

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

FUND TO ADDRESS PFAS CONTAMINATION

[RFA # PFNDM2024001](#)

Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1

RFA COORDINATOR	<p>All communication regarding the RFA <u>must</u> be made through the RFA Coordinator, identified below.</p> <p>Name: Madeline Bruno Title: PFAS Fund Management Specialist</p> <p>Contact Information: madeline.s.bruno@maine.gov</p>
PRE-PROPOSAL DUE	<p>Mandatory pre-proposals must be submitted via online form by:</p> <p>Deadline: October 28, 2024, no later than 11:59 pm EST</p>
SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE	<p>The RFA Coordinator must receive all questions by:</p> <p>Deadline: November 20, 2024, no later than 11:59 pm EST</p>
APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE	<p>The DACF must receive applications by:</p> <p>Deadline: January 31, 2025, no later than 11:59 pm EST</p> <p>Applications <u>must</u> be submitted electronically to PFASFund.DACF@maine.gov</p>



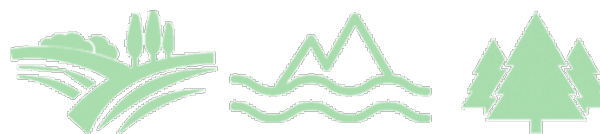
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ACRONYMS

APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
AWA	Animal Welfare Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CSV	Comma Separated Values
CV	Curriculum Vitae/Curricula Vitae
DACF	Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
EST	Eastern Standard Time
FOAA	State of Maine Freedom of Access Act
F&A	Facilities & Administration
FSA	Farm Service Agency
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
IP	Intellectual Property
MS/MSD	Matrix Spike/Matrix Spike Duplicate
MTDC	Modified Direct Total Cost
NICRA	Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate
PDF	Portable Document Format
PFAS	per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
PI	Principal Investigator
QAP	Quality Assurance Plan
RFA	Request for Application
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

1 INTRODUCTION

The State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF or Department) Fund to Address PFAS¹ Contamination (PFAS Fund) is seeking applications for **Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1**. Please read this Request for Applications (RFA) document and accompanying attachments in their entirety, as they provide instructions for submitting applications, the procedure and criteria by which the awardee(s) will be selected, and the general contractual terms that will govern the relationship between the State of Maine (State) and the awardee(s).

This grant funding will support research to help commercial farmers make informed decisions about utilizing agricultural property impacted by PFAS. Priority research areas are:

1. PFAS in Agricultural Settings: Water, Soil, and Plant Studies
2. PFAS in Agricultural Settings: Animals and Animal Product Studies
3. Understanding and Managing PFAS in On-Farm Agricultural Settings and Products
4. Remediation of PFAS-Contaminated Land and Suitable Uses of PFAS-Contaminated Agricultural Land and Products

Section 2 discusses the priorities more fully. If you have any questions or want to request reasonable accommodations necessary to complete this application, please contact the RFA Coordinator, Maddy Bruno, at madeline.s.bruno@maine.gov.

1.1 Award Information Overview

The Maine DACF PFAS Fund: Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1 application is the first announcement of research funds by the DACF PFAS Fund. DACF anticipates awarding \$3,000,000 under this announcement, dependent on the availability of funds, quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations. The funds are part of an award to DACF by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) via Grant Award No. FSA23CPT0013603. The PFAS Fund will fund multiple projects with a minimum value of \$100,000 and a maximum value of \$500,000 each. Requests over \$500,000 (including indirect costs) will not be considered. Proposals should assume a project period of 24 months.

Key dates for this RFA are presented in **Section 4**. To submit a response to this RFA, awardees must submit a **mandatory pre-proposal by October 28, 2024**. Pre-proposals will be evaluated on the proposed project's competitiveness within the grant funding round. Full proposals will be assessed based on the scoring criteria included within this RFA. Final decision-making authority rests with the Commissioner of DACF based on the criteria and the peer reviewers' recommendations.

A final report and associated deliverables will be expected to be submitted to DACF within two years of the initial funds transfer to the awardee, with some exceptions.

Additional award opportunities for large and small grant cycles will be available through at least State fiscal year 2026.

¹ "PFAS" means per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

1.2 General Provisions

From the time this RFA is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of this RFA. No other person/State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFA. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the application process at the State's discretion.

The issuance of the RFA does not commit the Department to issuing an award or paying expenses incurred by an applicant in preparing a response to the RFA. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings, where applicable.

All applications must adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in the RFA, as well as all written supplements and amendments issued by the Department. Applications must follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified within this RFA.

Applicants should note that in evaluating an application submitted in response to this RFA, the Department will consider the materials provided in the application and information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any).

The RFA and the awardee's proposal, including all appendices or attachments, will be the basis for the final contract, as determined by the Department.

Following the announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this RFA will be public records, available for public inspection upon request under the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) (1 M.R.S. § 401 et seq.).

At its sole discretion, the Department reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in applications received in response to the RFA.

All applicable State and Federal laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included by this reference. It shall be the applicant's responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them. See **Section 9** for more information.

1.3 Background of the DACF PFAS Fund and Governing Documents

Maine Governor Janet Mills created the PFAS Fund in 2022 to support farmers whose land and/or water are contaminated with PFAS. The PFAS fund is a first-in-the-country coordinated effort to specifically address PFAS in agriculture and is governed by [7 M.R.S.A. c. 10-D](#). One goal of the PFAS Fund is to fund research that allows farmers to make informed decisions about how to adjust their operations in light of PFAS contamination. Additional goals of the PFAS Fund include direct financial support for affected farmers, the purchase and management of PFAS-contaminated agricultural land, and mental and physical health-related initiatives.

More information, including a [detailed timeline](#) of the PFAS response in Maine and the PFAS Fund rules, can be found online on the DACF webpage. The DACF PFAS Fund is part of the more extensive, integrated, multi-agency investigation of and response to PFAS throughout Maine. DACF's primary focus is safeguarding human health and ensuring the viability of farms.

Applicants are advised to review the linked documents and websites before beginning the pre-proposal to ensure that the proposed project aligns not only with the priorities established in this RFA (**Section 2**) but with the goals of the DACF and the PFAS Fund as a whole.

2 RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The Research Advisory Panel refined four main categories of research priorities from those put forth in the [PFAS Fund Implementation Plan](#), during a meeting held during the January 2024 Maine Agricultural Trades Show, and via an online survey conducted in January 2024. The example topics provided for each category are not considered an exhaustive list of topics suitable for funding within each category.

Priority 1: PFAS in Agricultural Settings: Soil, Water, and Plant Studies

This category examines the fate and transport of PFAS in agricultural soil, water, and crop systems.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Studies related to the influence of soil properties on PFAS contamination, including residence time and modeling;
- Changes in PFAS levels in soil over time; how different variables influence the rate of change;
- PFAS sorption and transport kinetics in soil;
- Irrigation-based PFAS migration pathways through soil-water systems;
- Leaching from soil to groundwater; and
- PFAS transfer factors (also known as bioconcentration factors) such as:
 - Transfer from irrigation water to soil,
 - Transfer from soil to groundwater, and
 - Transfer from soil or water to crops consumed or utilized by animals or humans (e.g., vegetables, fruits, forage, grain, or specialty crops such as Christmas trees).

Priority 2: PFAS in Agricultural Settings: Animal and Animal Product Studies

This category includes research to broaden the understanding of PFAS uptake and movement through livestock and poultry and its fate in animal products (e.g., milk, eggs, meat).

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Predictive models for soil to forage crop to livestock to food commodity pathways;
- Livestock and poultry transfer/bioconcentration factors and factors that affect them (e.g., forage/feed transfer factor for meat/milk/eggs, how transfer factors change seasonally);
- Livestock correlation studies (e.g., the correlation between PFAS in more readily sampled media, including blood, milk, eggs, or ear punches, and muscle or organ tissue);
- Livestock and poultry elimination kinetics studies;
- Influence of feed additives/binders on PFAS levels in animals and animal products; and
- Accumulation of PFAS in various value-added dairy products (e.g., cream, yogurt, butter, cheese, etc.).

