

Q&A about the RFP

At the October 16, 2018 meeting of the Bioinformatics Community of Practice, we had some Q&A about this year's RFP. I'm reposting in case it helps some other people with their questions.

Feel free to post more questions on this forum, or send to cdi@usgs.gov.

Q: The past projects look like they involve lots of technology, what if the project is more geared to data compilation?

A: Not all projects use fancy new technology, we have funded data compilation (for example, landslides data, wetland soils data), because those proposals did a good job of showing how their outcomes would be applicable to a broad USGS audience. What lessons can you share back to the community? A theme for FY19 is building national datasets and understanding issues around data quality and integration, so your theme sounds potentially very relevant.

Q: Where does the 30% in-kind funding usually come from?

A: Usually this comes from salary of personnel who have funding and time they are able to contribute to the project. Related info: In-kind contributions can be either Federal or non-Federal. It is often USGS personnel salary for their time, but could be other funding outside of CDI. The purpose of the in-kind funding is to show that there is some programmatic or other support behind the idea. "Every proposal must have 30% matching funds from salary, travel, other grants. These matching funds help to demonstrate the commitment from the project PIs and science centers. We have had science centers pay for their own overhead costs as part of the matching funds. Feel free to be creative in how you achieve the matching funds as long as it does demonstrate a commitment to your project specifically." You can see examples of past budgets on [this wiki page](#).

Comment: Successful SOIs (Phase 1) were able to capture the interest of enough voters in the community, while successful full proposals (Phase 2) best addressed the evaluation criteria for CDI projects according to a Review Panel.

Q: Do you get the comment that it is hard to convince bosses or managers for someone to contribute their time to a CDI project, as it may not overlap with the Program or Center goals, and these projects tend to produce internal products?

A: We do hear that. We hope that these projects are also meeting Program or Center goals by knowledge and capacity building that people need in their daily jobs. Also, although some products are internal, we require teams to follow USGS data and software policy and strongly encourage public outputs in the form of code repositories, publications, and public web links. We are trying to build the knowledge and capacity of the broad earth and biological sciences research communities.

Q: The RFP says it does not fund data collection. In order to develop some tools and methods that involve hardware, data collection is necessary for tests and validation. Can you clarify?

A: The current wording is there to emphasize that routine data collection or data collection that would normally be funded by another USGS program would not be supported. However, if the data collection is in support of method/tool development, and the main outcome is the new tool or method, not the data collection.

Comment: We've had the complaint that the Phase 1 community voting is like a popularity contest. However, we like to think of it as a popularity contest for ideas. We want to fund the most in-demand ideas because then we know we are meeting the data and science needs of our CDI community. We like proposers to talk about their ideas and gain support and votes in Phase 1. What we don't like is getting "anyone off the street" to vote for particular projects without understanding or desiring the products, or without taking a look at the other ideas up for vote.

Comment: It's great when ideas stem from collaboration area discussions, and have the support of the collaboration area members in the voting. This is one way to tell we are meeting the needs of CDI members.

Thanks for the discussion!