



**Request for Responses
Prequalification: Consulting Engineering Services
Water Infrastructure Asset Management Planning Grants**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. For references (Section 12.C), is it CWT's intent to have references from entities that are interested in pursuing this new AMP Grant with the applying engineering firm, or should the references be for entities that have completed AMP or CIPs with the applying engineering firm?

References are for entities that have completed portions/sections/elements or a full AMP or CIP. The intent is to confirm that firms have experience with this type of assessment, and determine client satisfaction with the work product and process.

2. What will the Grant Application Process entail for eligible entities? Will it be similar to MassDEP's previous Water Infrastructure Assessment and Planning Grant Applications?

This process is still in development. At this time, we anticipate it should not be substantially different from the process that MassDEP currently uses.

3. Will Prequalified Firms be allowed to complete Grant Applications on behalf of eligible entities?

Yes

4. What will the process be for Awarded Eligible Entities to select their engineering firm to contract with?

Eligible Entities will select their engineering firm at the time of submitting their grant application. This RFR is for prequalifying engineering firms, and informing the creation of a grant program. Grant requirements, parameters or process have not been finalized.

5. The RFR indicates that "the AMP will not include capital improvement projects for non-existing infrastructure", however, how does the Trust and MassDEP feel about a situation where the existing infrastructure is not meeting the desired level of service for the eligible entity (i.e. undersized pumps, pumping station, or pipe section) and non-existing infrastructure is necessary / recommended within 5 years (Priority List of Assets) for the eligible entity to receive the desired level of service from that particular asset? We believe it may be beneficial for the AMP to include an improvement such as this for budget appropriation and rate system adjustments.

The proposed grant program will be for the preparation of asset management plans that address existing systems. Planning work for evaluative needs of an existing system is not eligible for consideration.

6. Can any pages of the 13-pages allowed for Section B. Answers to Questions, be 11 x 17?

No. Pages included of the body of the response (13 pages) must be submitted on standard letter format (8.5" x 11").

7. On page 5-6 of the RFR, (B. Experience), the following language appears - - "Please note the areas of Massachusetts in which your firm is active." What information is being sought?

This is requesting information on where your firm is active in Massachusetts. Please define regionally (i.e. Northeastern or Western Massachusetts). It is understood that responses will be subjective. For example: If you mainly do work in Pittsfield, Dalton, Lenox and Stockbridge, then geographically you are active in Western Mass.

8. Can firms who routinely work for and with numerous Massachusetts municipalities on drinking water, wastewater and storm water projects who have performed limited or no work funded under the current DEP-funded program be prequalified to conduct AMPs under the envisioned CWT Grant funding program?

Yes, these firms may submit responses to this RFP for prequalification of engineering firms.

9. Will prior work on, or experience with, Asset Management Plans previously funded by MADEP be a pre-requisite for firm pre-qualification?

No, prior work on, or experience with, Asset Management Plans previously funded by MADEP can be used as part of a firm's qualifications in response to questions 12-B and/or question 12-C, but completed work for the MassDEP program is not required.

10. Has the Trust established a minimum (or maximum) number of firms that you intend to prequalify?

No

11. What specific criteria will be used to prequalify (or not qualify) a firm to conduct AMPs? Certain of the Items in Section 13, "Trust's Evaluation of Responses," are subjective, while others seem to be overly restrictive.

There is no specific criteria beyond what is listed under Section 13. The RFP should outline prior AMP preparation experience and/or the ability to train employees to perform such work.

12. What is to prevent a firm from not submitting a pre-qualification response at this time and submitting a response when one or more of their client communities applies for an AMP grant? Would the Trust expedite the review of a response submittal to then qualify a firm if that approach is taken?

Firms must be pre-qualified to be eligible to work for eligible entities who receive grants. Firms that do not respond run the risk of not being eligible for this or future rounds as there is not guarantee that prequalification will re-open on each round of this program. The Trust encourages all eligible firms to submit responses if they wish to be eligible for grant funding.

13. If the response to Question [12] is “yes”, can a municipality apply for a grant while proposing to work with a firm that has not already been prequalified?

N/A

14. The state AMP grant funding program has been limited to \$400,000 in total funding per year with a maximum of a \$40,000 grant to a community. It would be good to know what annual amounts and individual maximum grants are anticipated under this program, for firms to decide whether or not so submit a response.

The intent of the RFP is to gather data so the Trust can establish parameters of the new program. To that end, the Trust intends to capitalize the program with the expectation of providing complete AMPs to eligible entities. Since it is unknown at this time to when or if the Trust may open the prequalification list to additional firms after this initial prequalification, it is at the discretion of each individual firm to determine its own necessary response.

15. Can non-prequalified firms work as a subconsultant for firms that have been prequalified? This may be appropriate in communities where different consultants routinely work on respective water infrastructure facilities.

For the purposes of responding to this RFR and confirming a firm’s capabilities, responses should only be reliant on their internal capabilities. This response is only regarding the firm not how a firm will contract or complete work with a specific eligible entity.

16. Under what terms or circumstances would the Trust exclude or remove a firm from the prequalified list?

A firm may be excluded if they are unable to meet the basic criteria under section 13 of the RFR, or by submitting an incomplete application. A firm may be removed if

the information submitted to the Trust via the RFR is found to be inaccurate or if personnel changes cause the firm to be unable to complete the contracted work. Additionally, a firm may be removed if they are unable to operate under guidelines established in the future grant program, or are excluded by being placed on a federal or state disbarment list.

