

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.1 "For purposes of match, since these funds are funneled thru the state and presumably will be awarded by DOC, a state agency, could I assume these are considered non-federal money?"

*A.1 Yes you are correct, for the purpose of match the funds will be considered non-federal.*

Q.2 "Although I see a statement that a higher ratio of applicant funding will be scored higher, I do not see any specific detail of cost sharing / match requirements. Could you please clarify the requirements for match?"

*A.2 There are no specific match requirements, however, applicants will indeed be scored based on "the funds the applicant already has to devote to the completion of the project" or the amount they have leveraged from other sources. More specifically, "the total project costs as a ratio to the total grant request."*

Q.3 "Are new construction projects eligible for this program or is it only for existing buildings?"

*A.3 New construction projects are eligible, however, the application and corresponding budget must clearly note what the awarded funds will be used for, as funds awarded through this program can not be used for costs unrelated to the wood-to-energy project.*

Q.4 "Please clarify the terms and relationships between the "applicant", "sub-recipient", "provider" and "contractor".

*A.4 The "sub-recipient" is the applicant and entity that will receive the grant if an award is made. In the case of this ARRA program the Maine Department of Conservation, Maine Forest Service (DOC/MFS) is the recipient of the funds from the USDA Forest Service. We will in turn be awarding the funds to successful applicants referred to as the sub-recipient. More simply applicant and sub-recipient are one in the same.*

*Unless described as a specific type of provider such as a service provider in the body of the RFA, the "provider", as referred to in Appendix A, is the applicant or entity receiving the grant. "Provider" is the standard term used in all State of Maine contracts.*

*"Contractor" as used in the body of the RFA is generally a company that is providing the applicant with services such as engineering, service or installation related to the wood-to-energy project. "Contractor" as used in Appendix A is synonymous with the term "provider" used in the context of the contractual agreement that successful applicants will enter into with the State of Maine in order to be awarded the grant funds. Again, this is standard language used for all grants and agreements.*

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.5 "On Page 2 of the grant application under " Energy, Economic and Community Benefits" evidence is asked for of Community Support such as Voter, Council or School Board Approval. Given the typical March - June dates of Maine town meetings how is this possible to achieve in a January 5th application?"

*Q.5 As is stated throughout the RFA, the intent of this program is to award funds to projects that are "shovel ready" in order to help create and retain jobs in the near-term . It is expected that some projects may be more shovel ready or further along in the implementation process than others and therefore may have already gone through the step of seeking approval of the appropriate body.*

*That said, the MFS recognizes that this component may be problematic for smaller communities and therefore requests that applicants that have not yet met this obligation, provide other documentation of public support as available and indication that steps have been taken to ensure their project will be on the agenda for an upcoming meeting of the appropriate governing body.*

Q.6 "Can application be made and grants be awarded conditional on local voter or school board approvals which would occur after the Jan 5th application deadline?"

*A.6 Grants can and will be awarded as conditional, based on the applicant's ability to secure local voter, council or school board approval, providing all other components of the application be scored such that the proposal is considered worthy of funding.*

Q.7 "Do I need a statement from the town saying it is ok to proceed with a pellet application project at my facility?"

*A.7 All applicants are asked to demonstrate evidence of community support and commitment of the community. Some applications such as a school will likely require approval of the town or school board, others may not have such requirements. However, all applicants are encouraged to demonstrate local support through applicable means.*

Q.7 "What does the term "public college" mean? Is that a college that receives annual appropriations from the State of Maine?"

*A.7 "Public" college broadly means an institution that receives some public funding and/or serves the public or community in some way.*

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.8 "Are private colleges, churches, granges, non-profits and other fraternal organizations whose buildings are used by the public and whose missions includes public participation and access to their lands and facilities eligible to participate in this program?"

*A.8 We encourage entities who can demonstrate that their projects are shovel ready, feasible and have a public benefit to apply. Our goal is to fund the best projects that can demonstrate those criteria. While the program is not aimed specifically at NGO's churches, granges and fraternal organizations, they are not specifically ineligible. We believe the project would be eligible if the town in which a grange hall exists made the case that the project was shovel ready, created jobs, and made the link to the public benefit.*

Q.9 "Are town academies and other private schools who admit public school students and whose education is paid for by tax dollars received from the state eligible to apply?"

*A.9 Yes, we encourage entities who can demonstrate that their projects are shovel ready, feasible and have a public benefit to apply.*

Q.10 "Would low income housing be eligible to apply for this program? We manage a total of 170 rental units, the majority of which are low income family or elderly. Some are non-profit owned and some are for-profit. Most are federally funded and subsidized by either MSHA or Rural Development."