Priority 3: Understanding and Managing PFAS on the Farm

This category includes research designed to 1) enhance the management and understanding of PFAS in agricultural settings and 2) develop tools to increase the speed and reliability of on-farm management decisions related to PFAS contamination.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Data collection, presentation, and/or analysis tools for quick evaluation of PFAS (e.g., models or sensors);
- Development of decision support tools (e.g., when it is safe to return farm products to the market? When can animals be safely released for slaughter post-depuration?);
- Soil management strategies and their relative effectiveness in reducing the impact of PFAS contamination (e.g., till versus no-till);
- On-field crop management strategies to reduce PFAS (e.g., harvest timing, forage species selection, pasturing strategies); and,
- Post-harvest investigations of how PFAS levels change throughout the life cycle of forage crops, from harvesting in the field to storage, and potential management practices related to those changes

Priority 4: Remediation of PFAS-Contaminated Land and Suitable Uses of PFAS-Contaminated Agricultural Land and Products

This category looks toward the future of a farm impacted by PFAS. It includes projects that investigate soil remediation technologies, alternative agricultural uses of PFAS-contaminated land, and novel uses of agricultural products.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Remediation of agricultural soils, including technologies such as immobilization, fractionation, and/or degradation;
- Alternative crop production potential on PFAS-contaminated land (e.g., grains, maple syrup, Christmas trees);
- Risks and benefits of animal fiber production on PFAS-impacted land;
- Use of biomass from impacted fields (e.g., construction, textiles, mulch); and,
- Treatment and/or low-risk disposal methods for PFAS-contaminated byproducts (biomass, manure, carcasses, milk, compost).

3 ELIGIBILITY

Participation in this RFA is open to scientists, resource managers, businesses, non-profits, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders pursuing relevant research. Public and private nonprofit institutions/organizations, public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), state and local governments, Tribal Governments, profit-making firms/businesses, and individuals are welcome to apply. If you have questions about whether you are eligible for this grant, please contact the RFA Coordinator.

Primary research institutions or private entities must be based in the United States and managed and controlled by United States entities. Exceptions to this requirement must be approved by DACF and

USDA before the submission of a pre-proposal form. Likewise, projects from institutions based in the United States with collaborators from institutions outside the United States must also be evaluated by DACF and USDA before pre-proposal submission. Contact the RFA Coordinator for further guidance.

DACF encourages applicants from all races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, socioeconomic classes, and career stages.

4 TIMELINE AND IMPORTANT DATES

The timeline and relevant dates for the 2024-2025 Research Grant Award Cycle are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Timeline for Round 1 Major Research Grant Award Cycle

DATE	ITEM
September 16, 2024	Call for pre-proposals opens via online form
October 28, 2024	Call for pre-proposals closes at 11:59 pm EST
November 08, 2024	Pre-proposal assessment forms sent to applicants
November 20, 2024	Questions on the full proposal due to RFA Coordinator
November 29, 2024	Responses to researcher questions posted online
January 31, 2025	Complete applications due by 11:59 pm EST
March 21, 2025	Anticipated completion of peer review; internal review begins
April 25, 2025	Anticipated notification date of project award decisions
Upon Signed Contract	Funding committed; 24-month period of performance begins
Two years post-award	The period of performance closes

5 PRE-PROPOSAL PROCESS AND APPLICATION DETAILS

The proposal process for the 2024-2025 grant cycle consists of a pre-proposal phase and a full proposal phase. This section describes the pre-proposal process. Pre-proposals are submitted directly to the RFA Coordinator via [this online form](#) and evaluated using the Pre-Proposal Evaluation Form (**Attachment A**). DACF staff will confirm receipt of pre-proposal submissions. Full proposals from applicants who did not submit a pre-proposal will not be considered for this RFA.

It should be noted that there will be no formal assessment of the project's intellectual or technical merit by peer reviewers at the pre-proposal stage. Rather, feedback to the principal investigator (PI) will focus on whether the full proposal is expected to be competitive within the round of grant funding addressed in this RFA. This non-technical screening will evaluate pre-proposals for relevance to the goals and priorities described in this RFA. Staff reviewing pre-proposals must attest that they have no conflicts of interest.

The review will include an advisory decision based only on relevance to the goals and priorities as follows:

- **The application is considered competitive.** This means that DACF has reviewed the pre-proposal and deems the project competitive for funding.
- **Application is not considered competitive.** This means that DACF has reviewed the pre-proposal and deems that the project is not competitive for funding. Receiving an adverse advisory decision does not preclude the applicant from completing a full proposal. Still, it indicates that the likelihood of project funding is low based on the information provided in the pre-proposal form.

Feedback will be provided to all applicants, regardless of the advisory decision. If a high volume of applications are received, DACF may limit the level of feedback to applicants.

6 FULL PROPOSAL PROCESS AND APPLICATION DETAILS

Section 6.1. provides details on the application content requirements. **Section 6.2** describes the question-and-answer process for this RFA. **Section 6.3** provides details on the submission process. The Peer Review Rubric Guidance for Full Proposals (**Attachment B**) is included to guide the development of proposals. Feedback for full proposals will be provided to applicants via the Proposal Review Form (**Attachment C**).

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide complete and sufficient information in the full proposal and complete every mandatory application section.

Reminder: If you did not submit a pre-proposal, your full proposal application will not be considered.

6.1 Full Proposal Required Content

6.1.1 Content Overview

Full proposals must include the three parts detailed in **Sections 6.1.2—6.1.4**. An overview of the required documents and document parts are provided in **Table 2**. Applicants should not provide additional attachments beyond those specified in the RFA or Application Form.

Table 2: Full Proposal Overview

Item	Title	Type	Required?	File(s) to Submit	RFA Section
Part I: Key Contacts and Project Information					
1	Part I Form	Fillable PDF	Yes	One (1) PDF Document 'DACF_PFAS_PI NAME_PART I'	6.1.2
2	Curriculum Vitae(s) Attachment	Attachment	Yes		
3	Indirect Rate Documentation	Attachment	If organization has a NICRA/State indirect rate agreement		
Part II: Project Narrative					
1	Introduction/Project Description	Section in Narrative	Yes	One (1) PDF Document 'DACF_PFAS_PI NAME_PART II'	6.1.3
2	Roles and Responsibilities	Section in Narrative	Yes		
3	Literature Review	Section in Narrative	Yes		
4	Rationale, Significance, Outcomes	Section in Narrative	Yes		
5	Research Methodology	Section in Narrative	Yes		
6	Timeline	Section in Narrative	Yes		
7	Research Facility/Site/Resources	Section in Narrative	Yes		
8	Duplication of Efforts	Section in Narrative	Yes		
9	Quality Assurance Measures	Section in Narrative	Yes		
10	Deliverables, Data Management, Share Plan	Section in Narrative	Yes		
11	Future Work	Section in Narrative	Optional		
12	Other	Section in Narrative	Optional		
13	Animal Welfare Plan Documentation	Attachment	If project includes live animals		
14	Financial Review	Attachment	If not from an accredited research institution		
15	Proof of Funds	Attachment	If leveraging additional funds		
16	Letter(s) of Support	Attachment	Optional		
Part III: Budget Worksheet and Narrative					
1	Budget Worksheet	Excel Worksheet	Yes	One (1) excel workbook 'DACF_PFAS_PI NAME_PART III'	6.1.4

6.1.2 Full Proposal Part I: Key Contacts and Project Information

To complete Full Proposal Part I, complete the form in **Attachment D** and attach Curricula Vitae (CV) and negotiated rate agreement documentation, if applicable. One PDF of the form and attachments should be submitted for this section as DACF_PFAS_PI NAME_PART I. Note that 'PI NAME' is a placeholder and should be replaced with the name of the Primary PI.

The form will outline the following high-level information: all key individuals and their associated roles and institutions, a budget/funding overview, a research location overview, and the project description.

DACF requires any individuals named as a PI or co-PI on the application to submit CV with relevant information for review. Upload the CV as an attachment to Full Proposal Part I. The length of each CV should not exceed ten pages. An applicant may include CV of additional collaborators if the applicant believes doing so will add merit to the application, but they are not required.