17. Please clarify the scope of services section with regard to “Stormwater AMPs” on pages 3 and 4 of the RFR? Are the 10 minimum items that should be included apply only to Stormwater AMPs or all AMPs? Why are charges for Stormwater System Utility Plans identified specifically in Item 7?

The provided 10 minimum items for the AMP are guideline for any or all of the three infrastructure disciplines. Stormwater systems have been singled out, since the overwhelming majority of public entities have not conducted stormwater plans that outline asset management needs, and/or developed stormwater utility plans that determine costs needed to perform regular upkeep of these particular systems.

18. In Section 12, “Response Questions”, what is the purpose of only asking for a list of similar studies or related asset management planning work since January 1, 2014? Should that time frame be extended to the past five years or more?

The time frame will be maintained as currently written. The intent of the time frame was to establish recent and relevant experience. We feel that three years is an adequate period for current examples of experience. A firm could show earlier efforts and provide proof that staff employees exist capable or performing such work, and/or outline training plans for employees.

19. In Section 8, “Scope of Services”, it is clearly stated and emphasized that the AMP **will not** include Capital Improvement Projects for non-existing infrastructure. Please clarify what would be considered as “non-existing infrastructure”? For example, would relief lines or facility expansions to address inadequate capacity issues or upgrades to address technology or operational improvements be included?

The asset management plan would only refer to assets that are currently owned, maintained and/or utilized by the eligible entity. The distinction between existing and non-existing infrastructure should be clear. The example provided seems to indicate future capital work that would be performed under other engineering evaluative work, rather than related to the preparation of Asset Management Plans.

20. Will facility condition assessments be considered eligible for AMP grant funding? ‘

No, facility condition assessments appear to be for evaluative work, that is not included under ‘existing infrastructure’.

21. In section 12G, please be specific with regard to software purchase (proprietary vs non-proprietary) that would be eligible for purchase and use under an AMP grant? It would help

if you could provide examples of software or software adaptations /versions that would or would not be grant eligible. Could a community choose to use software other than CUPSS, if it was provided at no cost, and if so, would other costs for the AMP be deemed ineligible for grant funding? Does the prohibition apply to commercial “off the shelf” software, such as computerized maintenance management packages? There seems to be a clear emphasis on the use of CUPSS software as part of an AMP. Is use of this software intended to be a requirement for AMP grant funding?

Per Section 12-G (a): It should be noted that the Trust will not allow proprietary software generated by engineering firms to be utilized for this work.

CUPSS is software developed by the EPA that is free and available for public use. There is no requirement to utilize this software. Each eligible entity needs to evaluate existing software within their community, that may be utilized by the infrastructure governing entity to provide a complete AMP.

22. If a firm has all of the experience and capabilities to complete an AMP, but cannot provide an example of a “fully executed AMP with clearly defined milestones for the process” as described in Section 13 (2) on page 7 of the RFR, will that prevent a firm from being prequalified? This requirement could serve to significantly limit the number of eminently qualified firms from being prequalified. If the intent of this process is to pre-qualify a large number of firms, it is suggested that the Trust review all of the “Trust’s Evaluation of Responses” in Section 13, to determine just how restrictive the RFR is.

Engineering firms are being encouraged to show past and present experience or show the ability to come up to speed for the preparation of asset management plans through training of their employees. Providing examples of past experience should demonstrate and support the firm’s description of experience and capabilities.

23. Item 12F of the RFR asks for information related to the cost associated with generating an Asset Management Plan for communities of various sizes throughout the Commonwealth. With so many variables, including the number, extent, and type of assets, availability of existing information on existing facilities, etc., a wide range of costs would result. As such, how and for what purpose will this information be used? If the intent is to develop standard or typical costs for AMP development, such wide ranges of work scopes, levels of effort, and costs may not be helpful.

The information requested is intended to inform the Trust on funding requirements of the program. Additionally, the scaling of cost will be used for analysis and recommendations, but not for price controls. Please note paragraph 3 of Section 1 of the RFR.

24. In many communities, responsibility for specific water infrastructure (i.e. drinking water, wastewater, and storm water) can fall under two or more municipal departments, agencies, districts, and/or private companies. a. In the case of varied municipal departments (i.e.

drinking water, sewer and highway) with their own budgets and revenue streams, could a grant be segmented/allocated to each involved department?

- a. How would potential grant recipients that are allocated to various departments address the need for in-kind services or the cash match requirements?
- b. Could a community apply for a grant for multiple water infrastructure entities and be allowed to allocate the grant monies; and the cash or in-kind services matches internally?

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25. If it is determined that certain software would not be eligible for AMP grant funding, could a municipality purchase desired/preferred software as part of a community match (assuming a community match will be required.)

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26. Can equipment needed to conduct condition assessments or to maintain the infrastructure systems be funded through a grant from the trust? Would data collection hardware be considered grant eligible?

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27. How much of the prior state funded grant program requirements for Asset Management Planning will remain in place for this program, including:

- a. The Community Match?
- b. The Maximum Grant?
- c. Limited time schedules for completion and reimbursements?
- d. Scope inclusion/exclusion and eligibility?

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28. It is understood that such Asset Management Plans could and would suffice as Financial Sustainability Plans required for Clean Water Project Funding under WRRDA? Does that mean that Clean Water Projects will now receive preferential treatment for AMP grant funding?

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29. Will communities that apply for grant funding be allowed to request multi-year grant funding based on local match limitations for various town departments?

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30. Will communities that only apply for a grant to complete an AMP only for drinking water or wastewater, or stormwater facilities be given less priority for grant funding?

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