

## **Cooperative Watershed Management Program**

### **Fiscal Year 2017 Phase II Evaluation Criteria**

*Note: Evaluation criteria are subject to change from year to year. Please ensure you refer to the evaluation criteria included in the funding opportunity announcement to which you are responding.*

The evaluation criteria portion of your application should thoroughly address each of the following criteria and sub-criteria in the order presented to assist in the complete and accurate evaluation of your proposal. If a particular criterion does not apply to your project, please indicate which criteria are inapplicable as part of your application.

*Note: it is suggested that applicants copy and paste the below criteria and sub-criteria into their applications to ensure that all necessary information is adequately addressed.*

Applications will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria (listed below), which comprise 100 points of the total evaluation weight. Please note that projects may be prioritized to ensure that they address the goals of the WaterSMART program.

#### **Evaluation Criterion A: Watershed Restoration Planning (30 points)**

Up to **30 points** may be awarded based on the extent to which the proposed project is supported by an existing watershed restoration plan (see *Section D.2.2.4 Documentation in Support of Applicant Eligibility* for more information regarding watershed restoration plan requirements). Reclamation will use the following criteria to prioritize proposals based on watershed restoration plans that are more holistic, address multiple issues related to water resources within the watershed, and that are developed by stakeholders with diverse interests. Please attach a copy of the applicable watershed restoration plan, or sections of the plan, as an appendix to your application. These pages will not be included in the total page count for the application.

- Describe your watershed restoration plan.
  - When was the restoration plan prepared and for what purpose?
  - What types of watershed management issues are addressed in the plan? For example, does the restoration plan address water quantity issues, water quality issues, and/or issues related to ecosystem health or the health of species and habitat within the watershed?
  - Who was involved in preparing the plan? Was the plan prepared with input from stakeholders with diverse interests (e.g., water, land or forest management interests, or environmental, agricultural, municipal, tribal, recreation uses)? What was the process used for interested stakeholders to provide input during the planning process?
  - If the restoration plan was prepared by an entity other than the applicant, explain why the watershed group applying did not prepare its own plan. In cases where the

applicant did not prepare the restoration plan, the applicant must provide documented support for the proposed project by the entity that authored the plan.

- Describe how the existing restoration plan provides support for your proposed watershed management project.
  - Does the proposed project implement a goal or need identified in the restoration plan?
  - Describe how the proposed project is prioritized in the referenced restoration plan.

### **Evaluation Criterion B: Project Benefits (30 points)**

Up to **30 points** may be awarded based on the evaluation of the benefits that are expected to result from the proposed project. This criterion evaluates the extent to which the project will improve the ecological resilience of the river, stream, or riparian systems within the watershed, and whether the project will benefit multiple water uses (agricultural, environmental, municipal, tribal, recreation uses) and issues within the watershed. Proposals containing a well-supported description of project benefits will receive more points under this criterion.

*Please note, if the work described in your application is a phase of a larger project, please only discuss the benefits that will result directly from the work discussed in your application and that is reflected in the budget and exclude discussion of benefits expected from the overall project.*

- Describe the expected benefits of the proposed project. Address all of the following sub-bullets that apply to the project (the described benefits are not listed in order of priority). In your responses, describe the extent and significance of the benefits associated with the project, including the geographic extent, the magnitude of expected project, and the significance of the benefits to addressing important issues within the watershed. Project benefits should be supported and quantified where appropriate, including support for the type of project and the methodology. Support for project benefits can include the existing watershed restoration plan, or other relevant planning efforts, research and science.
  - Will the project make more water available to meet water needs, or make water available at a more advantageous time or location? If so, how and to what extent?
  - Will the project result in long-term improvements to water quality? For example, will the project decrease sediment or nutrient pollution, improve water temperature, or mitigate impacts from mining or wildfires? If so, how and to what extent?
  - Will the project benefit aquatic or riparian ecosystems within the watershed? For example, will the project reduce flood risk, reduce bank erosion, increase biodiversity, preserve native species, or mitigate wildfire impacts? If so, how and to what extent?
  - Will the project benefit specific species and habitats? If so, describe the species and/or type of habitat that will benefit. How and to what extent will the project benefit the species or habitat? Please explain the status of species and habitat that will benefit (e.g., native species, game species, federally threatened or endangered, state listed, and whether critical habitat has been designated).

