

FY17 Section 319 Proposal Review Guidelines for the NPS Task Force

SCORING MATRIX CRITERIA

- 1. The project addresses an important water quality need for the State of Wyoming and the project is designed to effectively address that need.**
 - a. Does the project address a severe public health or ecological problem?
 - b. What is the benefit to water quality and the public?
 - c. Does the project benefit multiple stakeholders or just one stakeholder?
 - d. Does the project restore an impaired waterbody or protect a high quality waterbody? (see also WDEQ comments in Section I)
 - e. Is the project designed to directly address the problem or will it only tangentially address the problem?

- 2. The project involves appropriate partners and has significant stakeholder support. Adequate non-federal match has been secured for the project and match sources are appropriate for the project.**
 - a. Are all the appropriate parties involved in the project?
 - b. Have partners contributing funds or staff to the project indicated commitment to the project?
 - c. Has the sponsor found adequate sources of non-federal match and are those sources secured or pending? Non-federal match must comprise at least 40% of the total project cost (see Section I for non-federal match %).
 - d. Are the sources of non-federal match appropriate? If cash match is needed to indicate the sponsor's or partners' commitment to the project, is cash match included? If in-kind match will be used for project, are the rates and justification reasonable?
 - e. Do the sources of non-federal match indicate that the sponsor has looked for other appropriate sources of funding and is not relying solely on 319 funding?

- 3. Pre-project planning has taken place to help ensure the timely and successful completion of the project. Any preliminary research, planning or other activities needed to fully develop the project scope have been completed.**
 - a. Projects implementing BMPs need to meet planning requirements to be eligible for most of the 319 funding. In most cases, a "nine element watershed based plan" is needed (e.g., TMDL implementation plans constitute nine element watershed based plans). In limited circumstances, an alternative plan may be acceptable. See WDEQ comments in Section I of the Scoring Sheet); WDEQ will provide information about whether or not planning requirements have been met for the project, whether the project implements action items from the plan, and whether the project addresses a significant source of NPS pollution in the watershed based on information in the plan.
 - b. Has the sponsor indicated in the proposal that they are trying to target priority activities or geographical areas to get the greatest "bang for the buck"?
 - c. Has the sponsor "done their homework" to provide a solid foundation for the project? Are proposed activities reasonable, necessary, and feasible?

- 4. Goals and products of the project are clearly defined and attainable; project is focused on measurable outcomes.**
 - a. Does the project focus on producing results, rather than processes?
 - b. Has the project quantified the results/products of the project?
 - c. Has the project identified the water quality improvement the sponsor would like to achieve?

- 5. Project costs are reasonable as compared to anticipated results.**
 - a. Are the project costs reasonable compared to the project's scope? What's the "bang for the buck"?
 - b. Is the budget as cost-effective as possible?
 - c. Does the budget provide adequate information that indicates the sponsor has thought through individual task budgets? Is reasonable specificity provided in line items rather than generic lump sums?

- 6. The project includes methods to evaluate project effectiveness or justification as to why such methods (e.g., water quality monitoring) are not the best use of resources or should be postponed to a later time.**
 - a. All projects should include some mechanism to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Ideally, this would be done through water quality monitoring. However, water quality monitoring may not be appropriate for all projects. For example, some projects may need to implement several phases of BMPs before monitoring, or it may take several years for BMPs to be fully effective. In such cases, the best use of resources may be to postpone monitoring until a future date and use other methods (e.g., modeling) to evaluate effectiveness in the interim. Therefore, sponsors may provide a justification to waive the monitoring requirement for the project. A high score may be obtained if the sponsor provides a solid and complete justification for a waiver.
 - i. If a waiver is proposed:
 1. Has the sponsor provided sufficient justification for why a waiver is appropriate?
 2. Has the sponsor identified an alternative method (e.g., modeling) to evaluate project effectiveness in the interim?
 3. Have they indicated a commitment to monitor in the future and/or to coordinate with partnering agencies/organizations to complete the monitoring?
 - ii. If the sponsor is not requesting a waiver and will conduct water quality monitoring:
 1. Have they provided an overview of the study design and will it obtain useful information and meet the desired objectives?
 2. Has the sponsor committed to providing a Sampling and Analysis Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan?
 3. Are the samplers qualified to do the monitoring?

