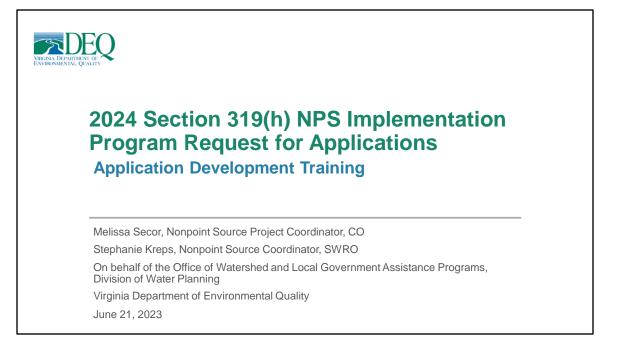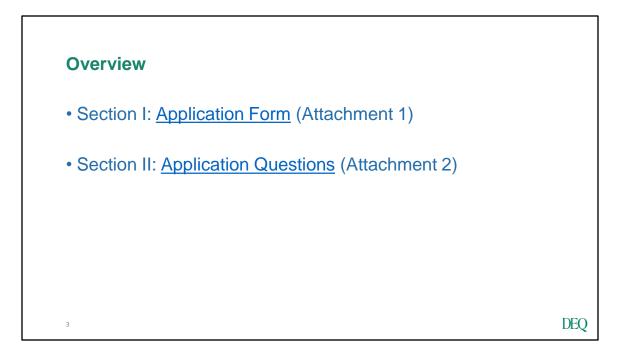[...Continued after Part I]

Access the recording <mark>here</mark>:
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/1901465054712944560

2024 Section 319(h) NPS Implementation Program Request for Applications
Application Development Training

Melissa Secor, Nonpoint Source Project Coordinator, CO

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On behalf of the Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs, Division of Water Planning

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

June 21, 2023

Welcome to Part II of the RFA webinar. In this part we'll be providing detailed guidance for pulling together your application packet, focusing on the Application Questions and Application Form.

[Refer to Application Questions and Form in handouts to follow along.]

Overview

- Section I: <u>Application Form</u> (Attachment 1)

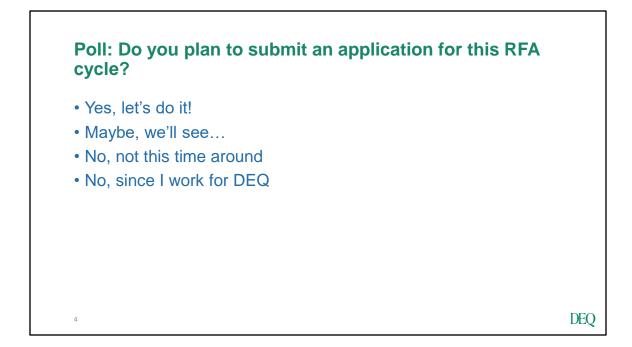- Section II: <u>Application Questions</u> (Attachment 2)

DEQ

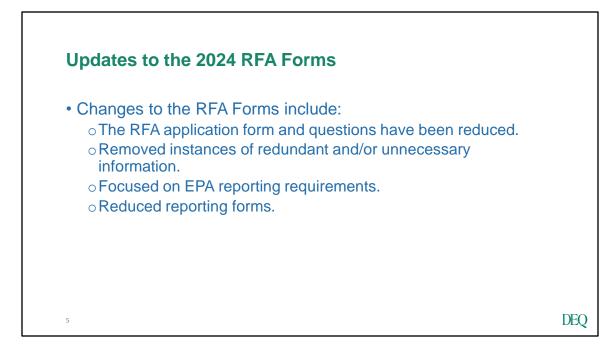There are two parts to this presentation. The first part will cover the Application Form (Attachment 1):
https://www.deq.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/18219/638203410904100000

