, however, no funding under this grant program can be used for engineering or construction.

May a letter of support be included with the proposal submission?
A letter of support may be submitted. However, it is not a requirement for this funding opportunity.

Award Announcement

Is the August 30 date when a determination will be made?
Since the time this question was asked, all program dates were extended. The date by which we will announce the awardees for this funding opportunity was changed to September 30, 2019.

Consultants

Does DEP still plan to issue RFPs for consultant contracts corresponding to the four regional town groupings? Or, has there been a change in strategy and the just issued NFA for grants to 501c3 organizations is intended to substitute for the consultant contracts? If DEP is still planning on issuing a consultants RFP, what is the approximate timeline for issuance?
The DEP has not yet partnered the four Regional Teams with consultants to help them develop Regional Resilience and Adaptation Action Plans. Please monitor the NJSTART website for bidding opportunities. No additional information can be provided at this time.

It sounds like this grant will be awarded before the consultant teams are selected?
We cannot specify when the consultant teams will be selected. Please monitor the NJSTART website for bidding opportunities. No additional information can be provided at this time.

Will the consultant teams be reviewing proposals and determining which proposals look most useful to them?
No.

If consultant services are part of monitoring or data collection efforts, would this fall under personnel costs?
Consultant services are other direct costs and should be placed in the contractual budget category, as indicated in the budget template.

Can partner contributions be paid out of the salary category?
Consultant services are considered other direct costs and should be placed in the contractual budget category, as indicated in the budget template. Pensions and overhead cost can be paid out of the salary category.

Duplication of Benefits

We participated in something that sounds similar. How do we determine if we are eligible?

As a HUD-funded initiative, Resilient NJ cannot fund entities to develop duplicate projects/activities. To determine if this grant may be considered a duplication of benefits, please review the HUD guidance published on page 71060 of the Federal Register Volume 76, No. 221 from November 16, 2011. As part of the application, all applicants will need to submit the Duplication of Benefits affidavit from Appendix B signed by an authorized representative. A Microsoft Word version is available on the Resilient NJ website. DEP cannot respond to individual questions on whether a previous activity is a duplication of benefits.

How far back in time do you want us to go back to fill out the duplication of benefits certification?
Duplication of benefits certification should go back to October 22, 2012.

Is the duplication of benefits certification applicable to the Principal Investigator(s) to the grant or the entire organization?
The duplication of benefits certification applies specifically to Superstorm Sandy Recovery funds to the whole organization. The point of the certification is to ensure that we are not funding a project or activity for which the organization has already been funded.

Do we address funds in the certification that are currently active or currently closed?
Both types of funds must be included.

Is the DOB certification referring to federal funds only or private funds as well?
The Grantee must identify all assistance received by each person, business concern, or other entity, via insurance, FEMA, SBA, other local, state, or Federal programs, and private or nonprofit charity organizations. Some of these funds will be considered non-duplicative assistance excluded from final benefit calculation, but nonetheless, they are identified in the beginning of the DOB process.

Would you accept an electronic document produced by a large institution listing all Sandy-related funding received by their principal investigators as the attachment for the DOB certification? All the information will be contained in one place regarding the PI's projects, such as the amount of funding, name of the funder and nature and purpose of the funding.
To be eligible for funding, applicants must include: A Duplication of Benefits form signed by an authorized representative of each participating entity that may receive funds from the Program. (Please use the Duplication of Benefits Affidavit on the Resilient NJ website at https://www.nj.gov/dep/oclup/resilientnj/). Any additional information should be submitted as appendices. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal. The list of projects and corresponding funding should be in a table format.

Eligibility

Can consulting firms join a team led by a 501(c)3 organization? Or, can a consulting firm providing its services on an in-kind basis join (or lead) a 501(c)3 team?
501(c)3 organizations that are applying for grants may choose to employ private subcontractors to perform tasks needed to complete their projects.

Are members of the current Resilient NJ regional teams eligible to apply for this opportunity?
Entities that are receiving funds to participate in the Resilient NJ program through another grant or contract are not excluded from this funding opportunity, provided that the work being proposed does not represent a duplication of benefits or a conflict of interest.

Our organization is currently completing GPNAs and Energy Audits for many of our buildings. Are such reports considered eligible for Resilient NJ program funding?
We cannot answer question regarding the eligibility of specific proposals. However, reports are an eligible activity as part of this program, provided that their intent is to enhance existing resources, tools, or methodologies, or create new resources that expand the knowledge or capabilities for local or regional resilience planning efforts in New Jersey.

