



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT PROGRAM

*Updated Oct. 10, 2019*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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#### **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

##### **Does my parish need to apply for this grant through my watershed region?**

Yes: The state will only award one grant per watershed region, so parishes and jurisdictions within each watershed region must agree on one public entity to coordinate submitting one application for the region. This public entity could be a parish, a planning and development district or any other political subdivision. A single parish should not apply without the participation and consent of the other parishes in the region.

##### **Who should be taking the lead on coordinating with the other parishes (e.g., mayors and floodplain administrators)?**

This decision must be made in each watershed region and may look different from one region to another. Local leaders should consider asking individuals or entities in the region to facilitate this coordination based on their skill sets, prior experience, subject matter expertise and capabilities to effectively coordinate and communicate with multiple jurisdictions.

##### **Does every parish and incorporated area need to be part of the Phase I letter of interest for a region?**

No. Only the parishes listed on the steering committee guidance worksheets for each region must coordinate to submit a Phase I letter of interest. Parishes should work with their respective municipalities to ensure local leaders are included in watershed management activities for the region.

##### **Are formal agreements or resolutions required between the applicant and the parishes for the Phase I letter of interest?**

No. Agreements between the parishes and the applicant will be required in order to submit the Phase II application. Agreements can be in the form of a resolution, a cooperative endeavor agreement, a memorandum of understanding or other instrument the parish and applicant agree upon. The applicant must have entered into formal agreements with a majority of the parishes in the watershed region by the Phase II deadline. Applicants have until March 31, 2020, to submit agreements with all parishes in the region.



## **Is the state requiring applicants to be eligible for Community Development Block Grant funds?**

Yes: Applicants must be public entities and meet the minimum requirements outlined in the program's [notice of funding availability](#), including any relevant CDBG requirements. Regional stakeholders should strongly consider the prospective applicant's prior experience administering or using CDBG funds. Any applicants with an open violation or inquiry from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development must provide the state with evidence addressing this inquiry or a plan of action for resolution.

## **If I hire a contractor to help draft an application for this grant program, will that contractor be prohibited from providing further professional services for activities or positions funded through this grant due to conflict of interest?**

This is a legal question that will require more research. If this is a concern, prospective applicants should discuss it with their legal counsel, consider applicable HUD rules and request an opinion from the Louisiana Board of Ethics before proceeding.

## **What happens if one parish does not want to participate?**

If a parish does not want to participate in a watershed region application, the state may require an authorized representative to formally recuse their parish from participation by emailing [watershed@la.gov](mailto:watershed@la.gov). Any communications indicating this recusal must state this decision was made with the understanding that not participating in the Regional Capacity Building Grant Program may impact their parish's eligibility for future funding opportunities associated with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative.

## **How is the fiscal agent appointed or selected?**

Local leadership in each watershed region must coordinate and select a fiscal agent that will serve as the applicant and grantee for this program.

## **What are the responsibilities of the fiscal agent?**

The fiscal agent will work with parish representatives to apply for this program and serve as the grantee. This entity will enter into an agreement with the state later in the application process and will be responsible for administering the grant, complying with all applicable grant rules and reporting to the Louisiana Office of Community Development. The fiscal agent will be responsible for managing and paying staff or contractors hired with this grant funding and ensuring grant funds are used in a manner consistent with CDBG funding requirements. Additional responsibilities associated with implementing future Louisiana Watershed Initiative funding opportunities will be determined and aligned with the Regional Capacity Building Grant Program activities as additional programs are launched.



**Does the grantee have to be an existing public entity? If so, is there a deadline for when this entity must be formed? What if no existing agencies have the capacity to properly manage the aspects of the long-term goals of the LWI? Can multiple public entities be listed as the name of the entity on the Phase I application?**

The applicant must be a public entity at the time it submits the Phase I letter of interest. This entity is not required to have a mission or staff specifically aligned with the long-term goals of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. The grantee will serve as the fiscal agent for receiving, coordinating and managing funds that will further the goals of this grant program.

The Phase I letter of interest should only list one public entity as the applicant. If the applicant or parishes in a region want multiple agencies to coordinate watershed activities or the other duties outlined on Page 26 of the program's [notice of funding availability](#), the applicant must develop an agreement among the agencies detailing how they will administer different duties; however, only one agency can serve as the applicant, fiscal agent and grantee.

**Could LWI staff assist applicants as they prepare to apply for Phase II of this program?**

Yes. The state encourages prospective applicants to reach out to LWI staff for assistance in preparing Phase II application materials by emailing [watershed@la.gov](mailto:watershed@la.gov).