The second part will cover the Application Questions (Attachment 2)):
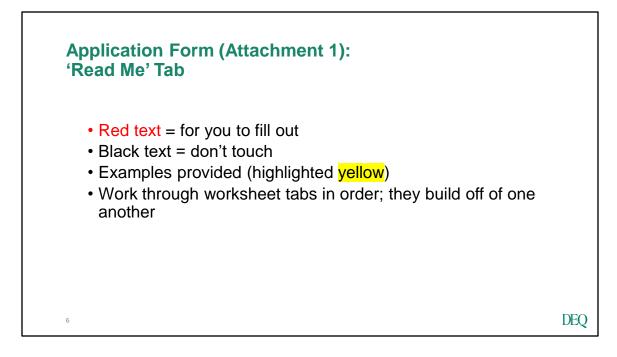https://www.deq.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/18218/638213119011530000

Disclaimer: I will be calling attention to specific questions and parts of the application. My emphasis just means that those sections have critical information we need to evaluate your application. Many of those that I'll be highlighting are also the parts we've seen neglected in the past. Please do not neglect to provide complete answers on all questions so the reviewers have the info they need to evaluate your application and won't need to score your application lower.

Poll: Do you plan to submit an application for this RFA cycle?

- Yes, let's do it!
- Maybe, we'll see…
- No, not this time around
- No, since I work for DEQ

DEQ

Before we get into the nitty gritty of the application materials, let's do a quick poll.

Updates to the 2024 RFA Forms

• Changes to the RFA Forms include:
  o The RFA application form and questions have been reduced.
  o Removed instances of redundant and/or unnecessary information.
  o Focused on EPA reporting requirements.
  o Reduced reporting forms.

DEQ

- We took some time to carefully review this year's RFA forms and made some changes compared to previous years.
- Specifically, we reduced some of the information requested in the application form and reduced the number of questions.
- We removed instances of redundant and/or unnecessary information.
- We focused on EPA reporting requirements to ensure we only request essential information.
- Also, we reduced the reporting forms that selected applicants will use for their grants.

[Refer to handouts (application materials added to handouts section of the webinar)]

[Open Application Form to show in presentation monitor]

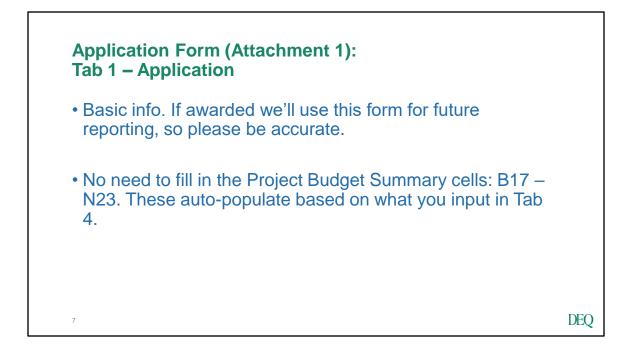So let's jump into the Application Form.

[Quickly go through what each tab is].

We'll go through each of these tabs and we'll start out by opening the 'Read me' tab.
- This tab provides step-by-step instructions for approaching the form to better understand it. There are instructions for how to complete each tab (as well as at the top of each tab). The more you understand it, the easier it is/less daunting it is to fill out.
- Look for the cells with red text. These will be the fields you will complete. Fields in black text are locked and meant to be static.
- Examples of how to complete Tabs 1-5 are highlighted yellow after Tab 6. These are not perfect and completing your application the same way doesn't guarantee you'll be selected for funding. It's just a resource. Also, please do not use the EXAMPLE tabs to complete your application as they

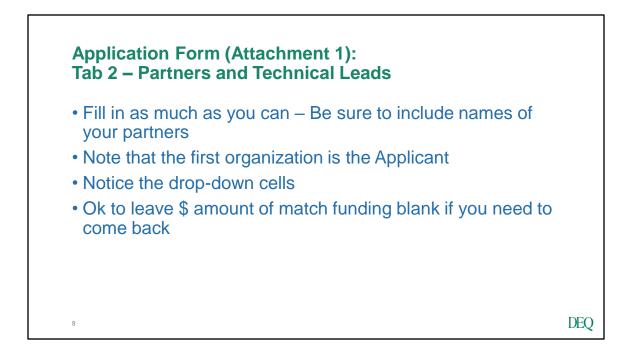may not be properly formatted for final submission.