Can grant funds be used to support the creation and installation of a set of semi-permanent monitoring tools to be installed in floodplains? The purpose of these tools would be to assist crowd-source data gathering, aiding in research studies and analysis on the path to preparation of plans.
We cannot answer question regarding the eligibility of specific proposals. Data gathering activities are a permitted activity as part of this program. Funding from the Resilient NJ program cannot be used for the purchase of equipment or construction.

The news release the Department sent out on March 12 was titled "Nonprofits, universities and colleges urged to apply ...", but the eligibility section of the grant application indicates that a 501(c)3 certificate is required. While our organization is a tax-exempt entity, we are not covered under that section of the Internal Revenue code. Could you please confirm what organizations are eligible to apply for this call?
Note that the application for this opportunity has been updated in response to this question. The opportunity is open to non-profits and tax-exempt entities and not limited to those with a 501(c)3 designation. You must provide, with the application, proof of your non-profit/tax-exempt status acceptable to the Department, such as a 501(c)3 certificate.

Our organization is planning a submission for the Resilient NJ RFP. The organization does not have a 501(c)(3), but the University Foundation has one. However, if we submit under the Kean University Foundation, we do not have a federally approved indirect rate.

If we submit as the University, we can provide an audit, but the University does not have a 990. Can you please tell me if it is permissible to submit as the University and simply submit the audit without a 990?

The 990 is a requirement of this grant, this is not a requirement that can be waived. It is not a problem to submit an application from an institution without a federally approved indirect rate. You would have to use the 10% de minimis rate.

If the project was a pilot for a planning exercise that could be replicated within the 9 MID counties, but was to be tested outside of that area, would that project be eligible?
The benefits would have to flow in the other direction. That is, the pilot would have to benefit areas within the 9 MID counties first with the possibility of being replicated elsewhere in the State.

What does "construction" mean with regard to eligible projects?
These funds can only be used for "planning" as defined by HUD. Construction would mean shovels in the ground (e.g. construction of rain gardens, sea wall, or other flood mitigation project). Please note, engineering analysis and studies are also ineligible for this funding. Page 4 of the grant application provides several examples of the types of projects that are eligible.

Can you define construction in the context of this grant? Is creation of communication pieces, e. g. sculptures, considered construction?

In this context, construction would mean shovels in the ground or permanent installations. Pieces that are non-permanent or transportable would not be considered construction.

What are "Planning-Only Activities?"

CDBG Regulation: 2 CFR §570.205   Eligible planning, urban environmental design and policy-planning-management-capacity building activities.

(a) Planning activities which consist of all costs of data gathering, studies, analysis, and preparation of plans and the identification of actions that will implement such plans, including, but not limited to:

(1) Comprehensive plans;

(2) Community development plans;

(3) Functional plans, in areas such as:

(i) Housing, including the development of a consolidated plan;

(ii) Land use and urban environmental design;

(iii) Economic development;

(iv) Open space and recreation;

(v) Energy use and conservation;

(vi) Floodplain and wetlands management in accordance with the requirements of Executive Orders 11988 and 11990;

(vii) Transportation;

(viii) Utilities; and

(ix) Historic preservation.

(4) Other plans and studies such as:

(i) Small area and neighborhood plans;

(ii) Capital improvements programs;

(iii) Individual project plans (but excluding engineering and design costs related to a specific activity which are eligible as part of the cost of such activity under §§570.201-570.204);

(iv) The reasonable costs of general environmental, urban environmental design and historic preservation studies; and general environmental assessment- and remediation-oriented planning related to properties with known or suspected environmental contamination. However, costs necessary to comply with 24 CFR part 58, including project specific environmental assessments and clearances for activities eligible for assistance under this part, are eligible as part of the cost of such activities under §§570.201-570.204. Costs for such specific assessments and clearances may also be incurred under this paragraph but would then be considered planning costs for the purposes of §570.200(g);

(v) Strategies and action programs to implement plans, including the development of codes, ordinances and regulations;

(vi) Support of clearinghouse functions, such as those specified in Executive Order 12372; and

(vii) Assessment of Fair Housing.

(viii) Developing an inventory of properties with known or suspected environmental contamination.