- iii. Has sponsor indicated they are aware of Wyoming statutes regarding (1) collection of resource data and (2) public record requirements?
 - b. Has the sponsor committed to providing pollutant load reduction estimates at the end of the project (required for all BMP implementation projects)?
- 7. The project has clearly identified tasks that include adequate information to describe work to be accomplished.**
 - a. Do the tasks indicate the sponsor has put sufficient thought into how to successfully implement the project?
 - b. Do the tasks contain sufficient detail to understand what will be done?
- 8. The project will provide outreach and education using effective and targeted methods, or an explanation of why outreach/education is not the best use of funds has been provided.**
 - a. Outreach/Education activities are recommended but not required for all projects. A high score for this criterion can be obtained if the sponsor provides sufficient explanation for why outreach/education is not the best use of funding.
 - i. If Outreach/Education will not be conducted:
 - 1. A complete and solid explanation as to why Outreach/Education is not the best use of resources has been provided.
 - ii. For Outreach/Education projects, or an Outreach/Education task within a larger project:
 - 1. Have they identified a targeted audience and a clearly defined message they are trying to communicate?
 - 2. Has the sponsor thought through what outreach activities might be most effective and why? Are they thinking of effective/innovative methods rather than defaulting to methods used in the past that may not have been effective?
 - 3. Has the sponsor provided some way to evaluate the effectiveness of Outreach/Education activities?
- 9. Sufficient technical and managerial resources are available to facilitate successful completion of the project.**
 - a. Does the proposal communicate that the sponsor has the resources to complete the project?
 - b. Has the sponsor sufficiently thought through what environmental permits they need for the project?
 - c. Does the proposal and, if applicable, past performance history (see Section I of the scoring sheet) communicate that the sponsor is committed to meeting all grant administrative requirements (e.g., reporting, records management, deadlines)?

10. The project will promote long-term and self-maintaining natural, ecological and social processes that will protect water quality.

- a. Is the project proposing long-term, sustainable solutions to the water quality problem? Is this a short-term, “band-aid” fix or something that addresses the problem well into the future?
- b. If implementing BMPs, has the sponsor identified operation and maintenance needs and how those will be achieved? Is there a commitment to make sure BMPs remain functional into the future, rather than a “fix it and forget it” approach?
- c. Will the project require a lot of maintenance, or is it as self-maintaining as possible?

11. Project will be implemented in a timely and efficient manner, according to a reasonable schedule.

- a. Does the milestone table seem reasonable? Can the project be completed in the time provided?
- b. Has the sponsor thought through a logical sequence of events?

12. To the extent possible, sponsor has made efforts to design the project in such a manner to benefit other resources (e.g., wildlife, fisheries, soil health, water conservation) in addition to water quality.

- a. While benefit to water quality is the primary resource concern that proposals will be evaluated against, sponsors should make efforts to consider other resource benefits that may occur due to the water quality improvement activities being implemented. The sponsor should try to maximize those benefits where appropriate and where the secondary benefits can still be related to water quality.
 - i. As a few examples:
 1. An urban stormwater wetland could be primarily designed to improve water quality but could also incorporate features for wildlife habitat.
 2. A stream restoration project can incorporate benefits to fisheries.
 3. Off-channel water tanks should incorporate small mammal/bird escape ramps and can be sited where they will benefit both wildlife and livestock.
 4. Converting flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation can reduce pollutant transport to rivers/streams and can also achieve water conservation goals.
 5. Many grazing and irrigation best management practices reduce pollutant transport to rivers/streams and also improve soil health.
 6. A wetlands project could install a pathway to allow visitors better access to the wetlands to see educational features to learn about wetlands and water quality.
 - a. However, a pathway installed purely for recreational benefits would NOT be an appropriate use of funds (not related to water quality).
 7. Planting trees/shrubs in a riparian area can help stabilize banks and also provide an aesthetic benefit.

- a. However, planting trees at a project purely for aesthetic reasons would not be an appropriate use of funds (not related to water quality).
- ii. Has sponsor identified other benefits of the project and described how these benefits will be achieved?