Tip: **Resist urge to start filling it out immediately**. **Start at Tab 1 and work your way through all 6 tabs sequentially** (Tab 1 should be filled out before Tab 2, Tab 2 before Tab 3, etc.). What is entered in one tab may populate information in another.

[Demonstrate Tab 1] – Application tab.

Tab 1 is the basic information requested, such as contact information, organizational ID #s, IP name, watersheds, etc. If awarded, we'll use this form for future reporting.

Remember, only fill in the cells with red text. There's no need to fill in the Project Budget Summary cells: B17 – N23. These auto-populate based on what you'll put in Tab 4.
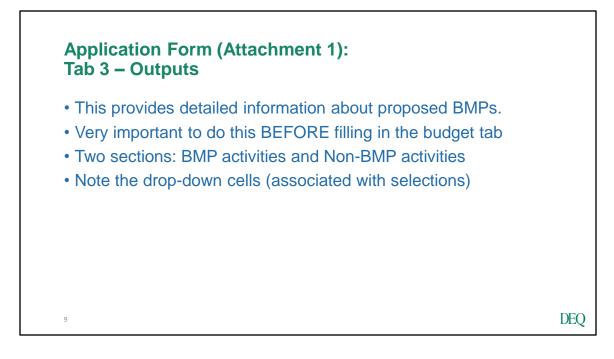
[Demonstrate Tab 2] – Partners tab.

Fill in as much as you can. Do at least put in the names of your partners because you'll need their names in subsequent tabs.

Note that the first organization pertains to the Applicant and the subsequent are the partners.

Notice the drop-down cells:
- Yes/No
- Primary Role in Project (Technical lead= the expertise for BMP design/construction; Supporting partner= provides outreach, ed, or admin support; Project Administrator= organization tasked with oversight and management of partners (usually the Applicant).
- Source Sector
- Secondary Source Sector

Ok to leave $ amount of match funding blank if you need to come back later to fill in.

[Demonstrate Tab 3] – Outputs tab.

Provide detailed information about the BMPs planned in your proposed Project.

DO THIS BEFORE YOU DO YOUR BUDGET. This populates Tab 4 and makes it much easier to fill out the budget tab.
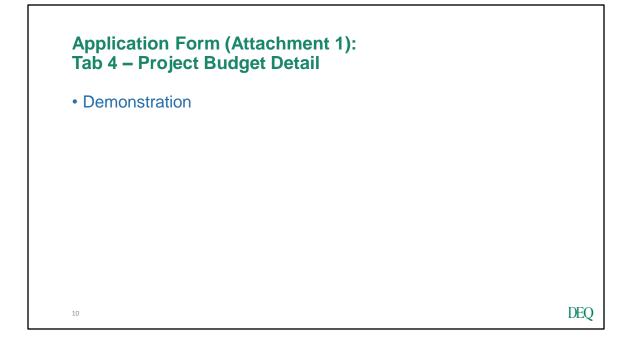
Two sections:
1. BMP Project Activity Summary – Focused on BMPs (Ag, Septic, Urban, Pet Waste)
2. Non-BMP Project Activity Summary – Focused on non-BMPs (Education/Outreach, WQM)

Cells include drop-down options:
- Source Sector
- BMP Name/BMP code
- Responsible party
- Watershed Name
- Estimated Extent BMP Installed
- BMP units (auto-populates)

- Estimated # of Activities or BMPs to complete
- Comments
- Target Completion Date

Application Form (Attachment 1):
Tab 4 – Project Budget Detail

• Demonstration

DEQ

[Demonstrate Tab 4] – Share the Budget EXAMPLE tab.

Everyone probably approaches the development of their budget differently but one recommendation would be to start with the BMP (Construction) budget since the project is ultimately driven by BMP implementation. So,
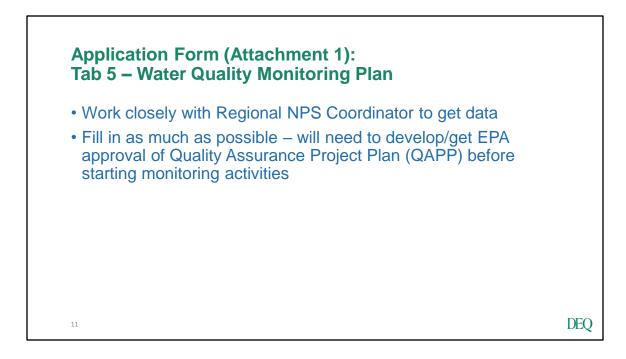
Step 1: Start at section 6 (Construction) first. Notice the fields that have been auto populate for you based on what you put in Tab 3. Then fill out your budget costs.