*A.10 We encourage entities who can demonstrate that their projects are shovel ready, feasible and have a public benefit to apply. Our goal is to fund the best projects that can demonstrate those criteria.*

Q.11 Questions related to the "Buy American" provision for the "Public Buildings Wood to Energy Program:

"From the "Request for Applications" document, I understand that if a proponent requests funding for a wood heating system not manufactured in the USA, they have to apply for a special exemption.

Exceptions are allowed for cases:

- where the head of the federal agency concerned determines adherence would be "inconsistent with the public interest",
- where iron/steel/manufactured goods are not produced in the U.S. in sufficient and available quantities, or
- inclusion of U.S. products would increase overall project cost by 25%

For the exemption, the proponent would have to apply to the appropriate federal agency, in this case, I assume it is the US Forest Service. Who at the USFS (or other Federal Agency) would make the determination of the exemption?

I also understand from the Federal Register documents that the "Buy-American" clause doesn't apply to steel or manufactured goods from NAFTA countries and other countries with which the U.S. has trade agreements if the project value is greater than \$7.4 million. However, I would assume that due to the funding threshold of this Program, no projects would reach this \$7.4 million project threshold for exemption. Is this correct?"

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

*A.11 The interpretation from our federal partners is that the total program amount of \$11.4 million exceeds the \$7.4 million threshold total and therefore projects funded through this ARRA program need only to comply with the requirement that steel or manufactured goods come from NAFTA countries and other countries with which the U.S. has trade agreements. Additional information can be found here: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-9073.pdf>. A list of the participating countries is posted on page 4 of the federal register document.*

Q.12 "We are completing construction of a Snow removal Equipment Garage under the FAA's AIP and we spec'd a wood gasification boiler. Is such a heating system eligible for funding under this grant? If not would the replacement of our oil fired boiler be eligible for funding in our terminal building?"

*A.12 Providing as an applicant you can prove public purpose, a wood gasification boiler is eligible for funding. The replacement of an oil fired boiler with a new oil fired boiler would not be eligible.*

Q.13 "We have a wood chip boiler that has been in use since 1998. We are proposing to expand that boiler to provide heating to our middle and elementary schools that are on the same campus as the existing boiler. We would apply for funding to run piping from the existing boiler to the middle and elementary schools?"

*A.13 We absolutely encourage you to apply and because it's an expansion to adjacent schools, we see no conflict or reason you would not be eligible to apply.*

Q.14 "I understand from Maine Dept. of Labor that unemployment for Hancock County normally rises in October or November and will in all likelihood exceed the 8% low limit before the Jan 5, '10 deadline for applying for the wood-fuels incentive. Will current unemployment rates be reviewed when scoring proposals?"

*A.14 Yes, current unemployment rates will be reviewed at the time proposals are received, on or shortly following the January 5, 2010 deadline. Additional counties may be added to the list should their unemployment rates exceed 8% at the time of review.*

Q.15 "One of our elementary schools has an aging Smith boiler. It is so old that parts are no longer available. Could we switch to biomass for heat AND install two new boilers with ARRA money? The square footage of the building is approximately 41,000 sq'."

*A.15 Funds through this program are for the installation of biomass heating systems. Providing the two new boilers are biomass boilers you would be eligible for funds through this program.*

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.16 "Our organization has received a USDA Rural Development Public Facilities grant for a community - based fisheries outreach center. Can the dollars received through this program be used as match to the USDA funds referenced above? I am told that certain stimulus program monies do not have a stated prohibition against use as match to other federal grant funds".

*A.16 The authority to use other federal funds as match would be in the USDA Rural Development Public Facilities grant program. The applicant would have to check the authorizing language and or the program description at the CFDA web site. Maine Forest Service programs generally do not allow other federal funds to be used as match. Most programs are not allowed. CDBG is one example which sometimes has the restriction lifted. This ARRA program does not have a match requirement.*

Q. 17 "To what extent are related heating system improvements eligible beyond boiler purchase and installation, for example if the recommended heating system upgrade includes changing a steam system to a hot-water system?"

*A.17 If such upgrades are a necessary component of the installation of an efficient system, such upgrades may be considered for funding through this grant program.*

Q.18 "To what extent are concurrent building envelope energy saving measures eligible (insulation, windows, etc.)"