OTHER

13. Specific considerations for projects implementing Irrigation BMPs

- a. Task Force determination that irrigation BMP projects need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- b. Is there a water quality benefit and is it proportional to the 319 contribution? Irrigation BMPs can have many other types of benefits (e.g., water conservation, property value, and increased yield); however, there must be a water quality benefit for 319 funds to be used. WDEQ will advise sponsors that they need to make the water quality benefit clear in their proposal.
 - i. How close are the BMPs to the waterbody of concern?
 - 1. Is runoff from the field directly entering the waterbody of concern? A perennial tributary to the waterbody? An ephemeral tributary to the waterbody? Runoff directly into the waterbody of concern or a perennial tributary will have greater pollutant transport than discharge to ephemeral tributaries.
 - ii. Will the proposed BMPs address the pollutants of concern?
 - 1. For example, converting from flood to sprinkler irrigation (e.g., pivot systems) may address multiple pollutants—sediment from overland flow, bacteria from overland flow, selenium through infiltration and subsurface flow... Converting an earthen ditch to a pipeline may reduce sediment from erosion and selenium through subsurface flow, but would not reduce bacteria from overland flow.
 - 2. Are irrigated lands a major or minor contributor of the pollutant in the watershed?
- c. Pivot systems and other sprinkler systems can be expensive relative to the total 319 budget. Is the sponsor also coordinating with other funding sources such as NRCS EQIP?
- d. For pivot systems and other sprinkler systems, has the sponsor committed to agreements with the landowner to make sure that the BMP stays with that property and is operated and maintained correctly into the future?
- e. Has the sponsor made efforts to prioritize which irrigated areas are the largest contributors and proactively soliciting voluntary participation from those areas?

14. Specific considerations for Septic System Projects

- a. Task Force determination that septic system projects need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- b. Does the sponsor recognize that any rehabilitated septic systems will need to meet the NPS Program Eligibility Criteria (e.g., older than 1973, single family dwelling, meets setback distances, etc...)?

- c. Is there a water quality benefit?
 - i. Partly, this is something established by meeting the eligibility criteria. If the eligibility criteria are met, then water quality improvement is likely.
 - ii. Beyond the eligibility requirements, are septic systems a major or minor contributor in the watershed relative to other sources? WDEQ will provide some information on this in Section I based on information in watershed-based plans. Other sources in the watershed may be contributing significantly more pollutants than all the septic systems combined; therefore, we wouldn't see a significant water quality benefit even from fixing all the septic systems in the watershed. Is the sponsor also considering other sources within the watershed? Or, is this a localized problem where septic systems are known to be the issue and/or are associated with a serious public health risk?
 - iii. Is the sponsor committed to identifying the most problematic septic systems in the watershed (e.g., straight pipe discharges, systems with sewage at surface)?
 - iv. Is the sponsor taking a proactive approach to finding these most problematic septic systems and soliciting voluntary participation?

15. Specific considerations for Microbial Source Tracking (MST) Projects

- a. Has the sponsor identified specific study questions and project goals?
- b. Is the sponsor using a tiered approach, in which MST is just one tool in the toolbox? Is the sponsor also using conventional methods (e.g., fecal indicator bacteria monitoring, surveying and characterizing the watershed, understanding land uses and wildlife/livestock populations in the watershed, conducting septic system inventories) to help understand sources of bacteria within the watershed?
- c. Has the sponsor identified the MST method they have chosen and explained why this method was chosen?
- d. Does the study design incorporate appropriate spatial and temporal scales?
- e. Does the number of proposed samples warrant a rigorous statistical assessment so that conclusions can be supported?
- f. Has the sponsor identified the laboratory that will conduct the analysis and provided information about the laboratory's qualifications/credentials?

16. Bonus Points for BMP Follow-Up Monitoring

- a. In order to encourage that sponsors periodically evaluate effectiveness of completed BMPs, a sponsor can earn bonus points for doing BMP follow-up monitoring.
 - i. The sponsor can earn 10 bonus points by committing to do follow-up monitoring on at least one BMP as part of the project proposal. Results must be submitted to the WDEQ as part of the final project report, so the sponsor should think through their timelines accordingly. The form included in the WDEQ guidance must be used (and copies included with the final project report).