Indirect costs are capped at 10 percent unless the applicant has an approved federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or other documentation related to an existing indirect rate negotiated with the State of Maine. If the applicant has both Federal and State negotiated rates, they should use whichever is lower. If applicable, submit documentation as an attachment to Full Proposal Part I.

6.1.3 Full Proposal Part II: Project Narrative

To complete Full Proposal Part II, submit a single PDF that includes narrative text and all required attachments, listed in **Table 2** and detailed within this section. The PDF document should be named 'DACF_PFAS_PI NAME_PART II'. Note that 'PI NAME' is a placeholder and should be replaced with the name of the Primary PI.

The Project Narrative should be no more than 12 pages, single-spaced, with 1-inch margins and 11-point font, plus the required and optional attachments. DACF encourages applicants to be succinct. It may be easier to format parts of the Project Narrative as tables and/or figures; no exact structure of the document is required beyond the format parameters discussed above. The Project Narrative should be written for a scientifically literate reader.

Consider using **Table 2** as a checklist to ensure all requested information and attachments are included within the Project Narrative.

1. Introduction/Project Description

This section will help reviewers understand who is proposing the work and what it is. It will also provide the major outcomes expected and their relevance to Maine agricultural producers.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of Key Staff and Partners

Briefly provide the qualifications of key staff and define their roles and expected contributions to the proposed project.

3. Literature Review

Describe how your research fits into the current body of science. The literature review should briefly identify where the proposed work fits into the larger realm of the discipline and identify what gaps in understanding it aims to address.

4. Rationale, Significance, and Outcomes

Describe why the proposed research is significant and the expected qualitative and/or quantitative outcomes. How does the proposed research fit within the framework of the DACF PFAS Fund? Why is it relevant to Maine agricultural producers? Any research priorities being addressed by the proposed project should be clearly stated (**Section 2**).

5. Research Methodology

This section should show how you will achieve the outcomes previously described. Fully describe research design and proposed methodology. Include the techniques and equipment that will be used, the expected results, and how data will be analyzed and interpreted.

6. Timeline

List and describe major benchmarks and estimated completion dates as if funds were awarded in May 2025.

7. Research Facility/Field Site/Resource Information

Description of where the proposed research will occur. Please include descriptions of the primary research facility as well as any other locations at which the project will be performed, including field sites. Maps and photos can be included as attachments if appropriate.

If applying for significant equipment costs (\$5,000+), please include a description of how the equipment will be procured, where it will be housed (photos are welcome), and whether it will be project dedicated.

8. Duplication of Efforts

Applicants are responsible for reporting if this application will result in programmatic, budgetary, or commitment overlap with another application of award (i.e. grant, cooperative agreement, or contract) submitted to another funding source in the same fiscal year (the State of Maine fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 annually).

1. **Programmatic overlap** occurs when substantially the same project is proposed in more than one application or is submitted to two or more funding sources for review and funding consideration and/or a specific objective and the project design for accomplishing the objective are the same or closely related in two or more applications or awards, regardless of the funding source;
2. **Budgetary overlap** occurs when duplicate or equivalent budgetary items (e.g. equipment, salaries) are requested in an application but already are provided by another source; and/or,
3. **Commitment overlap** occurs when an individual's time commitment exceeds 100 percent, whether or not salary support is requested in the application.

If the proposed project is chosen for funding, overlap, whether programmatic, budgetary, or commitment of an individual's effort greater than 100 percent, is not permitted. Overlaps disclosed in the Project Narrative must be resolved by the DACF with the applicant prior to award.

9. Quality Assurance Measures

A full Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) is **not** required for this application. However, this section serves as an opportunity for the applicant to communicate any measures being taken to ensure that data or

conclusions produced are scientifically valid and reliable. Suggested content and length will vary by project type but examples of the type of information to include are:

- Data quality check/validation procedure overview for lab results;
- Field data quality check procedures such as field duplicate collection frequency, whether standard operating procedures are established and documented, and field audit frequency by key personnel if not the individual performing the fieldwork;
- The process for handling data corrections or for users to dispute and correct data;
- The in-laboratory data quality check procedures such as frequency of matrix spike/matrix spike duplicate (MS/MSD) samples and frequency of confirmatory split samples sent to other laboratories; and/or
- Other relevant quality assurance procedures or plans.

10. Deliverables, Data Management, and Share Plan

Summarize the plan to distribute research and any deliverables that DACF can expect to receive from this project. This section should provide details on the intended type and amount of scientific data that will be generated. The section also requests the applicant to provide information on any software and code that may be required to access the data in the future, as well as information on repositories where the scientific data/metadata will be archived and any associated security/privacy concerns associated with the data. It is important to note that, as a stipulation of the DACF rules governing this work, the awardee is obligated to provide raw data to DACF in an open file format upon completion of the period of performance.

All publication deliverables associated with the funded research must be sent to DACF. Publications and/or presentations of research funded by this grant can be finalized after the end of the period of performance. However, DACF may request a written publishing/presentation plan as part of the final project closing documentation.

As these are federal funds distributed by the DACF, it should be noted that, pursuant to the Bayh-Dole act, the rights of recipients and contractors to elect and retain title to subject inventions developed with federal funding is acknowledged. The applicant should note any potential intellectual property (IP) concerns within this section and how they may affect the ability to share data with both the DACF and the public. Potential IP concerns will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

11. Additional Funding

There is no requirement for additional funding, but it should be noted that projects with additional funding will score higher on Selection Criteria 6B.

Indicate whether the project has outside funding such as an institutional match, private funds, or additional grant funding. Provide an overview of the funding terms and any relevant details.

If the project is in the process of applying for additional funding, detail the timeline for acceptance. Alternatively, please indicate if no additional funding will be utilized.

11. Future Work (Optional)

If desired, discuss any future projects that the researcher envisions may build on the work funded by this grant.

12. Other (Optional)

If desired, the applicant may include other information that may strengthen the review or communicate the vision of the organization. Examples: collaboration plan if multiple institutions, mission statement, business/organization origin, links to relevant webpages etc.

13. Part II Attachment: Animal Welfare Documentation (if applicable)

Proposals involving live vertebrate animals should attach documentation such as an approval from your Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) for this or a related project and an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) inspection report dated within the past 12-months. Additional equivalent documentation that shows the facility complies with the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) may be considered as well.

If research is occurring at a facility that has not yet gone through the licensing process for animal research or does not currently have an IACUC, please provide details on the path to licensure and IACUC establishment timeline.

Proposals involving live vertebrate animals will be reviewed without documentation of approval from an IACUC, but proof that approval is in place will be required prior to awarding funds.

14. Part II Attachment: Financial Review (if applicable)

Any non-accredited research institutions (e.g. businesses, non-profit organizations) must provide documentation that the applicant or associated group is in good financial standing. The attachment(s) may include a profit/loss statement from other grant activities, results of an external audit dated within the past 24 months, or a comparable document. If you are unsure if you need to provide a Financial Review document, please contact the RFA coordinator.

It should be noted that if a project is chosen for funding, DACF may be required to request additional financial information on behalf of the USDA in order to comply with the Transparency Act (2 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 170.320), depending on the size of the company.

Accredited research institutions need not supply this information.

15. Part II Attachment: Proof of Funding (if applicable)

Any projects that will leverage additional funds must include proof that funding has been awarded or is available. An example of an appropriate proof of funding document is a letter of commitment from the funding organization. Applications without additional funding need not submit this attachment.

16. Part II Optional Attachment: Letters of Support/Recommendation

Although the inclusion of one or more letters of support are optional, it should be noted that full points cannot be awarded unless at least two letters of support are included (Scoring Criteria 2B). Letters of support will help reviewers understand the importance of the proposed work to agricultural producers and community members. Written statements from agricultural community members, state or federal government organizations, or knowledgeable organizations or individuals, are appropriate to include in this attachment. DACF requests that no more than four letters of support be included with each application.