## **WATERSHED COORDINATION AND REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEES**

**Do you have a list of which parishes belong to each watershed region?**

Yes: A list of parishes that make up each watershed region can be found in Attachment F of the program's [notice of funding availability](#).

**What should I do if my parish is split between multiple watershed regions?**

Water does not follow political boundaries. As a result, some parishes are in multiple watersheds. If this is the case, a parish should plan to participate in more than one watershed region's water management activities. If only a small portion of a parish's land area is in a watershed region, it is still important for that parish to participate in the event the area is subject to recurring flooding and may benefit from flood mitigation measures.

**How is the watershed coordinator selected?**

The grantee will be responsible for determining the process to hire a watershed coordinator for its watershed region, which may or may not include feedback from a region's steering committee. A sample job description for the watershed coordinator is included on Page 22 of the program's [notice of funding availability](#).



## **How will the regional steering committees and watershed coalitions be formed?**

Each region's steering committee must be formed in the first year of this program, with guidance on their composition located in Attachment C of the program's [notice of funding availability](#). The regional steering committees, in coordination with OCD, will provide input on the purview, establishment and creation of regional watershed coalitions, which will be the authorities responsible for the long-term management of the watershed region.

## **Who will choose the members of each regional steering committee?**

Parishes will collaborate to choose representatives from each parish in the region to serve on the regional steering committee. The grant program applicant must build a consensus among parishes in the region to select the committee's membership and may opt to have parish representatives vote or systematically nominate members to the committee. The state will require applicants to submit a list of proposed steering committee members, including a description of how the committee's membership conforms to the state's guidance. LWI staff can assist with this process if parishes are unable to come to a consensus on their membership.

## **Can you provide clarification on the composition of the regional steering committee and who is responsible for approving it?**

Guidance related to the composition of these regional steering committees is located in Attachment C of this grant program's [notice of funding availability](#). The applicant will be responsible for facilitating collaboration among parishes in the region to nominate committee members and submit the proposed committee members to the state. The state will review the membership of each regional steering committee for conformance with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative's mission.

## **When should the regional steering committees be selected and when should they first meet?**

Applicants for this grant program, regional leaders and parish representatives should select steering committee members as soon as possible to begin supporting this program and other Louisiana Watershed Initiative grant opportunities. While the program's [notice of funding availability](#) states each steering committee must meet by March 20, 2020, regions should attempt to hold the first steering committee meeting by mid-December 2019 in order to be in the best position to take advantage of funding opportunities.

## **If a contractor serves on the regional steering committee or the watershed coalition, are they conflicted from being able to provide professional services to the watershed region or its member governments?**

Maybe. This is a legal question that applicants should direct to their legal counsel—referring to applicable HUD rules—and may involve requesting an advisory opinion from the Louisiana Board of Ethics.



**I am confused about use of words *regional* vs. *watersheds*. For example, in Region 5, do the watershed coordinator and regional floodplain manager serve the Teche Vermilion watershed or Region 5?**

The term *watershed region* has a specific definition for the purposes of this program. In August 2019, the Council on Watershed Management adopted eight watershed regions, illustrated [here](#). In this example, the watershed coordinator and regional floodplain manager would serve Region 5, which includes areas in addition to the Teche Vermilion watershed.

**Will a regional hazard mitigation plan be required by the regional coalition? Will each parish or community be required to align its hazard mitigation plan with the regional watershed plan?**

The regional watershed coalition will not require a regional hazard mitigation plan; however, creating a regional watershed plan or implementation strategy based on a region's highest priorities and risks is an appropriate task of the coalition. If developed, it would be beneficial to align parish and community hazard mitigation plans with the regional watershed strategy or implementation plan.

**Where will the watershed coalition groups obtain funding to hire staff and other resources?**

The state anticipates that both the state and its watershed coalitions will work together to identify long-term funding sources to maintain staff support beyond the term of this grant program. Parishes may help fund these longer-term staffing needs for the watershed regions, or the regions may secure grants for these purposes.

**How should my municipality or parish cooperate with the other jurisdictions in the region?**

Many local leaders and representatives have already begun coordinating in their watershed region. Any municipalities or parishes that need assistance locating and contacting stakeholders in their region should email [watershed@la.gov](mailto:watershed@la.gov). Additionally, a regional coordination plan description is required as part of the Phase II application program design. Local leaders who are unaware of ongoing activities in their watershed region and would like to coordinate with a particular stakeholder group should email [watershed@la.gov](mailto:watershed@la.gov). LWI staff will help to address any communications gaps.