*A.18 Funds from this program may only be used for the installation, purchase and related steps necessary for the installation of a biomass system. Funds may not be used for envelope improvements. Applicants are encouraged to review other ARRA funding opportunities available through the Public Utilities Commission for envelope and efficiency measures.  
<http://www.maine.gov/mpuc/recovery/>*

Q.19 "Section 8.2, C. "Overall Technical Feasibility" articulates a list of specific items that "may be included". Responding to all of them would exceed the page limit of the application. Can any of these be submitted as Appendices? Examples include: three pages of site drawings; and the 32 page operations manual for the equipment. Should we eliminate some of the requested/suggested data in favor of complying with the space limitations?"

*A.19 Items relating to technical feasibility are requested if applicable. It is not meant to be a rigid list of requirements. Items from this list may also be submitted as appendices.*

Q.20 "Must a fuel provider be identified? We cannot execute a contract for fuel until we have a project under way."

*A.20 Applicants should demonstrate knowledge of existing fuel supply and of fuel supply sources that come from a certified source in particular. Recognizing that not all applicants will have secured a fuel supply source, applicants should be aware of related options and limitations.*

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.21 8.2 B on Page 8 - "Is this just job creation, or is it job creation/retention?"

*A.21 For the purposes of this grant jobs or full-time equivalents are measured by both jobs created and retained.*

Q.22 8.2 C on Page 8 - "Must we provide a solid fuel license number before we enter the contract?"

*A.22 As previously stated, we expect that some projects will be further along in the process and therefore more shovel ready than others. Applicants should provide as much information as possible to illustrate "readiness".*

Q.23 9.2 on Page 11 - "Is the narrative double-sided or double-spaced (or both)?"

*Q.23 Section 9.2 of the RFA only states that the narrative portion of the application must be double sided. Applicants may choose to double-space their text so long as the 20-page limit is not exceeded.*

Q.24 "Money can be saved by installing equipment without filtration, ash removal and boiler tube cleaning devices. However, this will drastically reduce efficiency and increase emissions. Neither efficiency nor emissions are mentioned on the Scoring Rubric. Will efficiency and emissions be considered? If they will be considered, how will they effect scoring?"

*A.24 It is up to the applicant to illustrate feasibility for their project, both in terms of efficiency and emissions. Applicants unable to demonstrate feasibility will not be considered.*

- *Emissions requirements and EPA / DEP standards must be met or exceeded. Projects that do not meet current emission standards will not be considered, as funds will not be awarded for projects that are not consistent with current state and federal laws, rules and regulations.*
- *Efficiency is specific to each proposal. Applicants are encouraged to describe the energy efficiency and efficiency related to labor and maintenance.*

Q.25 "Can you explain more clearly the difference between standard and custom grants? If an entity applies for a grant for a wood chip heating system under 200,000 Btus, at a cost of over \$25,000, which application procedure should be used?"

*A.25 The difference between "standard" and "custom" categories is meant to simplify the application process for smaller "out-of-the-box" projects, "standard" being the category to capture the smaller more simple projects. The categories are not meant to be rigid and applicants can choose to provide additional information following the "custom" project criteria if necessary.*

*Also, the \$25,000 and \$750,000 figures delineate total "grant award" or the amount the applicant is requesting in grant funds, not total project cost.*

**Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities**

**RFA Questions & Answers**

**November 30, 2009**

	Standard Projects	Custom Projects
Definition	Small, Non-Complex	Large, Complex
Purpose	Fund conversion of existing fossil fuel systems in public buildings to wood fuels.	Fund conversion of larger fossil fuel systems to wood fuel systems in larger public facilities.
Grant Award	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$750,000
Award Criteria	Competitive	Competitive
Application	Application form, see Appendix B. See Subsection 8.1.	Application form, see Appendix B, plus detailed application. See Subsection 8.2.

**Q.26 "Would paper pellets made from waste paper qualify for this program?"**

*A.26 Wood pellet and chips will score highest. Other wood fuel sources are eligible, however they may not score as highly in the scoring matrix. Feasibility with such a fuel sources should also be explained.*

**Q.27 "We will be freeing up space in our existing floor plan for this project with modifications; to assist with my match what would I use per square foot of floor space as matching funds?"**

*A.27 While match is not specifically required, one criteria is the leveraging of other funds. Floor space would be difficult to convert to leveraged dollars. We encourage applicants to look elsewhere for leveraged resources.*

**Q.28 "My Forestry program follows sustainable forestry initiatives. Our program provides Certified Logging Professional (CLP) training and certification. Can any of this be used as an in-kind match?"**

*A.28 While match is not specifically required, one criteria is the leveraging of other funds. Educational programs would be difficult to convert to leveraged dollars. We encourage applicants to look elsewhere for leveraged resources.*

**Q.28 "How will wood boiler projects be bid? Will these be design/build projects? How will design teams/engineers be chosen?"**

*A.28 The bid and design process is at the discretion of the applicant, which must be a public entity.*

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.29 "Is this type of technology reliable enough to control temperatures with thermostats?"