6.1.4 Full Proposal Part III: Budget

An itemized budget must be submitted by populating the budget workbook provided as **Attachment E**. The workbook should be titled 'DACF_PFAS_PI NAME_PART III'. Note that 'PI NAME' is a placeholder and should be replaced with the name of the Primary PI. All budgets must follow the USDA Guidance for budgets and budget narratives included in **Attachment F**.

Applicants should note that instructions for completion and an example of a filled application are included as separate sheets within the budget workbook (**Attachment E**).

The proposed budget worksheet should detail the following sections:

- Personnel (include annual salary, percent time spent on project or multiplier being used, etc.)
- Fringe benefits of personnel
- Travel (includes travel to field sites, conferences, etc. Include how the travel directly supports the project)
- Equipment (known items exceeding \$5,000)
- Supplies (known items less than \$5,000. Applicant may list general categories and estimated cost such as glassware, chemicals, or seeds. Categories less than \$1,000 do not need to be itemized)
- Proposed Contractual/Procurement Costs
- Indirect costs (see note below)
- Details on current or pending funding that the applicant has or is applying for.
- Other (subcontracts, **publication costs**, equipment or facility rental, etc.)

Indirect costs are capped at 10 percent unless the applicant has an approved federal NICRA or an existing indirect agreement with the State of Maine, in which case indirect costs will be capped at the lesser of the two agreed rates. If applicable, submit indirect rate documentation as an attachment to Full Proposal Part I.

If an institution or organization does not have a Federal or State of Maine negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, indirect costs will be capped at 10 percent. Per USDA guidance (**Attachment F**), the 10 percent de minimis rate is applied to modified total direct costs (MTDC). For this purpose, MTDC means total direct costs related to the award, such as direct labor, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, publications, consultant services and travel costs. MTDC excludes the following costs: equipment, capital expenditures, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward and subcontract in excess of \$25,000.

There is no match requirement.

6.2 Submission of Questions and Amendments

It is the responsibility of all applicants and other interested parties to examine the entire RFA and seek clarification in writing if they do not understand any information or instructions.

6.2.1 Question/Answer Process

Applicants and other interested parties should submit any questions via email to the RFA Coordinator (madeline.s.bruno@maine.gov) using **Attachment F (Submitted Questions Form)**. Questions should be submitted as soon as possible but no later than the date and time specified on the RFA cover page.

Submitted Questions must include the RFA Number and Title in the subject line of the email. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate, complete, and on time email transmission and receipt.

Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the DACF PFAS Fund Research Website. All interested parties are responsible for going to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

6.2.2 Amendments

All amendments released regarding this RFA will be posted on the DACF PFAS Fund Research Website and emailed to all PI's who submitted a pre-proposal. All interested parties are responsible for going to this website to obtain amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

DACF reserves the right to revise, suspend, or terminate this RFA at its sole discretion. In such an event, DACF will inform all applicants as soon as reasonably possible. DACF also reserves the right to extend the deadline for submission of proposals or to seek additional proposals under this RFA to ensure the objectives of 7 M.R.S.A. § 320-K(I-L) will be met.

6.3 Full Proposal Submission Instructions

Proposals for this RFA must be submitted to PFASFund.DACF@maine.gov by January 31, 2025, by 11:59 PM EST. Please include RFA # PFNDM2024001 in the subject line.

Any emails containing original application submissions or any additional or revised application files received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception.

Please review the following delivery instructions to ensure successful submission of an application:

- Only applications received by email will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate, complete email transmission and receipt.
- Application submission emails successfully received by the PFASFund.DACF@maine.gov inbox will receive a reply stating as such.
- Emails containing links to file-sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only emailed application submissions that have the requested files attached will be accepted.
- Encrypted emails received, which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system, will not be accepted as submissions. Applicants are responsible for checking with their organization's information technology team to ensure that security settings will not encrypt their application submissions.
- File size limits are 25MB per email. Applicants may submit files across multiple emails, as necessary, due to file size concerns. All emails and files must be received by the date and time described above.
- Applicants are to insert the following into the subject line of their email submission: "RFA# PFNDM2024001 Application Submission – [Applicant's Last Name]".

7 FULL PROPOSAL REVIEW

Section 7 provides information on the review process of full proposals and details the evaluation processes, including selection criteria and the process used to score proposals. An overview of the Selection Criteria and Associated Point Values are provided in **Table 3**. The rubric used for scoring full proposals is included in **Attachment B**. Reviewers will provide feedback via the form in **Attachment C**.

7.1 Evaluation Process – General Information

Evaluation teams, composed of qualified peer reviewers, will judge the merits of each proposal received based on the criteria defined in the RFA.

Officials responsible for making decisions on the award selection will ensure that the selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who can meet the specifications. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in the review of the applications and to ensure that all contracts are awarded to the applicants that provide the best value to the State of Maine.

The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with applicants, if needed, to obtain clarification of information contained in the applications received. The Department may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Changes to applications, including updating or adding information, will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process and, therefore, applicants must submit proposals that present their projects and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible.

Failure to respond to all questions and instructions throughout the RFA may result in the application being disqualified as non-responsive or receiving a reduced score. The Department, and its evaluation team, has sole discretion to determine whether a variance from the RFA specifications will result either in disqualification or reduction in scoring of a proposal.

7.2 Scoring Process

All eligible grant applications will be reviewed by appropriate external technical peer reviewers based on the criteria and process described below. This review is designed to evaluate each application according to its scientific merit. The individual external peer reviewers may include USDA representatives, scientists, engineers, social scientists, and/or economists who are accomplished in their respective disciplines and proficient in the technical subjects they are reviewing. Peer reviewers will be required to attest that they do not have a conflict of interest.

Each application will be assigned to at least two primary peer reviewers. Peer reviewers will read the entire application package for each application they are assigned. Peer reviewers will utilize the rubric included in **Attachment B** when reviewing applications to consider an application's merit based on the extent to which the application demonstrates the criteria. The score will be based on a 100-point scale. The peer reviewers will also prepare a written individual evaluation (**Attachment C**) for each assigned application that addresses the peer review criteria described below and assign a numerical score using the same criteria. DACF will compile and consider the peer reviewers' recommendations.

Final decision-making authority for awarding grants rests with the DACF Commissioner, based upon the

grant selection criteria and the recommendations of the peer reviewers. For this round of funding, projects selected by the Commissioner will then be shared with USDA for its acquiescence. Written materials used in the review process, including peer-review worksheets, will be made available to the applicants when they are notified of funding results. The identities of unsuccessful or ineligible applicants will not be made public.

7.3 Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to six selection criteria detailed in **Sections 6.7.1 – 6.7.5**. **Table 3** provides a simplified version of the six selection criteria categories and the associated point values for reference.

Table 3: Simplified Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Description	Sub-Criteria Max Points	Total Criteria Points
1. Research Priority	1A	The proposal directly relates to one or more of the priorities identified in Section 2.	10	10
2. Identification of Need, Opportunity, and Justification	2A	The proposal has potential importance and benefits, including economic, for the Maine agricultural community.	10	30
	2B	The proposal meets the needs of agricultural producers impacted by PFAS contamination.	20	
3. Deliverables	3A	The project's deliverables are clearly stated.	5	15
	3B	The proposal includes a plan to distribute research results.	5	
	3C	The proposal includes an intention and budget to publish results in an open access journal (Pass/Fail)	5	
4. Project Methodology and Schedule	4A	The proposed methodology is clear and scientifically valid.	15	20
	4B	The project timetable is realistic.	5	
5. Project Management	5A	The proposed work is consistent with the qualifications and abilities of the persons involved.	7	15
	5B	The proposed work includes collaborations with other eligible institutions.	2	
	5C	The proposed work includes collaborations with farmers, and/or agricultural service providers.	2	
	5D	The project will be conducted within the State of Maine or by a Maine-based institution (Pass/Fail)	4	
6. Budget	6A	The proposal includes clear and realistic descriptions of how the funds will be allocated.	7	10
	6B	The project leverages funding from other sources (Pass/Fail)	3	
			TOTAL	100