- Will the project benefit multiple water uses within the watershed (e.g., municipal, agricultural, environmental, tribal, recreation uses)? If so, how and to what extent?
- Will the project benefit watershed stakeholders in ways not addressed in the preceding questions? If so, how? Will the project reduce water conflicts within the watershed? Will the project increase resiliency to drought? Will the project provide benefits other water uses not mentioned above? If so, how and to what extent?
- Will the project address multiple issues of concern within the watershed (e.g., both water supply and fish habitat issues)?
- Will the project benefit multiple water uses within the watershed (e.g., municipal, agricultural, environmental, tribal, recreation uses)? If so, how and to what extent?

### ***Evaluation Criterion C: Stakeholder Support (15 points)***

Up to **15 points** may be provided based on the level of stakeholder support for the proposed project and the extent to which the project will complement, and not duplicate, other ongoing efforts in the watershed. Proposals which demonstrate support for the project from a diverse array of stakeholders, and which will complement other ongoing activities, will receive the most points under this criterion.

- Please describe the level of stakeholder support for the proposed project. Are letters of support from stakeholders provided (see *Section D.2.2.8. Letters of Support*)? Are any stakeholders providing support for the project through cost-share contributions, or through other types of contributions to the project?
- Please explain whether the project is supported by a diverse set of stakeholders (appropriate given the types of interested stakeholders within the watershed and the scale, type and complexity of the proposed project). For example, is the project supported by entities representing environmental, agricultural, municipal, tribal, or recreation uses?
- Is the project supported by entities responsible for the management of land, water, recreation, or forestry within the watershed? Is the project consistent with the policies of those agencies?
- Is there opposition to the proposed project? If so, describe the opposition and explain how it will be addressed. Opposition will not necessarily result in fewer points.
- Will the proposed project complement other, ongoing watershed management activities by state, Federal, or local government entities, non-profits or individual landowners within the watershed? Please describe other relevant efforts, including who is undertaking these efforts and whether they support the proposed project. Explain how the proposed project will avoid duplication or complication of other ongoing efforts.

### ***Evaluation Criterion D: Project Implementation (10 points)***

Up to **10 points** may be awarded based upon the extent to which the watershed group is capable of proceeding with the proposed project upon entering into a financial assistance agreement. Applicants that describe a detailed implementation plan (e.g., estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work, including major tasks, milestones, and dates) will receive the most points under this criterion.

- Describe the implementation plan for the proposed project. Please include an estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work, including major tasks, milestones, and dates.
- Include a detailed project budget outlining costs for specific tasks.
- Describe any permits and agency approvals that will be required, along with the process and timeframe for obtaining such permits or approvals.
- Identify and describe any engineering or design work performed specifically in support of the proposed project, or that will be performed as part of the project.
- Does the applicant have access to the land or water source where the project is located? If so, please provide documentation. If the applicant does not yet have permission to access the project location, please describe the process and timeframe for obtaining such permission.

*Note: program funding may not be used for the purchase of water or land, or to secure an easement.*

### **Evaluation Criterion E: Performance Measures (10 points)**

Up to **10 points** may be provided based on the extent to which the proposal describes a plan to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the project once complete.

*Note: program funding may be used to establish a monitoring and data management plan or to install necessary equipment to monitor progress (see Section C.3.1.2 Supplemental Activities). However, program funding may not be used to measure performance once the project is completed (these costs are considered normal operation and maintenance costs and are the responsibility of the applicant).*

- Please describe the performance measures that will be used to quantify actual project benefits upon completion of the project. Include support for why the specific performance measures were chosen.

### **Evaluation Criterion F: Nexus to Reclamation (5 points)**

Up to **5 points** may be provided under this criterion for proposals that demonstrates a nexus between the proposed project and a Reclamation project or activity. Applicants should describe the nexus between the proposed project and a Reclamation project or activity, including:

- How is the proposed project connected to a Reclamation project or activity?

- Is there a Reclamation project within the watershed or is the watershed otherwise affected by a Reclamation project?
- Will the proposed work contribute water to a basin where a Reclamation project is located?
- Will the project help Reclamation meet trust responsibilities to any tribe(s)?
- Does the proposed project support implementation of a relevant Department of the Interior initiative?