Step 2: When preparing the budget, remember the standard TA: BMP is 35% TA and 65% BMP. You can check the resulting TA:BMP ratio you've put in your budget by looking at Tab 1, row 21 and 22. EXCEPTION: You may be eligible for additional TA allowances that we discussed earlier: 1) Being a new grantee, 1-time additional 5%; 2) Administering multiple partners (2 or more) additional 10%; 3) Doing WQM, additional 5%). Keep in mind that the maximum TA allowable if all exceptions are granted would be 50%.

Step 3: Complete the remaining sections of Tab 4 Project Budget, using the amount of TA you determined you'll budget and allocate it to the TA categories: Personnel,

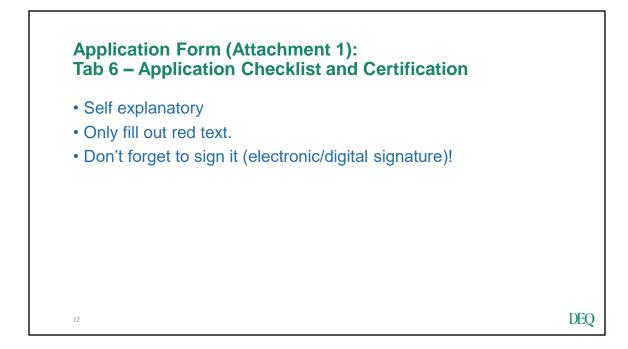Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Contractual, Other Direct, Indirect).

Don't forget to fill in your match for each category as you see fit (30% match required). <u>EXCEPTION:</u> Project that includes the residential septic activities in a high or above average fiscal stress area may request a reduced match amount of 15% match for septic-related activities (see DHCD's fiscal stress report to determine fiscal stress of county: https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/fiscal-stress).

[Demonstrate Tab 5].

Work closely with Regional NPS Coordinator to get data.

Fill out as much as possible. If awarded, you'll need to develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) before monitoring activities can get started. This involves completing EPA's template, DEQ review, and EPA review/approval. Sometimes there can be several review cycles so allow at least 3 months at the beginning of project to complete this process.

Application Form (Attachment 1):
Tab 6 – Application Checklist and Certification

• Self explanatory
• Only fill out red text.
• Don't forget to sign it (electronic/digital signature)!
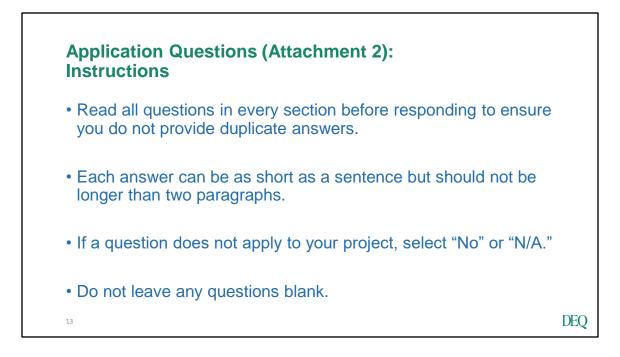
DEQ

Last tab!

Self explanatory- Nice checklist to help make sure you have everything in the application package (and in the correct format)

Only fill out red text.

Don't forget to sign it! Electronic or digital signature.

[STOP FOR QUESTIONS]

[TAKE A 10 min BREAK?]

[Open Application Questions document] [Refer to handout]

So Attachment 1 was all about the nuts and bolts of your project; Attachment 2 is the narrative to explain everything.

Be sure to read the instructions.

To get a sense of the types of questions (and not to duplicate your responses), it's best to read all the questions before responding.