7.3.1 Research Priorities (10%)

Research priorities are detailed in **Section 2**. There are 10 points total available for this category, with maximum points awarded to projects that include more than one category. To summarize, research priority categories for this round of research funding are:

1. PFAS in Agricultural Settings: Water, Soil, and Plant Studies
2. PFAS in Agricultural Settings: Animals and Animal Product Studies
3. Understanding and Managing PFAS in On Farm Agricultural Settings and Products
4. Remediation of PFAS Contaminated Land and Suitable Uses of PFAS Contaminated Agricultural Land and Products

7.3.2 Identification of Need, Opportunity, and Justification (30%)

Subsection 2A asks applicants to identify potential importance and benefits, including economic, for the Maine agricultural community. Subsection 2B asks applicants to identify how their proposal meets the needs of agricultural producers impacted by PFAS contamination. These are relatively broad categories, and DACF encourages applicants to be specific when addressing these. For example, projects designed to test a bioremediation process would meet the needs of agricultural producers impacted by PFAS contamination (2B) but may not be potentially beneficial to the Maine agricultural community (2A) if the pilot or bench test does not include tests on soils typically farmed in Maine. The outcomes from the proposed work do not need to *guarantee* they will be successful or helpful for Maine producers to receive points in this category, but a project will score higher if the applicability to Maine farmers and the greater agricultural community has been highlighted.

Applicants may include testimony such as written statements from agricultural community members, state or federal government organizations, or knowledgeable organizations or individuals as part of Full Proposal Part II.

7.3.3 Deliverables (15%)

The application narrative must clearly state project deliverables (Subsection 3A). A plan to distribute research results must be specified (Subsection 3B). Proposals that include an intention to publish results in an open access journal will score higher (Subsection 3C) and should factor open-access journal cost(s) into budget documentation.

7.3.4 Project Methodology and Schedule (20%)

The project methodology must be clear and scientifically valid (Subsection 4A). Peer reviewers will assess full proposals for technical merit and feasibility. To ensure that the proposed work is scientifically valid, DACF requests that an outline of quality assurance procedures be included in the project narrative.

Additionally, the project timeline must be realistic for completion within the period of performance (Subsection 4B). Clearly state whether additional funding is already committed for this project and whether such funding will affect the timeline of deliverables.

7.3.5 Project Management (15%)

This category includes three important assessment criteria: the qualifications of the individuals proposing the research (Subcategory 5A), whether a collaborative approach is proposed with another eligible institution (Subcategory 5B), and/or an agricultural producer (Subcategory 5C). Additionally, projects conducted in Maine or by a Maine-based institution will score higher (Subcategory 5D).

Proposals must be consistent with the qualifications and abilities of the people involved, particularly the PI(s) and significant collaborators. Collaboration is important to DACF, so proposals that include collaborations between multiple institutions and/or agricultural producers will receive a higher score. Additionally, work within Maine (whether it is a Maine-based institution or conducted in Maine) will also score higher. A Maine-based institution is one that is registered within Maine, such as an accredited institution, non-profit, or for-profit business.

7.3.6 Budget (10%)

Budgets must be realistic for the work and timeline being proposed in the project narrative (Subsection 6A). Applications which include funding from other sources (Subsection 6B) will score higher within this category. Funding sources can include other federal, state, or private grants, institutional funding, and private business investments. A letter of commitment from the funding source or a comparable document must be submitted as part of Full Proposal Part II.

8 PROJECT AWARD ADMINISTRATION

Project award notifications will be sent to the PI via email. Upon selection, the awardees must execute a State of Maine Service Contract with the appropriate riders as determined by DACF.

Following the award, a Contract Administrator from the Department will be appointed to assist with the development and administration of the contract and to act as administrator during the entire contract period. Department staff will be available after the award to consult with the awardee on finalizing the contract. A contract cannot be effective until at least 14 calendar days after award notification.

In providing services and performing under the contract, the awardee must act as an independent contractor, not an agent of the State of Maine.

The 24-month period of performance begins when funding is committed. Upon execution of all contractual documents and the request of an awardee, up to 15 percent of the total grant may be awarded to cover initial costs. An accounting of up-front spending, including receipts, must be submitted within 60 days of the transfer of funds. All other funds will be disbursed based on the awardees' submission of billing statements to DACF.

Funded projects will be expected to provide short quarterly update reports and a longer annual report to DACF. The DACF expects PIs to alert it if there are any changes in key personnel (e.g., parental leave or if a project team member departs for another institution). In some cases, projects may be asked to provide a plan for continuing work in the absence of key individuals.

Deliverables such as peer-reviewed journal articles need not be finalized upon contract completion, but a publication plan will be required. Data included as deliverables must be supplied in an open exchange format (e.g., Comma Separated Values (CSV) for tabular data), and all published papers must be shared with DACF. DACF encourages researchers to publish in open access journals and will allow associated publishing costs as a budget line item.

Within 30 days of award fund receipts, the PI will be expected to submit a summary of the project, which will be posted publicly along with the names and organizations of the key researchers.

In certain rare cases, DACF is required to provide the USDA with additional financial and/or business information, such as the salary information of the highest-paid executives, within 30 days of award fund receipt in order to remain compliant with the Transparency Act as defined in [2 CFR 170.320](#).

9 OTHER RULES

Projects shall comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, such as workplace safety standards and equal hiring opportunity laws. All PFAS waste associated with projects shall be handled and disposed of to the appropriate standards at the time of disposal. It should also be noted that Maine does not permit the land application of sludge per [LD1911](#), and no proposals that include the spreading of sludge will be funded by the DACF.

Additionally, the DACF must certify to the USDA that any projects funded through this grant cycle comply with the Code of Federal Regulations. The full text of the Code of Federal Regulations may be found online at [GovInfo](#).

Recipients who engage or assist in science-related activities on behalf of USDA must uphold the principles of scientific integrity established by [Departmental Regulations 1074-001](#), Scientific Integrity. Covered activities include engaging in, supervising, managing, and reporting scientific work; analyzing and publicly communicating information resulting from scientific work; and utilizing information derived from scientific work in policy and decision-making.

10 CONTACTS

To ensure informational emails are received, prospective applicants should add the following contacts to their emails:

General PFAS Fund Contact: PFASFund.DACF@maine.gov

Beth Valentine, Director, DACF PFAS Fund

Beth.valentine@maine.gov

(207) 313-0962

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Madeline Bruno (Maddy), PFAS Fund Management Specialist (RFA Coordinator)

Madeline.s.bruno@maine.gov

(207) 287-7601

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

ATTACHMENT A – PRE-PROPOSAL FEEDBACK

Attachment A

Maine DACF PFAS Fund: Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1
Pre-Proposal Feedback



PROJECT TITLE:	
PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR (PI):	
PI RESEARCH ORGANIZATION:	
PI EMAIL:	

Thank you for submitting your research pre-proposal to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) PFAS Fund. After careful review of your pre-proposal application, based only on relevancy to the goals and priorities described in the Maine DACF PFAS Fund: Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1 request for applications, the DACF PFAS Fund has determined the following:

- The application is considered competitive.** This means that DACF has reviewed the pre-proposal and deems the project competitive for funding.

- Application is not considered competitive.** This means that DACF has reviewed the pre-proposal and deems that the project is not competitive for funding. Receiving an adverse advisory decision does not preclude the applicant from completing a full proposal. Still, it indicates that the likelihood of project funding is low based on the information provided in the pre-proposal form.