**Will the personnel hired through this program, including the watershed coordinator, be state employees, or would they become employees of the applicant or parish?**

Any personnel hired through this program should be employed or contracted by the applicant and grantee, or by a parish in the watershed region. These staff or contractors will report to the program grantee and will not be employed by the state.



**Will the state issue a standard of qualifications for the watershed coordinator? Is the watershed coordinator required to conduct model runs using LWI watershed models?**

A sample job description for the watershed coordinator is included on Page 22 of the program's [notice of funding availability](#). The watershed coordinator will not be required to perform model runs; however, a background in hydrology may be helpful to the person hired or contracted for this role.

**Will the grantee have to monitor all parishes within the watershed region as subrecipients based on 2 CFR 200 requirements?**

Yes. Grantees must assume responsibilities for monitoring any subrecipients and reporting on subrecipient activity as required by relevant state and federal regulations. Any applicants using subrecipients for this program must identify them as part of their proposed program design.

**Will each parish in a watershed region be required to have one regional flood damage prevention ordinance, or will each parish or community in the region maintain and enforce their existing ordinance and regulations?**

No. Parishes and municipalities in a watershed region do not have to share a flood damage prevention ordinance.

**Can each parish provide the state with a point of contact that can then be distributed to each region?**

Yes. Parishes should email their preferred point(s) of contact to [watershed@la.gov](mailto:watershed@la.gov). The state will then distribute these points of contact to each watershed region.

## **FUNDING**

**Where are the funds for the Regional Capacity Building Grant Program coming from?**

This program is supported by federal CDBG funds allocated for planning activities following the 2016 floods. These funds are not part of the \$1.2 billion allocated through the Congressional Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 for flood mitigation activities in Louisiana.

**What framework is going to be provided to guide how funds are used with so many political entities involved?**

The state provided guidance on how funds should be used in the grant program's [notice of funding availability](#). The applicant for each region must provide details on their anticipated use of funds in the Phase II application for this program. The Phase II application should also address the region's specific coordination and capacity needs.



## **Are project delivery or grant administration costs allowable under this grant?**

Costs associated with the development of applications for this program are not eligible for reimbursement. However, project delivery and grant administration costs accrued after awards are issued may be reimbursed.

## **Is there a local match required from the parishes or regions for these projects?**

This grant program is structured to support planning and capacity building activities in each of the state's watershed regions. Designing and constructing projects are not eligible activities through this program. Applicants or parishes in each region are not required to contribute local matches; however, applicants should budget appropriate funds or in-kind resources necessary to support the success of the program. Grantees may leverage this grant award with other available funds, including those contributed by parishes in the region.

## **When you have more than one watershed in a region, how will funds be disbursed?**

Funds from this program will be disbursed to the grantee for each watershed region. This program may only reimburse planning and administration costs and cannot spend funds on projects.

## **Are projects reimbursed, or do regions apply and wait for funding?**

This program will support planning activities in each of the state's watershed regions. It will not fund projects. All funding associated with the program will be distributed via reimbursement. Grantees will submit invoices to the Louisiana Office of Community Development. OCD will then reimburse the grantee for eligible expenses.

## **Because the funding would be reimbursable, who would have to put up the money? One parish or all?**

The state will not prescribe how this should be done. Parishes in each watershed region should coordinate with their applicant to determine this and include it in the region's program design.

## **OTHER LWI ACTIVITIES**

### **What is the status of the H&H models and who is doing this work?**

In May 2019, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development issued a request for qualifications for engineering firms to develop hydrologic and hydraulic models for all the state's watersheds. In August, DOTD selected [short lists](#) for four of these modeling regions. The RFQ for the remaining three regions is open until further notice. For more information and to access these procurements, [click here](#).



**If LWI models take two to five years to complete, how will we spend the \$1.2 billion in federal flood mitigation funds when some major projects will need H&H modeling?**

The state is expediting the development of these watershed models to the greatest extent possible. However, this process takes time. As this work continues, the state anticipates awarding project funds in phases or rounds, funding more immediate projects that are backed by established engineering practices and those with minimal risk of adverse impacts. Additional phases will include funding for projects based on the completed watershed models.

**What role does the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers play in these projects?**

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative has coordinated planning activities closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This coordination and engagement will continue to leverage the USACE's data and modeling resources.