*A.29 Yes it is. In fact, except for the smallest of units (some stoves) they are controlled by thermostats. Many small units can be controlled entirely by a thermostat in much the same manner as an oil unit is.*

Q.30 "Does this grant help us to convert to wood fired boiler to get away from the oil dependence?"

*A.30 In short, yes, this program is designed to help lessen the State of Maine's dependence on oil through the conversion or augmentation of a wood chip or wood pellet appliance.*

Q.31 "Section 8.2C indicates proposals must include a preliminary evaluation of any environmental issues which may require the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement pursuant to NEPA Guidelines. After reading parts of the NEPA sections related to EA and EIS I am not sure if I need to do this.

1. Do all applications need to have an EIS documented as having been completed or indication that it is in process?
2. If you are building putting a wood furnace in an existing structure, there is no environmental impact to water or land. Do you need to complete an EIS?
3. How do you know if you need to do an EIS?
4. If I am required to do an EIS and or EA, how can I find an EPA point of contact person to complete the EA?"

A.31 A component of shovel readiness is knowing what procedures, permits and processes are required. Our intent is to fund projects that can demonstrate readiness. It is up to the applicant to determine if an EIS is needed.

Maine DEP office contact information can be found here:  
<http://www.maine.gov/dep/mdepoffices.htm>

Q.32 "Section 8.2 C Indicates we need to have a letter from the lending entity guaranteeing funding.  
a. Does this mean funding for the whole project if we do not receive the grant or does this mean you need a letter from the lending institution for the borrowed amount that constitutes the required match for the grant?  
b. Can some of the local match be in-kind contributions such as the cost of laying pipe for the project that is funded with local monies?"

A.32 We expect that some applicants may be borrowing funds from a lending institution, which would serve as leverage dollars that should be demonstrated through this program. In this case, a letter is required in order to demonstrate readiness.

Match can be used as long as it is specifically related to the installation of the biomass boiler.

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.33 "Other: Can an energy performance contract be used to demonstrate and in-kind match?"

*A.33 While match is not specifically required, one criteria is the leveraging of other funds. Energy performance contracts would be difficult to convert to leveraged dollars. We encourage applicants to look elsewhere for leveraged resources.*

Q.34 Section 8.2D Amount of funds allocated to indirect costs. "What are some basic examples of what this can cover?"

*A.34 Entities with an approved indirect cost allocation plan are allowed to apportion administrative costs according to the plan. Indirect cost allocation plans are typically approved by an entity's federal cognizant agency.*

Q.35 "Where are deadlines found?"

*A.35 Deadlines are found on this page of our website <http://www.maine.gov/doc/mfs/arra/> and in the RFA and in Section 5.0 of the RFA.*

Q.36 "Does a single pellet combustion system which includes a standard off the shelf combustor, new underground pipe work, separate boiler building and simple tie into the existing school heating system fall into the "standard" category as they are single units heating one school?"

*A.36 This project seems to fall within the complex category due to the required engineering necessary for such a project.*

Q.37 "Will a new single pellet combustion system which will be heating two to four buildings which will require additional engineering, design and more extensive site work be considered a candidate as a standard or complex project?"

*A.37 This project will fall within in the complex category due to the required engineering necessary for such a project.*

Q.38 "Two separate but adjacent school districts wish to combine separate hot water combustion installations to reduce overall project costs and management under a single RFA application .

District A

i. System #1) One system heating one building

District B

i. System #2) One system heating two buildings;

ii. System #3) One system heating two buildings;

Is this scenario allowed under the RFA guidelines?"

*A.38 Yes, one application is preferred. (Community or district heating projects are encouraged to apply for funds through this program and will score additional points.)*

Maine Department of Conservation  
ARRA Wood-to-Energy Program for Public Facilities

RFA Questions & Answers

November 30, 2009

Q.39 "The application instructions on page 9 say 'projects unable to demonstrate feasibility and "readiness" will not be considered.' Is that statement firm?"

A.39 This statement is firm in the sense that applicants need to demonstrate that they have invested thought and time in to project. The intent of this program is to fund projects that are shovel ready and can start construction within 120 days.