PROJECT FEEDBACK:

ITEM	YES	NO
Project goals and objectives are clear		
Project is relevant to one or more key research topics listed in the RFA		
Project has the potential to help farmers determine best options for maintaining/enhancing viability despite PFAS		
Proposal includes collaborations with multiple institutions, farmers, and/or agricultural service providers		
Project will be conducted within the State of Maine or by a Maine-based institution		
Project leverages funding from other sources		

NOTES FROM DACF REVIEW:

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ATTACHMENT B – PEER REVIEW RUBRIC

Maine DACF PFAS Fund: Major Grants for the Study of PFAS in Agricultural Systems, Round 1 Attachment B- Scoring Rubric

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Description	Sub-Criteria Max Points	Description for Reviewers ^a	Percentage of Sub-Criteria Max Points Awarded ^b				
					0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
1. Research Priority (10 points total)	1A	A proposal directly related to the priorities established by the Commissioner based upon RAP recommendations will score higher.	10	The research priority should be CLEARLY stated, and included in the Abstract and Narrative to indicate its importance. Proposals that are somewhat related may be awarded partial points at reviewer's discretion. If unsure whether a proposal fits into a priority category, consider that priority categories were chosen specifically to help farmers determine their best options for maintaining and enhancing viability despite the presence of PFAS on their property.	Proposal is not related to one of the priorities listed in the RFA (0 points)	Proposal is related to one of the priority categories listed in the RFA but would not help commercial farmers make informed decisions about how to utilize agricultural property impacted by PFAS, OR the proposal is only tangentially related to one of the priority categories (2.5 points)	Proposal is not related to one of the priority categories listed in the RFA but would help commercial farmers make informed decisions about how to utilize agricultural property impacted by PFAS (5 points)	The proposal addresses one research priority category (7.5 points)	The proposal addresses two or more research priority categories (10 points)
	2A	Proposal has potential importance and benefits, including economic, for the Maine agricultural community.	10	Since this grant is distributed by the Maine DACF, it's essential that proposed projects demonstrate specific benefits to Maine's agricultural community. For information on agricultural production in Maine, consider referencing the USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture for Maine.	Proposal does not have any obvious importance or benefits for the Maine agricultural community (0 points)	Potential benefits are described but insufficient details are provided to appropriately determine if the project is potentially important or beneficial to the Maine agricultural community (2.5 points)	Potential has the potential to benefit a small number of niche producers in Maine (5 points)	Proposal has the potential to benefit a portion of the Maine agricultural community (7.5 points)	Proposal has the potential to benefit most or all of the Maine agricultural community (10 points)
2. Identification of Need, Opportunity, and Justification (30 points total)	2B	Proposal meets the needs of agricultural producers impacted by PFAS contamination.	20	Producers need to know what products they can safely raise on their property given the presence of PFAS in soil and/or water. They also need guidance on harvesting and storing crops to minimize PFAS transfer, recommendations for livestock feeding strategies, and advice on managing waste and byproducts.	The proposed research results will not meet the needs of producers impacted by PFAS. There are no letters of support. (0 points)	The proposed research results will indirectly meet the needs of producers impacted by PFAS. There are no letters of support. (5 points)	The proposed research results will indirectly meet the needs of producers impacted by PFAS. There are one or more letters of support. (10 points)	The proposed research results will directly meet the needs of producers impacted by PFAS. There are no letters of support. (15 points)	The proposed research results will directly meet the needs of producers impacted by PFAS. There are one or more letters of support. (20 points)
	3A	Project deliverables clearly stated	5	Deliverables should be clear and realistic	Project deliverables are not stated (0 points)	Project deliverables are stated but are unrealistic when considering the scope of work, timeline, and/or budget (1.25 points)	Project deliverables are stated and appear appropriate when considering the scope of work proposed, timeline, and budget, but some deliverables may be missing or lack detail (2.5 points)	Project deliverables are stated and appear appropriate when considering the scope of work proposed, timeline, and budget, but some minor details may be missing (3.75 points)	Project deliverables are clearly stated and appear appropriate when considering the scope of work proposed, timeline, and budget (5 points)
3. Deliverables (15 points total)	3B	Plan to distribute research results specified	5	The narrative should include plans for distribution to DACF and the public, if applicable. Projects which do not limit the distribution of results will score higher.	Plans to distribute research results to the public and to the DACF are not specified (0 points)	Plans to distribute research results to the public and to the DACF are included but distribution plans lack detail or are missing crucial elements (e.g., data) (1.25 points)	Plans to distribute research results to the public and to the DACF are included but distribution plans lack minor details or elements OR plans to distribute research results are severely limited as key unique resources, which may impede the advancement of further research, will not be shared (2.5 points)	Plans to distribute research results to the public and to the DACF are clear but plans to distribute research results are somewhat limited as some minor resources will not be shared (3.75 points)	Plans to distribute research results to the public and to the DACF are clear and all key resources will be shared (5 points)
	3C	Proposal includes an intention and budget to publish results in an open access journal	5	Ensure that publishing to an open access journal is included in the relevant documents. This is a PASS/FAIL credit subcategory.	Proposal does not include the intention and budget to publish results in an open access journal. (0 points)				The proposal includes the intention and budget to publish results in an open access journal. (5 points)
4. Project Methodology and Schedule (20 points total)	4A	The methodology must be clear and scientifically valid	15	Ensure that the methodology is clearly defined, appropriate for the scope of work, and that there are no gaps in process.	The methodology is not clear and/or not scientifically valid (0 points)	The methodology is relatively clear but there are gaps in the process or quality issues that may impact the reliability of the results unless addressed prior to contract award (3.75 points)	The methodology proposed is clear but the validity of the scientific method described could be improved OR the methodology proposed could be improved but the validity of the scientific method described is clear (7.5 points)	The methodology is clear and scientifically valid but some more minor details are not considered or explained and may need to be addressed prior to funding if project is chosen (11.25 points)	The methodology is clear and scientifically valid (15 points)
	4B	The project timetable is realistic	5	The project timeline should be realistic, ensuring completion within the designated period of performance. Ideally, it should also be resilient to external influences or changing conditions.	The project timetable is not realistic (0 points)	The project timeline proposed could be possible but seems either over or under ambitious considering factors such as budget, scope of work, staffing (1.25 points)	The project timetable is realistic but could be easily impacted by outside factors in such a way that the project would be significantly incomplete at the end of the period of performance (2.5 points)	The project timetable is realistic and somewhat resilient (3.75 points)	The project timetable is realistic and resilient (5 points)
5. Project Management (15 points total)	5A	The proposed work is consistent with the qualifications and abilities of the persons involved	7	The key personnel should be qualified through academic background or relevant experience, and any training for research or lab assistants should match the work required. Ideally, projects will include already trained and hired staff, given the short period of performance (PoP). If this is not the case, the proposal should include a brief discussion of the training plans, demonstrating that consideration has been given to the process.	The qualifications and abilities of the PI involved in this project are not appropriate for the proposed work (0 points)	The qualifications and abilities of the PI are appropriate but other key staff lack qualifications (1.75 points)	The qualifications and abilities of the PI and all key staff on this project are appropriate for the proposed work but other staff may not be qualified or training of research/lab/field staff is not mentioned (3.5 points)	The qualifications and abilities of the PI and all key staff on this project are appropriate for the proposed work and other project staff appear qualified but significant training is discussed and will be required for accurate completion of the proposed project (5.25 points)	The qualifications and abilities of all individuals identified in this proposal are appropriate and minimal training will need to occur (7 points)
	5B	The proposed work includes collaborations with multiple institutions	2	A collaborative approach is preferred. Each collaborator/institution should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.	The proposed work is not collaborative with other institutions (0 points)	The proposed work includes another institution, but roles and responsibilities are not defined (0.5 point)	The proposed work includes collaborations with at least one institution and roles and responsibilities are somewhat defined (1 point)	The proposed work includes collaborations with at least one additional institution. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. (1.5 points)	The proposed work includes collaborations with multiple institutions. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. (2 points)
	5C	The proposed work includes collaborations with agricultural service providers.	2	A collaborative approach is preferred. Applicants may be planning on working with agricultural service providers or farmers, and they should be listed accordingly, with the most points going to projects in which the agricultural service provider has already been identified. Each collaborator should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Collaboration can be as simple as using soil from an impacted farm. Additional points are not awarded based on a threshold of involvement.	The proposed work is not collaborative with an agricultural service provider (0 points)	The proposed work intends to include an agricultural service provider but they have not yet identified a candidate (0.5 point)	The proposed work intends to include an agricultural service provider and a candidate has been identified, but roles and responsibilities are not well defined (1 point)	The proposed work includes collaborations with one agricultural service provider who has been identified, and roles and responsibilities are well defined (1.5 points)	The proposed work includes collaborations with multiple agricultural service providers who have been identified, and roles and responsibilities are well defined (2 points)
	5D	Project is conducted within the State of Maine or by a Maine-based institution	4	Conducted in Maine = members of the research team will be in Maine conducting research for at least a portion of the project. This is a PASS/FAIL subcategory	The project will not be conducted in Maine or by a Maine-based institution (0 points)				The project will be conducted in Maine and/or by a Maine-based institution (4 points)
6. Budget (10 points total)	6A	Proposals must be able to show clear and realistic descriptions of how the funds will be allocated.	7	Budgets will need to follow USDA guidance, and should be clear and realistic, and all documentation such as NICRA or P/L are included. If no NICRA is established, indirect spending can only make up 10% of the budget.	Budget is not clear or realistic for the proposed work, and/or does not follow USDA guidelines (0 points)	The budget is somewhat clear and follows USDA guidelines but there are obvious items missing (1.75 points)	The budget is relatively clear and follows USDA guidelines but some sections may be unrealistic or low-level items are missing. (3.5 points)	The budget is a mostly clear and realistic portrayal of how the funds will be allocated and follows USDA guidelines (5.25 points)	The budget is a clear and realistic portrayal of how the funds will be allocated and follows USDA guidelines. (7 points)
	6B	Projects leverages funding from other sources.	3	Projects may leverage funding or be planning on leveraging funding. Unless funding is already committed and documented, no points should be awarded for this section. This is a PASS/FAIL subcategory.	The project does not leverage funding from other sources (0 points)				The project leverages funding from other sources (3 points).