Each answer can be as short as a sentence but should not be longer than two paragraphs. Enter your response in the cell next to the question.
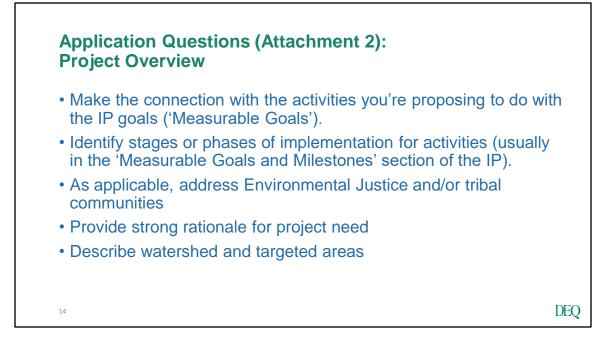
Note the drop-downs for 'yes/no' questions. If a question does not apply to your project, please select "No" or "Not applicable."

Do not leave any questions blank.

Take note of the places you think you'd be providing the same answer twice. Discuss

them with your NPS coordinator to make sure you're understanding the question and providing what the question is asking for.

You'll notice that some of the text is blue and hyperlinked to the definitions tab. This is to help the Applicant understand what is meant by this term so that you're answering the question completely. To open those, click the cell and it will take you to the definition tab. [For example, click on 'TMDL impairment(s)' to see link to definition].
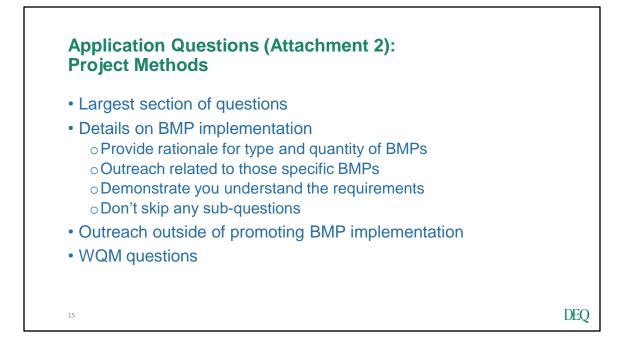
Now let's go over each of the tabs for the Application Questions. The first tab is: Project Overview.

Refer to the Implementation Plan (IP) to help answer these questions and make sure where and what you're proposing to do is eligible (i.e., in the plan). These questions help pull this information out.

Key things to keep in mind:
- IP goals are listed in each IP, usually as 'Measurable Goals'. These are targets for implementation activities. Examples include the number of Ag BMPs, number of residential septic BMPs, outreach campaigns, etc. Make the connection with the activities you're proposing to align with these IP goals.
- For question 4, each IP has stages or phases of implementation for activities. Be sure you find this information (usually in the 'Measurable Goals and Milestones' section of the IP). For example, Cunningham Creek's IP has Stage 1 and Stage 2 Goals outlined in Table 7-4.
- Question 10, indicates if your project addresses Environmental Justice and/or tribal communities. Please be sure to respond to this questions as applicable. More information can be found on the DEQ website.

- Provide enough information to provide a strong rationale for interest, activities, any continued activities.
- Describe the watershed you propose to work in and any targeted areas you'll focus in. Targeting is important. Helps show progress towards meeting IP goals. There is a section in the Implementation Plan that will explain areas to target and why it's necessary to focus there first. We'll be taking this into consideration when reviewing your application (if you've made that connection). Maybe there's a reason to target somewhere differently than what the IP says so give us a compelling reason why you may be targeting a different area.
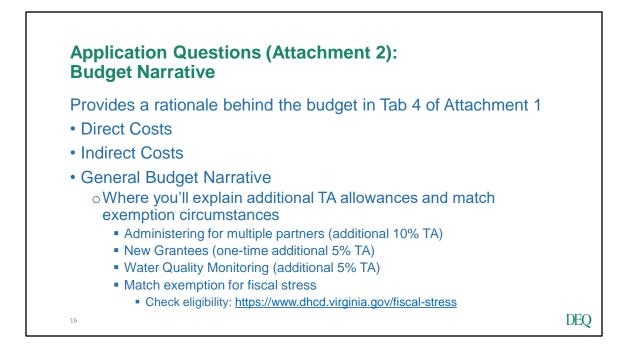
The Project Methods tab is the largest section of questions. Even though it's the largest, depending on your project, there may be several sections that are N/A if you're only focused in one source sector. The questions are grouped into sectors: Agriculture, residential septic, pet waste, and urban. Then there's a section for public outreach and water quality monitoring.