(5) [Reserved]

(6) Policy—planning—management—capacity building activities which will enable the recipient to:

(1) Determine its needs;

(2) Set long-term goals and short-term objectives, including those related to urban environmental design;

(3) Devise programs and activities to meet these goals and objectives;

(4) Evaluate the progress of such programs and activities in accomplishing these goals and objectives; and

(5) Carry out management, coordination and monitoring of activities necessary for effective planning implementation, but excluding the costs necessary to implement such plans.
[53 FR 34439, Sept. 6, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 56127, Oct. 31, 1991; 60 FR 1915, Jan. 5, 1995; 71 FR 30035, May 24, 2006; 80 FR 42366, July 16, 2015]

Evaluation of Projects

Can you comment on whether student involvement is encouraged, or how this may be received in review? We have demonstrated success in our research and deliverables with students involved, but I nevertheless worry that this may be perceived as a weakness. As an academic institution, education is a major part of our mission.
Applications will be evaluated on the demonstration of capacity to complete the project successfully. Beyond that, we cannot comment on how the relative values of different qualifications may be evaluated.

If the project has wide applicability beyond the four regions and maybe extend to the 9 MID counties, will it have more merit?
The geographical breadth of the project's applicability is not included in the scoring criteria.

Are there any advantages for an applicant coming in with in-kind resources?
Providing in-kind resources is not one of the criteria used to score the application.

Funding

Are the regional teams and the non-profits, colleges and universities competing for the same funding? More specifically are the funds coming from the same source or are there clearly defined "buckets" which will pay for the regional teams and nonprofits separately?
Funding for regional teams has already been established and will have no impact on this opportunity. The regional teams and the program support grant opportunity are funded from two separate "buckets."

Is there a match requirement?
There is no match requirement.

If funded, the average award will be $30,000 which seems very low. How likely is it that 8 may be funded? Can it be as low as 2 or 3 awards?
That will depend entirely on the number, quality and applicability of applications submitted.

HUD CDBG Requirements

The application states that "Successful applicants must comply with CDBG requirements." We've had some hard experiences dealing with HUD requirements as an academic institution, such as indemnification and federal riders.
We are not aware of those specific issues. The Resilient NJ program is funded by through HUD Community Development Block Grant. Anything that is applicable to HUD-CDBG program is applicable to this program.

Implementation

What does implementation mean? The chart shows Phase 1 and Phase 2. Does Phase 2 – Implementation mean it is also Planning only?
Yes. An example would be that the Action Plan in Phase 1 identifies a need to modify a master plan. The implementation of that would be the actual writing of the master plan.

Indirect Costs

Which indirect cost rate should we use?
Your organization should use the federally approved negotiated rate. If you do not have a federal negotiated rate, you should use the 10% de minimis rate. If your organization has multiple approved rates, you should use the one(s) most applicable to this funding opportunity.

Our institution has a very high approved indirect rate. Would this be permissible, or do we need a lower rate for this grant?
Your organization should use the federally approved negotiated rate. If you do not have a federal negotiated rate, you should use the 10% de minimis rate. If your organization has multiple approved rates, you should use the one(s) most applicable to this funding opportunity.

Last year our Center completed a resilience-focused project for the NJDCA under their Statewide and Regional Assistance Planning Grants program. The underlying funding came from HUD, but was administered through the DCA who set a not-to-exceed limit on the allowable indirect costs that could be charged to the project at 10% of total funds requested, consistent with provisions adopted by other New Jersey State agencies for grant programs. I am writing to determine if such a not-to-exceed limit would also apply for the Resilient NJ Program Support Grant program. We are now trying to cost out the project we have in mind and, needless to say, the indirect cost rate we need to charge will have a significant impact.
The conditions that were put in place for other grant contracts are not relevant to this program. For this program, you may use a federally approved negotiated cost rate, or a de minimis rate of 10% for indirect costs.

Regional Teams

Can you give a little more information on the regional teams? What are the attributes of the teams? Who are on the teams? Who in the town will be participating in the projects? And at what level? Is it the mayor? The engineer?
The regional teams selected for funding through the Resilient NJ program can be found at https://www.nj.gov/dep/oclup/resilientnj/. The towns have identified a point person for the team called the Prime. The personnel filling this role varies. It can be the administrator, principal planner, engineer, or the sustainability or resiliency coordinator.

What have the regional teams done already in preparation for this program?
No official work has been done. We are still working with regional teams to get documents for final approval submitted in preparation signing of subrecipient agreements. None of the grants associated with this funding opportunity will be directly involved in the planning work of the regional teams. The projects coming out of this funding opportunity should benefit at least some of the four regional teams

or the nine Most Impacted and Distressed counties in New Jersey. We are also looking for projects that support resiliency planning in general, throughout the state.

