

# **Coastal Counties Restoration Initiative (CCRI)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

NACo has developed this Frequently Asked Question list to provide potential CCRI applicants with added information on the Request for Proposals and Application. Please also feel free to contact Carrie Clingan at 202.942.4246 or [CClingan@naco.org](mailto:CClingan@naco.org) for more information or with specific questions.

### **I. Grant Funding and Matching Funds Information**

#### **Q. Does CCRI have a matching funds requirement?**

**A.** Yes. CCRI requires grantees to match grant funds at a ratio of 1:1. Projects that leverage the amount of funds requested with significant cash or in-kind contribution from project partners are much more competitive. Our most competitive applications usually match at 2:1 or higher.

#### **Q. What can count as matching funds?**

**A.** In-kind and cash matches are appropriate. Funds cannot be federal in origin. Federal grant programs through third parties and state revolving funds cannot count as match for this grant. Salaries of employees for the time spent on grant activities may be considered as match.

#### **Q. Is CCRI a cash grant or is it on a reimbursement schedule?**

**A.** Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis.

#### **Q. What documentation is required for reimbursement of grant funds?**

**A.** The applicant must submit supporting documentation in the form of: (in order of preference) invoices, timesheets (for personnel costs), receipts, cancelled checks or, if none of the preceding documents are available, a memo attesting to the validity of the expenditure and the reason why a receipt could not be obtained.

#### **Q. What documentation is required for matching funds?**

**A.** Matching funds must be documented at the same level of scrutiny as reimbursement documentation.

### **II. Application-specific Technical Information**

#### **Q. Does a county applicant need to have a letter of support from the County Chief Elected Official or Board?**

**A.** Yes. Every applicant must submit this letter to establish the support of the county's elected officials.

#### **Q. If I am partnering with a county and not a county applicant, how extensive should the partnership be?**

**A.** County partnerships must demonstrate significant county involvement through the county letter of support and through the description of grant activities including outreach and

educational activities that involve the county directly. Unless the county's policies require it, a resolution does not need to be passed to demonstrate support to apply for this grant.

**Q. How developed should the community outreach components of the proposed project be at the time of the application?**

**A.** Community outreach is a key aspect to this initiative. The ideal outreach component will be one that continues after the restoration work is complete and shows creativity in utilizing a broad array of tools to engage the community and addresses a wide range of citizens. The proposal should have at least an outline of the outreach program with a proposed timeframe for implementation and have established a partnership where necessary to carry out these activities. The applicant should have coordinated with knowledgeable partners or entities within the county that have agreed on an outline and an action plan of the community outreach aspects of the program within the proposed time frame. The ideal project is one that builds on this initial framework to continue those efforts well past the grant period (typically two years).

**Q. Does a particular site(s) need to be identified in the proposal?**

**A.** Yes. Applicants are encouraged to provide detailed information about the current conditions of the site including photographs, the methods to be used to restore the site and long-term maintenance and monitoring activities. Reviewers can then make reasonable judgments about the ecological significance and success of the restoration work. NOAA's environmental compliance responsibilities cannot be completed without identifying a specific site.

**Q. What are anticipated environmental results and how do I address those?**

**A.** In the planning stage of a project, it is sometimes hard to perceive what the exact final environmental outcome will be, but it is important to show grant reviewers that you have considered environmental outcomes. Discuss potential acreage or stream miles to be restored, types of habitat to be improved and identify species to benefit, the amount of vegetation to be planted, and the future benefit that the project will have on water quality and other environmental factors. Applicants should keep in mind that a competitive application will have a significant focus on long-term monitoring and the successful production of measurable, on-the-ground results.

**Q. What is the definition of "restoration"?**

**A.** Restoration is the process of reestablishing a self-sustaining habitat that closely resembles the natural condition in terms of structure and function. The goal of restoration is to expedite natural processes in rebuilding a healthy, functioning natural ecosystem that works like it did before it was polluted or destroyed. Restoration also means an actual increase in living marine resource habitats, as measured both by structural and functional characteristics having the ability to support fish and wildlife.

Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or Federal law, activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under Federal, state or local law and activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation are not allowable restoration under CCRI.

**Q. What is the definition of a "riparian area"?**

A. Riparian areas typically refer to stream buffers or floodplain projects. Examples of the functions of riparian areas are improving water quality by filtering out sediment, acting as sponges to reduce flooding and increase water availability for drinking and irrigation and providing habitat for fish and wildlife.

**III. Partner Justification**

**Q. Can CCRI be listed as one of the partners for the project?**

A. No. The applicant can be listed as one of the partners, but not CCCRI. Please list ALL partners under "partner contributions," even if the value of their contribution is still to be determined or if they cannot be counted as matching partners to help reviewers understand the scope of the project.

**Q. What if we have no partners?**

A. While having no established partners does not mean that your proposal will not get due consideration, the most competitive proposals generally include at least enough partners to ensure that outreach and educational goals are met.

**Q. What are considered "partner contributions?"**

A. Partner contributions can be in the form of a cash contribution or the contribution of in-kind services such as volunteer labor and technical expertise. Contributions should generally be restricted to those directly involved in the proposed scope of work, but can include planning and other related activities conducted within one year of the proposed start date for the project. While federal partnerships are encouraged, federal matching dollars cannot be counted as match.

**Q. Does volunteer manual labor count towards the educational/training component?**

A. Volunteer labor should be supplemented with educational programs, such as presentations or workshops, in order to be considered as part of the educational component. It is important that volunteers understand how they are adding to the project and what the overall ecological objectives are.

**IV. Project Budget**

**Q. What items cannot be purchased with CCRI grant funds?**

A. Grants are intended to be used for direct environmental restoration and education expenses. Items such as cameras, computers, general wages and boat time should not occupy a major portion of your proposed budget. Food, t-shirts, hats and other purchases for entertainment of volunteers are some of the items that cannot be acquired using CCRI grant funds.

**Q. Can CCRI funds support staff salaries and benefits?**

A. Yes. CCRI funds can be used to pay for salary and benefits of staff directly involved in project planning and implementation. However, applicants are encouraged to keep requests for salaries and benefits to 50 percent or less.

**Q. Should in-kind contributions be given a dollar value in the budget?**

**A.** Where possible, in-kind contributions should be given a dollar value. Volunteers provide valuable time and energy to the project that should be measured. Use the prevailing rate that would be paid for a contractor for similar service or the professional rate of an individual who is donating their professional time/expertise. \$10-\$15/hr is an appropriate default for manual labor (e.g., for planting trees). Please list number of hours and hourly wage and note the dollar amount represented with in-kind services.

**V. CCRI – specific Assistance for First-time Grant Writers**

**Narrative Information**

Please make sure that narrative information is clear and concise. Have someone unconnected to the project read through your narrative to ensure clarity and specifics. It's easy to overlook small points when you've been intimately connected to a project that someone else will spot right away. Proofread your proposal to make sure that all grammatical errors and spelling mistakes are corrected before submitting. Stay within allotted word counts so that information isn't lost. Please "connect the dots" for reviewers on all aspects of your narrative by being specific and clear. Explain how grant funds, matching and non-matching funds and other assistance add up to a total project and how CCRI will fund a key aspect of the project to ensure success.

**Budgets**

Add up your budgets and check totals. Often we receive budgets that don't correspond closely with narrative information or don't add up. Look carefully at budget categories and request assistance if something isn't clear.

**Matching Funds**

Check matching funds information and ensure that non-matching funds are carefully noted as part of the overall project even though they aren't counted as match. This helps reviewers understand the scope of the project.

In-kind donations of time, supplies and expertise can all be considered match. Reach out to local civic groups for volunteers.

**Outreach and Partnerships**

Look for non-profit and other watershed groups in your area that may be stakeholders in the restoration project. Look to local civic groups for volunteers and support. Engage multimedia and other web tools to boost the outreach component of your project. High Schools and colleges often require community service activities and may become a partner in your project. These organizations can provide volunteers as well as outreach and education. Creative outreach and partners help an application to succeed.