It's important to:
- Provide rationale for the type and quantity of BMPs – will often relate back to how you're prioritizing/targeting (be realistic with your time/resources/budget)
- Describe outreach related to those specific BMPs – how you will promote cost share
- Demonstrate you understand the requirements: cost share admin, contractor selection, design, install, O&M requirements, etc.
- Don't skip any of the sub-questions. Ask if you think it's duplicative or don't fully understand.

If you plan to do outreach outside of promoting BMP implementation, be sure to fully answer #20.

If you plan to do water quality monitoring, be sure to fully answer #21.

The next tab is asking for the rationale behind your budget in Tab 4 of the Application Form: Budget Narrative.

Be sure to be comprehensive and accurate AND demonstrate that the amounts requested are reasonable and realistic. What is the rationale behind the numbers? Explain your numbers in your budget.

This section is broken down into
• Direct costs (bulk of budget- Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Contractual, Construction (BMPs), and Other Direct Costs)
• Indirect costs (most people don't use this but if applicable then complete)
• General budget narrative (TA allowances) - This is the section where you'll explain any additional TA allowances and match exemption circumstances where you can request more than 35% TA. If you are an applicant with any of these circumstances, you can get additional TA:
  • **Administering for multiple partners (#31)**– An Applicant with multiple partners or sub-grantees (two or more) receiving 319(h) funds aside from the Grantee, is eligible for up to 10% additional TA for administrative support to coordinate all of the partners, associated meetings, and
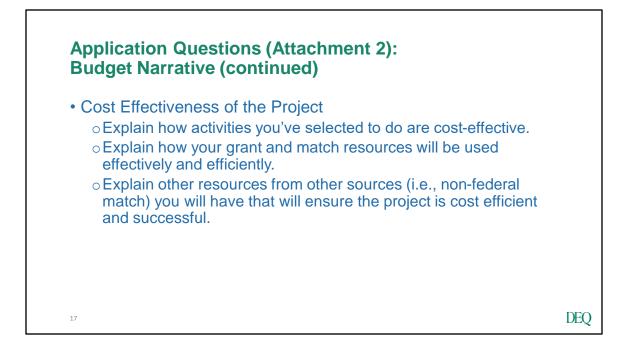
reporting. NOT applicable to contractors.

- **New Grantees (#32)**– Applicants that have never received or administered a NPS Implementation project, nor received Section 319(h) funds from Virginia may request a <u>one-time 5% increase in TA</u> funds.
- **Water Quality Monitoring (#33)**– Applications including plans for water quality monitoring to document progress in improving water quality based on implementation are eligible for <u>additional TA funds of up to 5%</u> of grant funding requested. Additional TA funds only to be used on monitoring activities.

#34: If you've requested additional TA for all three of these TA allowances, your TA funds shouldn't exceed 50% of the total funds requested. If they do, need to provide a strong justification for why it does.

Match exemption for fiscal stress(#35) – For all applications, there's a minimum 30% match requirement. However, if you're project is doing septic BMPs, and your locality is in a High/Above Average Fiscal Stress area, you can use a higher cost-share rate for homeowners to receive more cost-share funds. Then as a Grantee, you don't have to provide 30% match on these activities and rather <u>only 15% match </u>on budget categories related to septic work. All other activities (Ag, urban, etc.) would still need to provide 30% match.

You can check your eligibility via the link to the VA Dept of Housing and Community Development: https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/fiscal-stress

Also you can view on EDM by selecting "County Fiscal Stress 2019" under the TMDL/IP watersheds layer. [DEMOSTRATE during webinar]

- Cost Effectiveness of the Project
  - Explain how activities you've selected to do are cost-effective.
  - Explain how your grant and match resources will be used effectively and efficiently.
  - Explain other resources from other sources (i.e., non-federal match) you will have that will ensure the project is cost efficient and successful.