TOTAL: 100

Notes:

^aPeer Reviewers should only use these descriptions as a guide. Please review the full packet (available only to reviewers) and refer to the detailed descriptions of each category.

^bCategories (0, 25, 50, 75, 100) refer to the percentage of points suggested to be awarded for the sub-category. Points can be awarded in between these values when appropriate.

ATTACHMENT C – FULL PROPOSAL FEEDBACK

Attachment C: Full Proposal Scoring Rubric

Project Title: _____

Reviewer ID: _____

Review Group ID: _____

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Description	Sub-Criteria Max Points	SCORE	COMMENTS
1. Research Priority	1A	A proposal directly related to the priorities established by the Commissioner based upon RAP recommendations will score higher.	10		
2. Identification of Need, Opportunity, and Justification	2A	Proposal has potential importance and benefits, including economic, for the Maine agricultural community.	10		
	2B	Proposal meets the needs of agricultural producers impacted by PFAS contamination.	20		
3. Deliverables	3A	Project deliverables clearly stated	5		
	3B	Plan to distribute research results specified	5		
	3C	Proposal includes an intention and budget to publish results in an open access journal	5		
4. Project Methodology and Schedule	4A	The methodology must be clear and scientifically valid	15		
	4B	The project timetable is realistic	5		
5. Project Management	5A	The proposed work is consistent with the qualifications and abilities of the persons involved	7		
	5B	The proposed work includes collaborations with multiple institutions	2		
	5C	The proposed work includes collaborations with agricultural service providers.	2		
	5D	Project is conducted within the State of Maine or by a Maine-based institution	4		
6. Budget	6A	Proposals must be able to show clear and realistic descriptions of how the funds will be allocated.	7		
	6B	Projects leverages funding from other sources.	3		

Attachment C: Full Proposal Scoring Rubric

Project Title: _____

Reviewer ID: _____

Review Group ID: _____

Optional: provide any additional overall comments or feedback:

I attest I have no conflict of interest, per the rules outlined in the Reviewers Instructions.

ATTACHMENT D – PART I FILLABLE PDF

Please access the fillable PDF form for Part I by accessing this link:

[Attachment D Fillable PDF](#)

ATTACHMENT E – PART III EXCEL BUDGET WORKBOOK

Please access the Excel Workbook by accessing this link:

[Attachment E](#)

Reminder: There are sheets within the workbook that provide examples and directions.

ATTACHMENT F – USDA BUDGET NARRATIVE GUIDANCE

USDA Budget Narrative Guidance

All costs must comply with the cost principles of 2 CFR Part 200, [Subpart E – Cost Principles](#). All costs (both Federal and any required non-Federal cost-sharing/match) that are part of an award must be:

- allowable ([2 CFR 200.403](#)),
- allocable to the agreement ([2 CFR 200.405](#)), and
- reasonable in amount ([2 CFR 200.404](#)).

A thorough budget narrative will aid the administrative review and processing of a recommended award. Amounts included in a budget and budget narrative are estimates; in the event of an award, payments will be based on actual expenditures. The following is guidance for your use in preparing a thorough budget narrative. The guidance follows the order of the budget items.

COST-SHARING/MATCHING: If required, you must provide the information below for the Federal portion of costs and *separately* provide the information below with the same level of detail for the cost-sharing/matching portion, as applicable, as part of the budget narrative.

PERSONNEL – Only include employees of applicant organization

This category includes salaries and wages of personnel of the applicant organization (i.e., employees) that will be working directly on the project. For each individual, identify their role and describe their contributions to the project. Also include their annual salary, percent of effort, and the period of time they will contribute to the project along with the associated funds requested for support. The following format is an appropriate way to provide the information.

Mr. Jones – Project Director. Accountable for assuring that all project activities are carried out in a timely, cost-efficient and responsible manner. He will provide oversight of daily activities and lead and direct the project toward accomplishment of the objectives of the project. He is responsible for the submission of the required reports.

Salary	% effort	Project Duration	Funds Requested
\$50,000	25%	12 months	\$12,500

FRINGE BENEFITS – Only related to salaries identified under Personnel

Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to, the costs of leave (e.g., vacation, family-related, sick or military), employee insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefit plans. Also, see [2 CFR 200.431](#), Compensation-Fringe Benefits. Provide information about how fringe benefits are determined along with the amount requested.

For instance:	Amt. Requested
Fringe benefits - 25% of salaries and wages (\$12,500 @ 25%).	\$3,125

TRAVEL

Refer to your organization's travel policy for guidance on how to arrange travel. If your organization lacks a policy, it is expected that you follow the U.S. federal government policy, see <http://www.gsa.gov/federaltravelregulation>.

For the budget narrative, identify the total funds requested for travel. Provide as much detail as possible including purpose, destination, dates of travel, and number of individuals for each trip. If the dates of travel are not known, specify estimated length of trip. Identify what will be followed (e.g., organizational travel policies or government per diem rates). The following are a few examples of how to provide the information.

- 2 people - travel to Washington D.C. once per year for a two-day meeting [identify purpose of meeting].
 - Airfare \$800 x 2 for airfare = \$1,600
 - Airport parking = \$64
 - Hotel for 3 nights x 2 @ \$200 = \$1,200
 - Meals for 2 days x 2 = \$24;
 - Rental car for 3 days @ \$110/day = \$330
 - Total for trip: \$3,439
- Local travel for project manager is calculated at .50 per mile throughout primary service area x 326 miles/month x 12 months = \$1,956.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment is defined as an item of property that has an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more (unless the organization has established lower levels) and an expected service life of more than one year. List each item of equipment along with the applicable cost. Include justification of its need in accomplishing the goals of the project.

Example: To complete objectives #1 and #2, Refrigerated Trailer is required. XYZ Refrigerated Trailer, Model #123, at \$5,555

These costs should only include the costs to purchase new equipment. The cost of renting or leasing equipment is not to be included in this category but instead, include under the Contractual category. If equipment is costly, include a lease vs purchase comparison in the budget narrative in support of route chosen.

SUPPLIES

Supplies is defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#) as all tangible personal property other than those described in [2 CFR 200.1](#) Equipment. A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes or \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life. Suggest also viewing [2 CFR 200.453](#), Materials and Supplies Costs, Including Costs of Computing Devices, regarding the allowability of costs.