I need clarification on the relationship between the regional teams and consultant teams.
The consultant teams will be providing planning and technical assistance to the regional teams to develop Action Plans. The regional teams composed of local governments and community-based organization partners have requirements to participate and inform the process. The community-based organization's role is to ensure that vulnerable populations and those who otherwise would not be included in these efforts are included in the discussions and to ensure their vision is incorporated into the final product.

What is the difference and who comprises the memberships of the regional teams and the consultant teams?
The regional teams grant opportunity was available to municipal, county and local government entities as well as community-based organizations. The consultant teams will be selected through a separate procurement process. Please monitor the NJSTART website for bidding opportunities. No additional information can be provided at this time.

Is there information available about the regional team projects?
The Regional Teams selected for funding through the Resilient NJ program can be found at https://www.nj.gov/dep/oclup/resilientnj/.

How much and what type of interaction, if any, is expected between and among the selected grantees?
No interaction is expected.

Subcontractors

Are we allowed to have subcontractors? Can we use consultant firms?
You can use subcontractors. They are not limited to non-profits.

If two nonprofits decided to partner on the project, one would have to be the lead and the other would be the subcontractor?
Yes.

Timeline

Does the timeline refer to calendar years or fiscal years?
Calendar years.

Does the timeline refer only to the regional team work?
Phase 1 and Phase 2 refer to the regional team work and the consultant team work. We wanted you to be aware of the overall program schedule to ensure that whatever you are developing can be completed in time to inform the process.

How will potential projects fit into the program timeline? What does this statement mean?
"…products and resources developed by NGO grantees should be completed in time to be utilized by the Consultant and Regional Teams at appropriate stages of the program."

It depends on what your proposal might be. These are some general examples strictly for illustrative purposes only. If you were going to do a training that is necessary early in the process, you would want to complete that training closer to the beginning of the timeline. If you were developing a tool to evaluate the quality of resiliency resulting from a plan, you may want to wait until Phase 1 is complete. We did not specify exactly when the work must be done because that date would depend on the project you were proposing and how it would fit in the overall timeline of the program.

When you say that our proposed project should fit into the program timeline, do you want us to tell you the specific starting and end date?
You don't have to give us specific dates. You can use Month 1 to Month 6, for example, to define the schedule. If your proposal will specifically inform the regional projects, we will expect you to be clear about the timing of your project to coincide with the team process timeline.

To prepare a schedule for the project proposal, when can a contract be expected and when can we expect work to begin if awarded?
The State will seek to get all awardees under agreement as quickly as possible. We cannot provide a specific timeframe. After the grant award is announced, there is still the process of finalizing the scope of work and getting the subrecipient agreement executed. We did not identify when work will start because your project and how it falls into the overall program timeline may vary. If your project applies to the beginning of a regional team's project, to be useful, it needs to be completed at the beginning of the effort or even before. If your project is something that evaluates an effort, for example, then it would have a later start date. Note that all projects associated with this effort must be completed by May 31, 2022.

The application document states that all funding must be completed by May 2022 but the date of September 2022 was also mentioned. Which is it?
All activities and tasks for Resilient NJ projects must be completed by May 31, 2022. This is the deadline set by the Department. The September 30, 2022 deadline is for DEP to complete all the administrative requirements for the Resilient NJ Program as required by HUD.

Is it acceptable to complete the scope in a shorter timeline than the timeline set forth in the RFP?
Yes.

Tools and Resources

There is a methodology for evaluation mentioned in the application. Has that methodology been created? Can it be shared with the NGOs?
The program is creating methodologies the consultant teams will use across the four Regional Team projects. The methodologies are not complete or publicly available at this time. The methodologies will be available publicly when they are finalized.

Have you already identified the users/audience for the tools and resources produced, especially those relating to engaging socially vulnerable populations? If so, who are they? If not, are there expectations or constraints we should be aware of in selecting users/audiences to target?
While the Department is doing ongoing work in this area, there are no specified targets, expectations, or constraints at this time.

Are there preferred or unacceptable formats for the tools produced (e.g. downloadable manual, workshop facilitation guide, website, video, etc.)?
There are no preferred or unacceptable formats for tools and products inherent in the program.

Website Posting

Will the presentation be posted on the website?
The presentation and the Q&A recordings are posted on the website.

Will we be notified when the responses to these questions have been posted on the website?
We will send out an email announcement to the listserv and various DEP mailing lists when the document is posted. We encourage you to sign up for the listserv at ResilientNJ@dep.nj.gov.