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DEQ

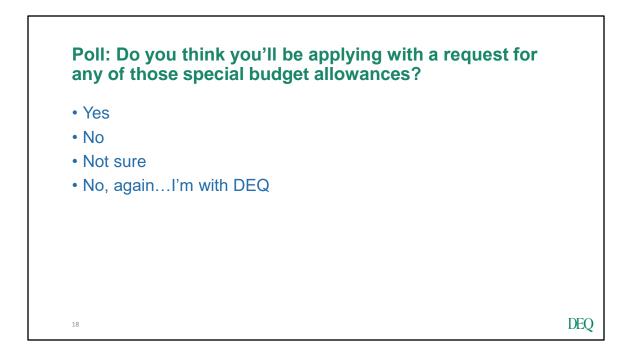The Budget Narrative tab also includes a section about Cost Effectiveness.

The question DEQ will ask during the review is, are the activities you've selected to do cost-effective (i.e., it's effectiveness or productivity of an effort in relation to its cost)? There are other reasons why things may cost more (material costs have gone up, shortage of materials, etc.) so explain this – help us to understand your thought process for justifying these practices' costs and why some practices (that may be more expensive) are needed to successfully implement your project.

Basically, we want to know why you're proposing the number of BMPs for the total amount you're asking. So, break it down: we'll get 10 stream exclusion projects for $225,000 of 319(h) funding. Comes out to $22,500 per BMP. I can compare that with another project that is proposing $30,000 per similar BMP. Obviously, there are a lot of factors that play into costs, but this does give us an idea of how you've calculated the value of choosing some BMPs over others.

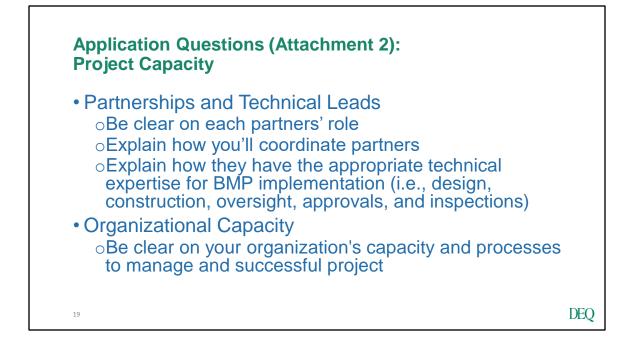How will your grant and match resources be used effectively and efficiently? For example, if you know a significant amount of Personnel time is needed to work with homeowners in your septic projects, then this is an effective use of your funding. Be

sure it's clear where match is coming from.

What other resources do you have from other sources (i.e., non-federal match) that will ensure the project is cost efficient and successful?

Poll: Do you think you'll be applying with a request for any of those special budget allowances?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- No, again…I'm with DEQ

DEQ

So will you be requesting any of these allowances or match exemption? (i.e. additional TA for administering multiple partners, new grantee, WQM or reduced match for septic work?)

Application Questions (Attachment 2): Project Capacity

- Partnerships and Technical Leads
  - Be clear on each partners' role
  - Explain how you'll coordinate partners
  - Explain how they have the appropriate technical expertise for BMP implementation (i.e., design, construction, oversight, approvals, and inspections)
- Organizational Capacity
  - Be clear on your organization's capacity and processes to manage and successful project

DEQ

For the next tab, we'll ask for more details on your Project Capacity including:
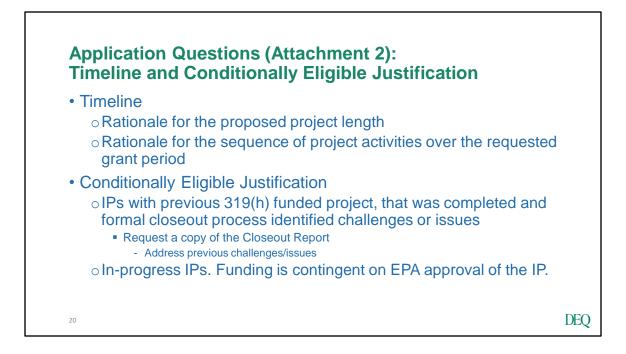- Partnerships and Technical Leads
- Organizational Capacity

Regarding **Partnerships and Technical Leads**:
- Be sure you're clear on each of the partners' roles and how they're contributing to the project. (#41; See definition)
- Explain how they have the appropriate technical expertise for BMP implementation (i.e., design, construction, oversight, approvals, and inspections). #41a (How will you coordinate partners to complete the work?) and #42 (How will you ensure the appropriate technical expertise is utilized for BMP implementation to ensure that project activity is technically sound and meets the approved BMP specifications?)