Indicate general categories of expendable supplies including an amount for each category. Caution: If a category is viewed as too general or the associated amount is too high, further itemization may be requested. Therefore, use good judgement in determining the level of detail to provide.

Example: General office supplies \$50/mo. x 12 mo. =	\$600
Postage \$37/mo. x 8 mo. =	\$296
Laptop Computer 1 x \$900 =	\$900
Printer 1 x \$300 =	\$300
Projector 1 x \$900 =	\$900
Copies 8000 copies x .10/copy =	\$800

CONTRACTUAL

This category includes consultants, subcontracts, etc.

Consultants -- List the total costs for all consultant services. Identify each consultant, the services he/she will perform, total number of days, rate of pay, travel costs, per diem, and total estimated costs.

Contract -- A contract is defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#) as a legal instrument by which a non-Federal entity purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a Federal award. The term as used in this part does not include a legal instrument, even if the non-Federal entity considers it a contract, when the substance of the transaction meets the definition of a Federal award or subaward (see §200.1 Subaward).

Explain the need for each agreement and how their use will support the purpose and goals of the project. For each contract, describe the associated activities, scope of work or services to be provided and how the costs were estimated. If budgeting for a procurement action, document if a solicitation process has occurred or if the contract will be a sole source.

Example:

- ABC Company: Training \$250/individual x 3 staff 5 days = \$ 750
- Amy White to provide Technical Assistant Services
 - 1FTE @ \$25,000 + 20% Fringe Benefits of \$5,000 = \$30,000
 - Travel at 2,000 miles @ .50 per mile = \$ 1,000
 - Training course \$ 175

Supplies @ \$42.50 x 12 months =	\$ 510
Telephone @ \$40 x 12 months =	<u>\$ 480</u>
	\$32,165

- John Doe, Consultant \$40 per hour x 220 hours for 12 month period = \$ 8,800
- To Be Announced Outreach Coordinator Annual salary \$30,000 x 10% level of effort/12 months = \$ 3,000

CONSTRUCTION

Construction efforts are to be included under this category with the same level of detail as described under the “Other” category below.

OTHER

Costs not fitting under one of the other categories are to be included under this category. The level of detail is to be commensurate with other categories. Subawards should be included in this category. Per [2 CFR 200.1](#), a subaward is an award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a Federal program. A subaward may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the pass-through entity considers a contract.

Example: Outreach Workshop

Rental of facilities (\$750/2 days)	\$1,500
Information technology services	\$ 400
Training packets (approx. 125/\$40 each)	<u>\$5,000</u>
Total	\$6,900

Note: Percentage for contingencies is not an allowable cost.

INDIRECT

[2 CFR 200.1](#) defines *Indirect (F&A) costs* as those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. To facilitate equitable distribution of indirect expenses to the cost objectives served, it may be necessary to establish a number of pools of indirect (F&A) costs. Indirect (F&A) cost pools must be distributed to benefitted cost objectives on bases that will produce an equitable result in consideration of relative benefits derived.

This cost category guidance includes several components:

- Calculation (This is to be included as part of the budget narrative)
- Indirect Cost Rates
 - Negotiated Rate
 - 10% De Minimis Rate
- Limitation (i.e., indirect cost cap)

- Unrecovered Indirect Costs for Cost-sharing/Match
- Voluntarily Reduce/Waive

Calculation.

If indirect costs are requested as part of the proposed budget, you must provide details used in determining the indirect costs requested. For instance, provide the calculation specifying the amounts used in applying the base (the base specified in the applicable rate agreement) by the applicable rate (see indirect cost rate info below as well as Limitation section). The calculation can be displayed in different formats but must capture the components (i.e., amounts used in applying the base and the applicable rate).

EXAMPLE 1: For purposes of this example, the recipient uses the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate (10% of Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC)). MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward. MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000.

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Indirect Eligible Amounts</u>
Salaries and wages	\$50,000	\$50,000
Materials and supplies	3,000	3,000
Equipment	5,500	-0-
Subaward	30,000	<u>25,000</u>
		\$78,000 x 10% = \$7,800 Indirect Costs

EXAMPLE 2: For purposes of this example, the recipient has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) of 20% with a base of salaries and fringe benefits.

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Indirect Eligible Amounts</u>
Salaries and wages	\$50,000	\$50,000
Fringe Benefits	10,000	10,000
Materials and supplies	3,000	-0-
Equipment	5,500	-0-
Subaward	30,000	<u>-0-</u>
		\$60,000 x 20% = \$12,000 Indirect Costs

Indirect costs may only be recovered if the non-Federal entity has one of the following indirect cost rates.

1. **Negotiated Rate:** If the organization has a *current* NICRA established with the cognizant Federal agency (the agency that provides the most funds to the organization), then

provide a copy of the NICRA; expired rates are not acceptable. If unable to obtain a current negotiated rate from the cognizant agency, you are permitted to opt to use the 10% de minimis cost rate (you may only be reimbursed for allowable direct cost). Violation of cost accounting principles is not permitted when re-budgeting or charging costs to awards. Rather, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs. Along with a copy of the NICRA, include the rate and base as part of the budget narrative.

Example: Rate 24.87% of MTDC - 24.87% applied to the following items: \$97,300 of Personnel, \$23,352 of Fringe, \$110,000 of other, and the first \$25,000 of three (3) subawards = \$76,015.65 indirect costs

- 2. 10% De Minimis Cost Rate:** In accordance with [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#), any non-Federal entities, unless excepted, may elect to forgo calculation of an indirect cost rate and request a 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. The 10% de minimis rate is applied to modified total direct costs (MTDC). For this purpose, MTDC means total direct costs related to the award, such as direct labor, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, publications, consultant services and travel costs. MTDC excludes the following costs: equipment, capital expenditures, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward and subcontract in excess of \$25,000. Violation of cost accounting principles is not permitted when charging costs to awards. Rather, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs.

If the 10% de minimis option is chosen, it must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time you choose to negotiate for a rate, which you may apply to do at any time. If the organization previously opted for the de minimis rate, a copy of the rate agreement must be provided. If the organization is currently electing the de minimis rate, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award, as appropriate.

Example: Rate 10% of MTDC – 10% applied to the following items: \$45,000 of Personnel, \$10,800 of Fringe, and \$59,000 of Other = \$11,480 indirect costs

Limitation: Some programs may not allow the recovery of indirect costs. In such instances, the limitation flows down to subcontractors. Refer to the applicable notice of funding opportunity to determine if indirect costs are unallowable.

USDA appropriation acts limit indirect costs to 10 percent for cooperative and contribution agreements with nonprofit entities; for purposes of this limitation “nonprofit entities” includes institutions of higher education. For agreements subject to this limitation first apply the 10 percent indirect cost rate to the agreement’s total direct costs; this is shown on line 6.i of the SF424A. Then calculate indirect costs using the rate and the direct cost application base specified in the recipient’s NICRA. Use whichever rate results in the lower amount.

If the organization has a NICRA, both the NICRA calculation and the 10% TDC must be completed in order to determine the lesser (i.e., maximum allowed indirect costs) for the applicable project.

Calculation instructions: First, multiply the NICRA rate by the base stated in the NICRA to arrive at Amount A. Next, multiply the statutory limit of 10% by TDC to arrive at Amount B. The lower of Amount A and B is the maximum amount of allowable indirect cost, therefore include this amount on the budget.

Unrecovered Indirect Costs for Cost-sharing/Match: 2 CFR 200.306(c) provides,

“Unrecovered indirect costs, including indirect costs on cost sharing or matching may be included as part of cost sharing or matching only with the prior approval of the Federal awarding agency. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the Federal award under the non-Federal entity's approved negotiated indirect cost rate.”

Voluntarily Reduce/Waive: A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. If organizations waive indirect cost recovery and request only direct costs, the organization is required to include in the award budget only those types of costs consistently treated as direct costs by the organization.

ATTACHMENT G – Q & A FORM WORD DOCUMENT

Please access the Word Document to submit questions by opening this link:

[Attachment G Word Document](#)

Email questions to madeline.s.bruno@maine.gov and attach questions as a word document.