Organizational Capacity:
- Be clear on your organization's capacity and processes to lead and administer a successful implementation project

The last tab is on Timeline and Conditionally Eligible Justification.

Regarding **Timeline**, provide a rationale for :
- The proposed project length
- The sequence of project activities in relation to the requested grant period

Be sure to explain the rationale for why activities will take place when they do. Time of year can affect what can be done so help us understand your rationale. Example: If you say you'll have all the BMPs under contract in six months…is that realistic? Probably not. If that's your timeline, tell us why it IS realistic. We want to know your assumptions for the decisions. Don't try to impress us with a speedy, unrealistic timeline. You need to be able to defend your decisions.

Conditionally Eligible Justification
- The LAST question addresses the IPs from Table 1 that are labeled "Conditionally Eligible".
- These are IPs that had a previous 319(h) funded project that was completed and a formal closeout process was performed.
- During the closeout process, challenges or issues in past project implementation,

local need or interest or past project administration/management were identified.
- If your IP is identified as 'Conditionally Eligible' in Table 1:
    - You need to request a copy of the Closeout Report from DEQ (npsgrants@deq.virginia.gov or your regional NPS Coordinator) and evaluate how you'll address any previous challenges in implementing and/or managing a project that the closeout report addressed.
    - If you've never had a 319(h) grant or worked in an area that's 'Conditionally Eligible' this doesn't count for or against you. We're evaluating whether or not Applicants have requested information (Closeout Report) to find out what needs to be addressed and have adequately proposed ways to overcome those challenges or issues (see the evaluative criteria in the RFA).

Additionally, there are IPs currently <u>in-progress</u> that are awaiting EPA approval. Funding for projects under those IPs are contingent on EPA approval of the IP. As discussed earlier, IPs that are still in progress are only eligible if it's submitted to EPA for review by 8/31/2023 and approved by 12/1/2023.

The key is to <u>refer to Table 1</u> to see if it's conditionally eligible due to it being previously closed or if it's an IP in progress.
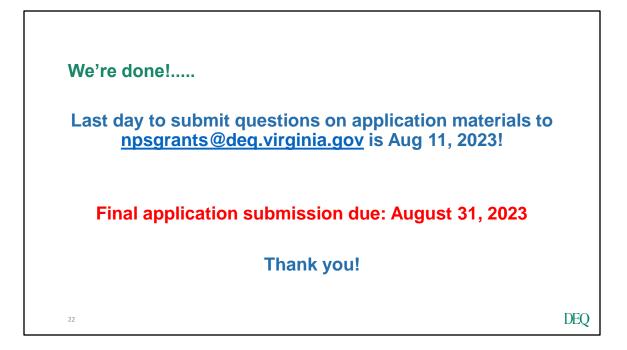
[STOP FOR QUESTIONS]

Poll: Round two: do you think you'll submit an application for this RFA cycle?

- Yes, gotta get to work on it
- Maybe, still not sure
- No, not this time around
- No,… still me from DEQ

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DEQ

We're done!.....

Last day to submit questions on application materials to npsgrants@deq.virginia.gov is Aug 11, 2023!

Final application submission due: August 31, 2023

Thank you!

DEQ

Reminder: This webinar was recorded and a link will be sent to everyone who registered (and can be shared with others) in a couple days. We will post the video recording and presentation (with notes) on the DEQ NPS website: https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/water/water-quality/nonpoint-source-management/funding-grant-and-project-resources (under Current Funding Opportunities) and the Virginia Business Opportunities (eVA) website

Feel free to contact your regional NPS Coordinator or npsgrants@deq.virginia.gov if you have any questions with your application by August 11, 2023.

Thank you for interest and participating today! Hope to hear from you by August 31, 2023.